



Wykham Park Farm, Banbury

Planning Statement

March 2013

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1	Application Context	2
1.2	Application Proposals	2
2.0	SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT	3
2.1	The Site	3
2.2	The Site Characteristics	3
	<i>Landscape</i>	3
	<i>Physical Features</i>	3
	<i>Historic Environment/Archaeology</i>	3
	<i>Existing Movement</i>	4
2.3	The Surrounding Area	4
3.0	DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSALS.....	5
3.1	Land Use	5
3.2	Layout	5
3.3	Access	6
3.4	Sustainability Strategy	6
3.4	Open Space	6
3.5	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)	7
3.6	Sustainable Design and Renewable Energy	7
4.0	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	9
4.1	National Planning Policy	9
4.2	Regional Planning Policy	10
4.3	Local Planning Policy	11
	<i>Cherwell District Local Plan (1996)</i>	11
	<i>The Non-Statutory Cherwell District Local Plan (2004)</i>	11
4.4	Emerging Local Plan Policy.....	11
5.0	EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS AGAINST PLANNING POLICY	13
5.1	Housing Land Supply	13
	5.1.1 <i>Coalescence</i>	14
	5.1.2 <i>Proximity to Salt Way</i>	15
	5.1.3 <i>Impact on wider landscape character</i>	15
	5.1.4 <i>A sustainable form of development</i>	16
5.2	Conclusions	17

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Application Context

This Planning Statement has been prepared by David Lock Associates on behalf of Gallagher Estates (the applicant) for a mixed use sustainable urban extension on land at Wykham Park Farm, to the south of Banbury.

Wykham Park Farm is being promoted as a strategic housing location through the Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft August 2012 for some 1000 residential units, primary school, mixed use development and supporting facilities. Representations have been duly made on the Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft August 2012.

1.2 Application Proposals

The purpose of the Planning Statement is to describe and assess the proposals against adopted and emerging planning policy and in this context draw conclusions in relation to the suitability of the proposals.

The application seeks outline permission with all matters reserved for the development of An urban extension to Banbury for up to 1000 dwellings together with a local centre containing retail (A1), financial services (A2), restaurants (A3-A5), up to a combined total floorspace of 1,000m², employment space (B1) up to a total floorspace of 5000m² with the B1(a) office component limited to a maximum of 2,500m², associated car parking, a community primary school [including space for community uses (D1) and assembly and leisure uses (D2)], green infrastructure including formal and informal open space, amenity space, retained hedgerows, structural landscaping, supporting infrastructure [including gas, electricity, sewerage, water, telecommunications] sustainable urban drainage systems, new connection to the A361 Bloxham Road, pedestrian and cycling connections to the surrounding footpath and cycle network and any necessary demolition and ground remodelling.

The development aims to secure a Sustainable Urban Extension of Banbury, fully linked and integrated into the fabric of the town whilst being of sufficient scale to meet its own distinct community, education and leisure needs. The proposals represent a sustainable and deliverable form of development that is capable of assisting the Council in fulfilling their 5 year housing land requirement whilst making a significant and positive contribution to the wider growth agenda of Oxfordshire. This is against a background of a declared 3 year housing land supply by Cherwell District Council (CDC).

The outline planning application is submitted with a full suite of supporting information, in conformity with CDC's validation checklist for outline applications:

- planning application forms, notices and certificates;
- planning application fee;
- application drawings;
- Environmental Statement;
- Non-Technical Statement;
- Design and Access Statement ;
- Planning Statement;
- Transport Assessment and;
- Travel Plan.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the context relating to the site and surrounding area.

2.1 The Site

The site is located approximately 1.7km immediately to the south of Banbury Town Centre. The site is defined to the north by Salt Way beyond which is the residential area of Easington. Salt Way provides pedestrian access to White Post Lane to the east. This leads to Bodicote High Street.

To the south of the site is Wykham Lane, a narrow country lane. Beyond that is Tudor Hall School and open countryside used primarily for agricultural uses. The Bloxham Road (A361) forms the western edge of the site. To the east, the site adjoins an existing bridleway. Beyond this is Banbury Cricket Club Pavilion and the village of Bodicote.

2.2 The Site Characteristics

The total site area extends to 50.31 hectares

Landscape

The site is predominately rural in character comprising intensively cultivated arable and pasture agricultural land. There are a number of landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows within the site, tree species include sycamore, hawthorn, lime, ash and an oak spinney. They are generally mature and well established.

There are no known Tree Preservation Orders on the site.

Physical Features

The topography of the site is generally undulating with small shallow valleys running south towards the Sor Brook Valley, marking the east and west boundaries of the site. Views into the site from the surrounding area and outside and out of the site are limited due to the topography and existing woodland, trees and hedgerow.

The only building within the site is Wykham Park Farm Cottage.

There are also a series of electricity poles crossing the site.

The site is not at any risk of flooding high or low as defined on the Environment Agency indicative floodplain maps.

Historic Environment/Archaeology

There are some areas of archaeological interest within the eastern part of the site. The master plan responds to these areas of interest and proposes no built development.

Existing Movement

The site adjoins the existing transportation network in Banbury. To the western edge of the site is the A361. The A361 provides one of the main strategic routes into the town. The site is located adjacent to the Salt Way. It is part of the National Cycle Network traffic free route and is known as Route 5. The route connects with villages such as Chipping Campden to the west, Bodicote to the east and Bloxham to the south.

There is an existing pedestrian footpath on the north side of Bloxham Road. This footpath connects with nearby residential streets and continues all the way to the town of Banbury. The key bus service in the vicinity of the site is the B1/B4 and 488/489 service which provides a 30 minute frequency service to the east of the site into Banbury. There are numerous other services which pass along the A361

2.3 The Surrounding Area

The site is well related to the existing settlement of Banbury. It is immediately to the south of the existing built up area. The site is located to the south of the residential area of Easington and is adjacent to Banbury School and Blessed George Napier Catholic School.

The south west of the site has a more undulating landform with a pastoral, rural estate landscape character with many mature trees. This character is partly due to Tudor Hall School and Wykham Park, identified as parkland of district importance.

To the east of the site features include Banbury Cricket Club Ground and Pavilion and the spire of the Church in neighbouring Bodicote, which is identified within a Conservation Area.

Beyond the site area in the west and south is open countryside used primarily for agricultural uses.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSALS

The proposed development provides an opportunity to construct a high quality mixed use development that delivers significant benefits in the form of new homes, jobs and community facilities (including a primary school) whilst responding to the setting of existing site features, such as Salt Way and significant mature trees and hedgerows.

3.1 Land Use

The site will be developed to create a sustainable urban extension, comprising, of the following land uses, as shown on the Development Framework Plan.

- up to 1,000 new dwellings; comprising a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures.
- Employment space up to a total floorspace of 5,000m², including offices (B1a use) limited to a maximum of 2,500m².
- a local centre to comprise of a mix of retail (A1 uses), services (A2-A5 uses), leisure (D2 uses) up to a combined floorspace of 1,000m²
- a community primary school.
- green infrastructure comprising: retention and enhancement of significant hedgerows and woodland areas, where appropriate; strategic open space comprising parks with sport pitches, play areas; other informal public open spaces; and structural landscape planting.
- transport infrastructure comprising: access from Bloxham Road (A361); public transport, primary road network, public transport corridor and strategic pedestrian and cycle routes.
- associated infrastructure, roads, lighting and drainage systems.

3.2 Layout

The development is structured around a central spine route, with a network of secondary and tertiary routes providing a permeable movement pattern for the development. The network of primary, secondary and tertiary streets and the associated coherent built form will create an easily understood and highly accessible urban environment.

Residential units will be located as part of mixed use areas or purely residential blocks and defined by the existing lines of hedges and trees. Both commercial and community facilities are located within easy walking and cycling distance of the new neighbourhoods.

The local retail and community uses are co-located to encourage a reduction in vehicle use as well as to foster a sense of community and focus for the development.

The employment area is located in the western part of the site to provide both commercial profile and ease of access from the proposed new junction of Bloxham Road (A361) which reduces the need for extraneous traffic to penetrate the site.

3.3 Access

Within the site itself, a public transport loop is proposed to allow buses in to circulate within the site and serve the maximum number of residents. The inner route is proposed to run from the employment area, through the local centre, primary school and residential areas. The route has been located to ensure that all residents are within 400 metres of public transport.

The internal layout is designed to accommodate public transport, private cars, cyclists and pedestrians providing multiple options to move around the site.

The route through the site will form the proposed bus route that will link the site to adjoining residential areas – Easington and Calthorpe. The streets will be designed to give equal priority to public transport, other vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

3.4 Sustainability Strategy

The development will deliver a series of sustainable transport options providing viable and realistic alternatives to use of the private car. The scheme proposes a new public transport network served by a frequent bus service that integrates the site with the existing bus network within and towards Banbury.

The scheme is based upon the principle of walkable neighbourhoods with the creation of a permeable and safe network of streets which will encourage shorter journeys to be made by foot or cycle to provide convenient routes, linking the residential areas with employment, local centre and the primary school and bus stops.

The internal cycle network will be linked to the existing external cycleway network including the National Cycle Route 5. Where possible, the routes of Public Rights of Way within the site have been maintained along their existing course.

3.4 Open Space

Formal and informal open space within the site are key elements of the proposed development.

Significant hedgerows and mature trees will be retained, where possible, within the development. Generally, retained hedgerows will not form garden boundaries and will be managed to enhance their wildlife value. Significant landscape features such as Salt Way; tree and hedgerow species will be maintained and enhanced where possible to form focal points along key views within the site. New strategic planting will reinforce the framework of existing vegetation. Species will be selected to optimise habitat creation and ecological diversity.

Within the development, smaller formal landscape spaces will be an integral element of the design, with the provision of local areas for play as well as street planting as part of a high quality landscaped public realm.

3.5 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

Construction of impermeable surfaces within the proposed development requires appropriate drainage arrangements to manage surface water. A range of sustainable urban drainage solutions will be incorporated into both the built and green environments. Surface water attenuation methods such as balancing ponds and open swales (shallow ditches) will be used to store and release collected surface water to receiving watercourses.

SUDS will be implemented in order to reduce flood risk, reduce pollution and provide landscape and wildlife benefits.

3.6 Sustainable Design and Renewable Energy

The applicant is committed to delivering a sustainable development, a key component of which will be the level of sustainable design and renewable energy incorporated into the scheme. Gallagher Estates will ensure that the development meets the appropriate national standards at the time of consent.

Techniques include adoption of a 'Green Travel Plan' to encourage sustainable modes of travel, incorporation of SUDS and implementation of strategies to reduce waste and to encourage recycling.

3.7 Draft Heads of Terms

Cherwell District Council's Planning Obligations draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was approved on 23rd May 2011 as informal interim guidance for development control purposes. It is understood to remain a draft until the document is progressed and tested by consultation, in the context of the Core Strategy/Local Plan and the outcome of such consultations evaluated, and as such only limited weight can be attached to the SPD.

Since publication of the draft SPD, the NPPF has been published which seeks to ensure viability and deliverability. Guidance has been published in the form of *Viability Testing Local Plan* produced by the Local Housing Delivery Group chaired by Sir John Harman (June 2012). As a result the weight to be attached to the draft SPD must be limited.

However, the applicants welcome the opportunity to discuss Heads of Terms with Cherwell District Council. The planning application includes proposals for:

- Affordable housing
- Education
- Local open space, play space and landscaping
- Local community facilities
- Sustainable urban drainage systems
- Nature conservation and biodiversity
- Sustainable construction
- Sustainable transport and travel plans, footpath /cycleway provision, public transport infrastructure and access improvements

Any other S106 obligations will be considered in the context of overall viability considerations.

3.8 Affordable Housing

Cherwell District Council (CDC) Planning Obligations CPD sets out headline requirements for the provision of Affordable Housing. Large sites (over 10 units) in Banbury are required to provide 30% affordable housing in the form of social rented, affordable rented housing and intermediate rent. In addition, developments of over 400 homes are required to provide 5% of all proposed dwellings as affordable extra care homes as part of the affordable housing requirement. The normal policy requirement is 70% affordable rented and 30% intermediate housing such as shared ownership, intermediate rent or in exceptional case discount market sale.

The proportion and type of provision is to be established in discussions with CDC.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The Government's commitment to delivery of sustainable development is enshrined within National Planning Policy Framework. Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare positive plans to encourage sustainable development that meets the area's need for homes, jobs and open space. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out the proper approach to decision making and requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the prevailing development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.1 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012; at its core is a presumption in favour of sustainable development for plan-making and for decision-taking. Policies in paragraphs 18-219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of sustainable development. The '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*' is described as the 'golden thread' running through decision-taking.

This section considers the relevant provisions of the NPPF as they relate to the development proposal.

Where the development plan is up to date then the presumption in favour of sustainable development requires approving developments where they accord with the development plan. Applications that conflict with an up to date development plan should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where the development plan is, absent, silent or out of date then permission should also be granted unless:

- "*any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework when taken as a whole*"
- "*specific policies in this Framework indicate that development should be restricted*"

Paragraph 9 refers to the positive outcomes of pursuing more sustainable forms of development in terms of improvements to the quality of the built, natural and historic environment. Paragraph 17 sets out the 12 core-planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.

It is a core planning principle to "*proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs*" (para 17).

The NPPF requires planning authorities to 'boost significantly' the supply of housing and stresses the importance of delivering a wide choice of high quality homes which meet local needs, delivered through high quality and inclusive design. Paragraph 47 refers to a list of measures to help local planning authorities achieve this aim.

One of the key requirements of the NPPF is for local authorities to identify a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5%, (to ensure choice and competition in the market for land). Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities are required to increase the buffer to 20% in order to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply.

The NPPF places a priority on sites which are considered “*deliverable*”, defined in footnote 11 as sites that are “*available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development on the site is viable*”.

Paragraph 49 states that ‘housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year land supply’.

The clear requirement placed on Local Authorities to front load delivery of housing demonstrates the importance the Government places on ‘boosting’ housing supply.

Applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres, that are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, require submission of an impact assessment demonstrating compliance with the sequential approach. This requirement is removed for developments under a certain floor area threshold, which can be locally set. In the absence of a locally set threshold, the NPPF sets a default of 2,500 sq m. (para 26). The proposals fall below this threshold.

Paragraph 56 amplifies the Government’s view on the importance of good design in the creation of sustainable forms of development. Paragraph 58 contains a list of policy formulation and design making criteria to ensure development is of a high quality. Paragraph 69 refers to the importance of promoting vibrant, safe and accessible development.

Paragraph 173 refers to the need to ensure viability and deliverability both in plan making and decision taking, stating that costs of requirement applied to the development such as affordable housing, infrastructure contributions etc. should provide ‘competitive returns to a willing landowner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable’.

Paragraph 197 states ‘in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development’.

Paragraphs 203-206 relate to planning obligations. Paragraph 204 states planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests

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

4.2 Regional Planning Policy

The Government intends to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies through the Localism Bill, which gives rise to uncertainty over regional policies and targets. Notwithstanding this, at present the RSS is capable of being a material consideration and therefore it is appropriate to set out the relevant regional plan policies.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South East of England, the *South East Plan*, (SEP) was adopted in May 2009, provides a broad development strategy for the region until 2026 and makes provision for significant housing delivery.

Policy H1 of the Regional Plan sets the housing target of 13,400 dwellings (670 per annum) for Cherwell District Council over the plan period (2006-2026). The South East Plan divides the district into two areas defined as “Central Oxfordshire” (6,400 homes) and “Rest of Oxfordshire” (7,000 homes).

Policy SP3 refers to the Plan's intended urban focus, based around principles of urban renaissance and sustainable development.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

Cherwell District Local Plan (1996)

The adopted Cherwell Local Plan (adopted November 1996) still remains part of the statutory Development Plan for the area. A number of policies are still relevant and 'saved' until the Council's Local Development Framework that will replace the adopted Cherwell Local Plan is in place.

The relevant 'saved' policies that relate to the Banbury area are: Policy H5 – Affordable Housing; Policy TR14 – Formation of new accesses to the inner relief road and Hennem Way, Banbury; Policy TR16 – Access Improvements in the vicinity of Banbury Railway Station; Policy R14 – Reservation of land for community buildings in association with housing developments at Hanwell Fields, Banbury; Policy C5 – Protection of ecological value and rural character of specified features of value in the district; Policy C15 – Prevention of coalescence of settlements; and Policy C34 – Protection of views of St Mary's Church, Banbury.

There are no policies that relate specifically to the site.

The Non-Statutory Cherwell District Local Plan (2004)

The Non-Statutory Cherwell District Local Plan 2011 was intended to review and update the Local Plan adopted in 1996. Due to changes to the planning system introduced by the Government, work on the plan was discontinued prior to adoption. The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan is not part of the statutory development plan but it has been approved as interim planning policy for development control purposes.

There are no policies that relate specifically to the site.

4.4 Emerging Local Plan Policy

The Cherwell Local Plan is currently at consultation stage, prior to its submission to the Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government for public examination. Whilst the plan does not form part of the statutory development plan, it is a material consideration and provides an indication of the growth strategy for the district over a 20 year period.

The Plan provides for an additional period of 5 years above the RSS provision, to cover a plan period 2006 to 2031. The annual RSS housing target of 670 has been rolled forward, to provide for 16, 750 dwellings over the plan period.

The Council has not yet formally determined its position on whether the 5% or 20% buffer is applicable.

The spatial strategy to manage growth within the district focuses the bulk of growth in and around Bicester and Banbury.

Paragraph A.11 reads 'most of the growth in the district will be directed to locations within or immediately adjoining the main towns of Banbury and Bicester'

It is therefore clear that Banbury is expected to make a substantial contribution in meeting the housing needs of the district. Policy BSC 1 sets out the district wide housing provision, Banbury to provide 4,352 homes over the plan period. Policy BSC 2 aims for 40% of new homes to be delivered on brownfield land and new housing on brown and greenfield land to be provided at a density of no less than 30 dph. Central to this growth agenda is the creation of sustainable communities that meet the needs of a growing and ageing population, offering a high quality of life.

Policy BSC 3 requires 30% affordable homes, 70% of which will be social rented/affordable rented dwellings and 30% as other forms of intermediate affordable homes.

Para B.258 states that development at the edge Banbury will need to address how they face out into the open countryside and present a green edge to development. Proposals will also be considered against the requirements of 'Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement'.

Para C.126 sets out the strategy for ensuring sustainable development in Banbury, which includes

- Provide for new development that will bring with it new open space and recreation opportunities
- Plan new development in a way that will improve access to natural and semi-natural green space and promote opportunities for new publicly accessible wooded areas
- Provide for new development in accessible locations which will provide good opportunities for improving and accessing public transport services, for delivering and using new cycleways, for travelling on foot and for minimising the impact on the highway network and traffic congestion.

Para 127 recognises that mixed use strategic development sites delivering housing, services and facilities and contributions to local infrastructure are considered to be the most sustainable way of meeting Banbury's housing needs and addressing the issues facing the town.

5.0 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out the proper approach to decision making. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF, demonstrates how the presumption in favour of sustainable development is to be incorporated into decision-taking and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

- 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; or
- specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

5.1 Housing Land Supply

Cherwell District Council's 2011 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) reported a housing land supply of 2.9 years for the period 2012-17 which equates to a shortfall of 1,560 homes.

The 2011 AMR breaks down the housing land supply into the two sub regions referred to in SEP as "Central Oxfordshire" and "Rest of Oxfordshire", but referred to within Cherwell Local Plan as "Bicester and Central Oxfordshire" and "Banbury and North Cherwell" respectively. The former has a 4.1 housing land supply, compared with a far smaller 1.7 years within the Banbury/ North Cherwell sub-region, a shortfall of 1,210 homes over the same plan period.

The 2011 AMR reported housing completions (net) in 10/11 were 370 compared to the South East Plan requirement of 670 per annum. Furthermore, overall housing completions in 11/12 are expected to be low with a projection of 222 excluding previously unidentified sites.

The 2011 Annual Monitoring Review reported an under delivery of (net) housing completions for 10/11, and overall housing completions in 11/12 are expected to be low.

Cherwell District Council published a housing land supply briefing note in 14 August 2012, which refers to new permissions that count towards Cherwell's supply for the district and therefore increase the housing land supply figure above that set out in the 2011 AMR.

The most up to date figure for Cherwell District's housing supply is 3.2 years for 2012-17, as set out in the Statement of Common Ground for an appeal on land adjacent to the application site, South of Salt Way at Crouch Farm, Bloxham Road, Banbury appeal reference; APP/C3105/A/12/2178521.

As part of this appeal, the Council's Policy Officer, in his proof of evidence, accepts that Cherwell cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites nor, the NPPF's requirement for an additional 5% / 20% and as such relevant local policies for the supply of housing cannot therefore be considered up-to-date.

As set out above, the NPPF is clear that in a case where development plan policy is considered to be out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole.

5.2 The Site - Principle of Development

Wykham Park Farm is not currently allocated for development within the emerging Local Plan, however the site was identified in the 'Options for Growth' document (September 2008), (BAN 4) as an option for an area of planned growth of approximately 1600 dwellings. The site was considered in the following terms;

"Relatively close to the town centre, secondary schools, hospital and a superstore. Sufficient land to create a coherent neighbourhood and new local centre without unacceptable harm to landscape further south (Sor Brook Valley). Several access options: Broughton Road, south of Easington, Wykham Lane or Bodicote roundabout. Potential for coalescence (coming together) with Bodicote and for impact on landscape along Wykham Lane. This restricts the potential for southward, eastward and westward expansion".

This demonstrates that the site was considered as a reasonable option for growth and was regarded as being relatively close to the town centre and its key amenities.

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) sets out the reasons as to why the site was not brought forward into the draft Core Strategy, (Appendix C, Table C.1 Assessment of Alternatives, pp317), and in turn are key elements that have informed the principle and layout of development.

The Council's SA suggested that coalescence issues prevented east and southwards expansion, and went on to suggest that the site scored low in terms of accessibility to the town centre and employment areas on eastern side of the town. Furthermore, the proximity to the Salt Way, considered an important wildlife and recreational corridor, was considered likely to be adversely affected by development.

Further considerations are the impact of the development on the wider landscape and whether the proposal contributes to the pursuit of sustainable development as advocated in the framework.

5.1.1 Coalescence

Policy ESD 15, of the emerging Local Plan refers to new green boundaries to growth, their purpose is that they are kept free from built development to maintain distinctive identity and prevent coalescence. With regard to edge development at Banbury, the green buffers serve to protect the villages of Hanwell, Drayton, Bodicote and Adderbury.

The nearest village to the application site is Bodicote which sits to the east of the site at a distance of more than 0.5 km from the site boundary. Bodicote is physically separated by Banbury Cricket Club Ground and Pavilion. Separation is also defined by the existing woodland edge on the south and the east site boundaries which create a structural landscape buffer to screen development from views from Bodicote, including the sensitive areas within Bodicote Conservation Area as referred to in the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Report.

The policy also states that Green buffers will take the form of community woodland where the opportunity exists and when woodland planting is appropriate in landscape terms. Additional woodland planting on land at the edge of the plateau would strengthen woodland habitats whilst proving a valuable open space asset in the form of community woodlands. It is considered that this approach would comply with the policy intention that relates to Green Buffers.

5.1.2 Proximity to Salt Way

The Salt Way is a key site feature, comprising an ancient tree lined bridleway, which runs along and defines much of the northern site boundary. Salt Way provides an important structuring element as it is an interface between the existing edge of Banbury and the site. It also has an important role to play in providing a green footpath link between the existing Banbury School and Blessed George Napier Catholic Church, the residential area of Easington and the actual site.

The Salt Way was a historical trading route for the transportation of salt, now a locally valued footpath and cycleway. Policy ESD 15 refers specifically to the additional buffers on the south east edge of Banbury, the rationale being the protection of Crouch Hill and historic Salt Way.

The Sustainability Appraisal that accompanies the draft Core Strategy refers to the importance of the Salt Way as a wildlife and movement corridor, concluding that any proximal development would be detrimental. The Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Report (LSCR) (2010) concluded that there was capacity to accept development within the site, albeit restricted to areas of low value.

The mitigation methods within the LSCR however, refer to the opportunity to reinforce the Salt Way as a green corridor, linking the Sor Brook valley to the surrounding network of footpaths around Wykham Farm Park.

The emerging Local Plan acknowledges that the District is deficient in quality public open spaces and green infrastructure.

The Landscape and Visual Chapter within the Environmental Statement, contains a full appraisal of the Salt Way to include an assessment of the potential impacts that may arise from the development that is proposed.

The development is set back from Salt Way, providing a sensitive buffer of open space, which maintains its character as an important footpath and cycle way. Strengthening the hedgerow features and carrying out additional woodland planting as referred to in Policy ESD 15, presents an opportunity to protect and enhance this locally valuable ecological and open space resource and could provide opportunities to illustrate its historical context through the use of interpretation boards.

5.1.3 Impact on wider landscape character

With reference to the wider landscape, the development proposals are not considered to harm the rural qualities of the landscape as the site is visually enclosed through strong hedgerow features and contained within the Banbury plateau.

CDC consider the Salt Way to represent the southern limits of the built area of Banbury, and whilst the Salt Way is a locally valuable footpath and cycle route of historical interest, it does not display any robust characteristics that support any implied function as a settlement boundary. To elevate the Salt Way as a defined settlement boundary is not justified given its historical function as a trade route and places a clearly artificial constraint on the natural expansion of the town given the historical and potential future expansion of Banbury.

The plateau landform is considered to provide a far more appropriate and natural feature to accommodate the southwards growth of Banbury.

5.1.4 *A sustainable form of development*

The development comprises a fully sustainable urban extension to Banbury integrated into the fabric of the town whilst being of sufficient scale to meet its own distinct community, education and leisure needs. The development includes 2 ha of employment space, a local centre with commercial and community uses, and a primary school.

Notwithstanding this, the location of the development on the edge of the two main service centres in the district is particularly advantageous where a convenient, frequent, safe and reliable bus service to Banbury town centre will offer wider opportunities for employment, leisure, health and welfare facilities and more strategic travel. Adoption of a 'Green Travel Plan' will further encourage sustainable modes of travel.

The form and layout of the development is compact so it is easy to walk and cycle around. A comprehensive network of footpaths and cycle ways will connect with both new and existing routes linking the site to the wider strategic networks.

The built form will achieve the highest appropriate standards of sustainable environmental performance and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) techniques will be used for surface water generated from the new development wherever possible.

Prominent landscape features such as Salt Way; tree and hedgerow species will be maintained and enhanced where possible to form focal points along key views within the site. New strategic planting will reinforce the framework of existing vegetation. Species will be selected to optimise habitat creation and ecological diversity.

Up to 1000 dwellings are proposed which will make a substantial contribution in meeting the housing needs of the district. In accordance with the provisions of emerging Local Plan Policies BSC 3 and BSC 4, the housing will include a proportion of affordable units and will comprise a mix of house types, including flats/apartments, townhouses and houses and will provide a range of sizes to encourage the creation of a balanced population and improve the functioning of the housing market system.

5.2 Conclusions

CDC does not have a 5 year land supply and therefore by virtue of paragraph 49 of the NPPF the relevant policies for the supply of housing cannot be considered up-to-date.

In light of the current planning policy framework it is considered that there is clear and robust planning context for the proposed development. At national and local level there is a requirement for a presumption in favour of sustainable development and an onus on local authorities to stimulate a step change in housing delivery which provides a supportive context for delivery of residential units supported within a mixed use scheme.

Para 127 of the emerging Cherwell Local Plan recognises that mixed use strategic development sites delivering housing, services and facilities and contributions to local infrastructure are considered to be the most sustainable way of meeting Banbury's housing needs and addressing the issues facing the town.

The site is being promoted as a viable and robust option for accommodating development and should therefore be seen within this context as an appropriate option for resolving the Council's housing shortfall.

The proposal represents deliverable and a sustainable form of development in the context of the NPPF, there are no adverse impacts that significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits as set out, nor are there any specific policies nor national designations that preclude development in this location, as such it is considered that permission should be granted in accordance with paragraph 14.

DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES LIMITED

50 NORTH THIRTEENTH STREET, CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES, MK9 3BP

TEL: 01908 666276 FAX: 01908 605747 EMAIL: mail@davidlock.com

www.davidlock.com

David Lock Associates
Town Planning and Urban Design

