
PLANNING STATEMENT

Development at:

Land south of South Side,

Steeple Aston,

Oxon

December 2019

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Rectory Homes Ltd in support of a full planning application for the erection of 10 dwellings on land South of South Side, Steeple Aston.
- 1.2 The description of development comprises the following:
- ‘Erection of 10 no. two-storey residential dwellings with access off South Side, including a new pedestrian footway, parking and garaging, landscaping, and all enabling and ancillary works.’*
- 1.3 The site is located towards the south-western edge of the village of Steeple Aston, approximately 7.2 miles north west of Bicester, in the administrative area of Cherwell District Council.
- 1.4 It comprises a rectangular field situated on the southern end of South Side Road. It is bound to the north, east and west by hedgerows and trees, and to the south by a post and wire fence behind a hedgerow. Existing residential dwellings are present to the east of the application site and a small MOT garage is located to the west, beyond which is the telephone exchange site.
- 1.5 In support of this planning application and in addition to the detailed architectural drawings, a number of technical documents and plans have been prepared which have informed the development of the proposal. The planning application comprises the following documents:
- Site Location Plan
 - Site Plan
 - Elevations and Floor Plans
 - Materials Plan
 - Street Scenes
 - Ecology Assessment
 - Ecological Mitigation & Management Plan
 - Topographical Survey

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- FRA and Drainage Strategy
- Tree Survey
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Transport Statement
- Road Safety Audit
- Noise Assessment
- Archaeology WSI & Report of findings
- Landscape Plan
- Detailed Planting Plan
- Photomontage visualisation images.

1.6 The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate how the proposal accords with the relevant policies of the development plan, together with national planning guidance. Section 2 of this statement describes the application site and its surrounding area, whilst Section 3 explores the planning history of the site. Section 4 provides a detailed description of the proposal with the planning policy framework for the site identified in Section 5. Section 6 identifies the main planning considerations with Section 7 providing a summary and conclusion.

2.0 The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site comprises a broadly rectangular-shaped field of scrubland with no current use, located at the southern end of South Side Road. There is a small area of existing hardstanding located towards the northern end of the site including sheds which are used for agricultural storage. The site extends to approximately 0.93 ha, is largely level, and contains no notable physical features.
- 2.2 It lies outside of but adjoins the Steeple Aston Conservation Area, which covers the majority of the core of the village. There are examples of more recent development at the edges of the village which are also located outside but adjacent to the Conservation Area, particularly along Grange Park at the north-western edge of the village, and Nizewell Head at the south-eastern edge.
- 2.3 Access to the site is currently provided via an agricultural field gate off South Side. South Side is an unclassified semi-rural single carriageway road which runs broadly on an east to west alignment adjacent to the northern site boundary. Immediately west of the site access, South Side is subject to a change in speed limit from 30mph to 60mph upon exiting the village.
- 2.4 The site is fairly well screened from South Side, bound by a hedgerow and trees that form the site's northern boundary. Part of this boundary is also enclosed by a low stone wall at its north eastern end, parts of which are in disrepair. The eastern and western site boundaries comprise post and wire fences in front of hedgerows and vegetation, with the rear site boundary formed of a post and wire fence behind an existing hedgerow.
- 2.5 The site is situated in between existing built form. To the east is a detached residential dwelling and to the west is a small MOT garage of breezeblock construction with a corrugated sheet metal roof on an area of hardstanding.
- 2.6 Steeple Aston has an irregular settlement pattern, relatively dispersed and grid-shaped, with development primarily extending along the main arterial routes through the village such as South Side and North Side, with a large area of green space in the

centre comprising fields and extended rear curtilages of residential properties. Cul-de-sacs of housing extend from these main routes at the village edges.

- 2.7 On the northern end of South Side, immediately north of the application site, are residential properties accessed along a private road. Additional residential development is located further east, along both sides of South Side, and north, along Water Lane. To the south, beyond the post and wire fence bounding the site, are agricultural fields. A public right of way cross these fields on a north east – south west diagonal axis south of the application site.
- 2.8 There is no single prevailing architectural style in the village, with buildings demonstrating examples of traditional stone built cottages, more modern red brick dwellings, and typical estate housing.
- 2.9 Steeple Aston is classified as a service village (Category A) in the adopted Local Plan 2031. Such settlements have more services and facilities than other villages in the District, and act as rural ‘service centres’ for the ‘satellite villages.’ Local facilities in the village include a public house, village shop, post office, primary school, village hall and a sports and recreation club and pitch.
- 2.10 Bus stops are available along South Side which offer direct services hourly to larger service centres such as Banbury town centre and Oxford city centre. The nearest bus stop to the application site is located approximately 160m to the east along South Side.
- 2.11 In light of the extent of local services and facilities in the village, and regular public transport links to larger settlements, the application site is considered to occupy a sustainable location for development.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 This section of the statement provides an overview of the relevant planning history to this application site.
- 3.2 As part of this application, a planning history search of Cherwell District Council's online planning records has been undertaken on the site. The application site has been subject to three recent planning applications for development. These are outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Planning History of the application site

Application Reference	Description of Development	Decision	Date of Decision
17/02414/F	Erection of 6 residential dwellings	Withdrawn	15.02.18
18/01482/F	Erection of 6 residential dwellings	Withdrawn	01.10.18
19/01177/F	Erection of 10 residential dwellings	Withdrawn	29.08.19

- 3.3 The first application which was submitted in 2017 proposed the erection of 6 residential dwellings on the site. Following conclusion of the statutory consultation period, the Council made it clear they could not support the planning application due to concern over highways matters and prematurity in relation to the emerging Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.4 The Parish Council also objected to the scheme on the basis of the proposed housing mix and highway concerns, in particular, the lack of suitable pedestrian access to / from the site and the rest of the village to the east.
- 3.5 The second application was a duplicate submission of the original application and was submitted to encourage further discussions with the Parish Council and the County Council Highways Team on matters of the development proposal.
- 3.6 The third application was submitted following discussions with the Parish Council and extended the proposed number of dwellings to 10 units, comprising a greater mix of units to respond to local requirements. Although the application received support in

principle from the District Council and the Parish Council, a number of design-related concerns resulted in the withdrawal of the application to work on a revised scheme, following formal pre-application advice.

3.7 Prior to submission of the third application, extensive pre-application discussions took place with the County Council Highways Team to discuss various options for a new pedestrian footway along South Side, linking the proposed development with the rest of the village to the east.

3.8 The current scheme has comprehensively responded to and reflected the advice received through amended plans and the preparation of additional technical documents to support the application.

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 This proposal seeks full planning permission for the erection of 10 dwellings comprising a mix of 2, 3 and 4-bedroom properties in detached and semi-detached form with access from South Side, including a new pedestrian footway, parking and garaging, landscaping and all enabling and ancillary works. The proposed properties will be 2 storeys in height, in keeping with the existing properties along South Side.
- 4.2 The proposed dwellings are of a high quality traditional design. The palette of materials for the proposal dwellings comprises Cotswold stone to all elevations with slate roofs. This reflects the prevailing local vernacular of the existing residential properties found along South Side and more broadly throughout the village.
- 4.3 Access into the site will be facilitated via a new vehicular access off South Side. This will be in the form of a 5.5m wide access road connected via a simple T junction, with sufficient visibility splays achievable in both directions.
- 4.4 Each property is proposed with at least three parking spaces, utilising a combination of garages and on-plot driveway parking. The proposed parking provision exceeds the County Council's adopted Parking Standards to ensure there is ample parking for visitors, as well as the residents of the proposed properties.
- 4.5 A new pedestrian footway is proposed along South Side which would enable safe pedestrian access from the development to the rest of the village to the east. The proposal comprises a new 1.2m footway along the highway verge, starting from the front of plot 1 which then becomes a 1.5m 'virtual footway' in buff colour with white line between the footway and rest of the highway. A new priority give-way built out is proposed along South Side which would give priority to vehicles leaving the village. Appropriate signage is proposed in both directions and at either end of the application site to inform drivers of the system.
- 4.6 Each property will be provided with generous private amenity space to the rear of the plots, with extensive landscaping proposed across the site including the rear and front of the properties to soften the edge of the development. To the rear of the site, a new landscape buffer is proposed between the proposed dwellings and the field beyond.

- 4.7 The only trees on site reside at the site frontage and eastern site boundary and are proposed for retention as part of the development proposals. With the exception of a small section of removal of the existing hedgerow to facilitate the site access and a very small group of semi-mature low quality trees at the site's north eastern boundary to allow for pedestrian access, no other vegetation will be affected by the proposals.

Benefits of the Scheme

- 4.8 This proposal will offer a number of identifiable benefits to the local area, which will include the following:
- Provision of new small properties and family-sized homes in a sustainable location providing additional housing opportunities;
 - Supporting construction jobs in the short term;
 - Creation of a high quality and well-designed housing scheme that complements the local vernacular and presents an attractive place to live;
 - Ecological gains through the creation of additional habitat opportunities within the site, including provision of a new landscape buffer to the rear;
 - Provision of a new pedestrian footway from the site to the rest of the village to the east.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 This section of the Statement considers the relevant planning policy framework for the site and surrounding area, having regard to the development proposal. It considers the statutory development plan, emerging local planning policy guidance and national planning policy as set out in the NPPF and NPPG.

5.2 Under the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, there is an obligation to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.3 The Government published the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in February 2019. The NPPF provides an overarching framework for the production of local policy documents and the consideration of development proposals. At the heart of the framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which applies to both plan-making and decision-taking.

5.4 For decision taking this means Local Planning Authorities should:

- Approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; or
- 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:
 - the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

- 5.5 At paragraph 8, the NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development which include economic, social and environmental considerations. It states that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation as they are mutually dependent.
- 5.6 Paragraph 11 requires that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It specifies that for decision taking, this means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the framework provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 5.7 Chapter 5 of the Framework concerns the delivery of a sufficient supply of homes with Paragraph 59 relaying the importance of the availability and variety of land coming forward in order to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.
- 5.8 Paragraph 68 of the framework requires local authorities to promote a good mix of sites, including the need to identify through the development plan and brownfield registers land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare. It also recognises the 'important contribution' small and medium-sized sites can make in assisting the LPA in meeting the housing requirement of an area.
- 5.9 The NPPF encourages sustainable development in rural areas with paragraph 78 stating that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.
- 5.10 Paragraph 109 states 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.

- 5.11 Chapter 12 puts emphasis on the design of new buildings and places. Paragraph 128 relays that design quality should be considered through the evolution and assessment of individual proposals.
- 5.12 Paragraph 130 states permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking in to account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectation in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

Development Plan

- 5.13 Within the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1), the following specific saved policies have been identified as being relevant to the proposal:
- PSD 1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) – States that The Council will always work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
 - BSC 4 (Housing Mix) – States new residential development will be expected to provide a mix of homes to meet current and expected future requirements in the interests of meeting housing need and creating socially mixed and inclusive communities.
 - BSC 11 (Local Standards of Provision – Outdoor Recreation) -
 - ESD 10 (Protection & Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment) – States that a net gain in biodiversity will be sought in considering development proposals.
 - ESD 13 (Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement) – Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.
 - ESD 15 (The Character of the Built and Historic Environment) – New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design.

- Policy Villages 1 (Village Categorisation) – States that only Category A (Service Centres) and Category B (Satellite Villages) will be considered suitable for minor development in addition to infilling and conversion. Steeple Aston in a Category ‘A’ village and as such is a suitable village for minor development.
- Policy Villages 2 (Distributing Growth across the Rural Areas) – Requires a total of 750 homes to be delivered at Category A villages. This will be in addition to the rural allowances for small site ‘windfalls’ and planning permissions for 10 or more dwellings as at 31 March 2014.

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1): Partial Review- Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need

- 5.14 The Council is in the process of partially reviewing the existing Local Plan Part 1 in light of Oxford’s unmet housing need.
- 5.15 The Partial Review of the Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for formal Examination in March 2018, with formal Hearing sessions conducted in February 2019. In response to the Inspector’s Post-Hearing’s Advice Note dated July 2019, the Council has prepared as series of proposed main modifications to the Review of the Local Plan. Consultation on the proposed main modifications runs until 20th December 2019.
- 5.16 Given its current status, the Plan is not currently a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.17 The Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan includes the village of Steeple Aston and passed referendum on 21st March 2019. The Plan has since been ‘made’ and is part of the development plan for the area. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development, however there are a number of policies which are relevant to the proposed application.
- 5.18 Policy PD1 refers to Category A villages which includes Steeple Aston. The policy states that development in the form of infilling, conversions and minor development proposals will be supported in principle within the settlement areas as defined on the corresponding policy maps.

- 5.19 The policy continues, outside of the defined settlement areas, proposals for residential development must have regard to the following criteria:
- a) Should be immediately adjacent to the settlement area;
 - b) Should not be best and most versatile agricultural land;
 - c) Should conserve and, where possible, enhance the landscape;
 - d) Should conserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and any other heritage assets;
 - e) should not lead to coalescence with any other settlement.
- 5.20 Policy PD5 states that the design of development proposals should be of a high standard, responding to the character of the settlement and incorporating appropriate mitigation measures in respect of landscape and biodiversity. The policy continues that minor development schemes will be required to provide new or improve existing footpaths and cycle ways.
- 5.21 Policy PH1 concerns the mix of proposals for residential development, stating that such schemes should have regard to evidence of housing need in the latest SHMA (2014), with a particular preference of more units with a smaller number of bedrooms.
- 5.22 Given the status of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is afforded full weight in the determination of this application.

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Cherwell Residential Design Guide (2018)

- 5.23 The Cherwell Residential Design Guide outlines a set of principles that should be considered in the creation of development schemes and includes guidance on responding to the site context, layouts and urban forms, car parking, design of streetscapes, landscaping and materials.

6.0 Planning Considerations

- 6.1 This section of the statement seeks to address the key planning issues considered to arise from the proposal. Such issues have been identified through a review of the planning policy framework that applies, together with an analysis of the local context of the site.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 An initial consideration is as to whether Steeple Aston represents a sustainable location for growth. Steeple Aston is classified as a Category A village, considered a rural service centre offering a good range of facilities and services. Given this, a modest level of housing growth is considered acceptable through minor development, infilling and the conversion of buildings.

- 6.3 Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation of the adopted Local Plan identifies the most sustainable villages (Steeple Aston included) where minor development within built up limits will, in principle, be supported, in addition to infilling and conversions. The policy suggests that ‘small-scale development’ typically, but not exclusively, comprises less than 10 dwellings.

- 6.4 Policy Villages 2: Distribution Growth across the Rural Areas of the adopted Local Plan supports new housing development at Category A settlements for proposals of 10 or more dwellings, subject to a list of criteria. The policy criteria include:

- Whether the land is PDL or of lesser environmental value;
- Significant impacts on heritage or wildlife assets;
- Whether development would enhance the built environment;
- Best and most versatile agricultural land;
- Significant landscape impacts;
- Satisfactory vehicular and pedestrian access / egress can be achieved;
- Location to local facilities and services;
- Necessary infrastructure provision;
- Deliverability of site allocations;
- Deliverability of the site within 5 years;

- Flood risk impact.

6.5 Policy PD1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan largely reflects the aims of Policy Villages 2 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 in looking to support sustainable forms of development on the edge of Category A villages and is the most recent policy against which development of the scale proposed will be assessed. Policy PD1 gives support for an approximate total of 20 new dwellings within or adjacent to Steeple Astron within the Plan period.

6.6 Similarly to Policy Villages 2, Policy PD1 has a list of criteria to which any proposal for development should have particular regard to, as follows:

- a) The site should be immediately adjacent to the settlement area;
- b) The site should not be the best and most versatile agricultural land;
- c) The development should conserve and, where possible, enhance the landscape;
- d) The development should conserve, and where possible, enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the conservation areas and the significance of other heritage assets; and
- e) The development should not give rise to coalescence with any other nearby settlement.

6.7 The application site clearly adjoins the existing settlement area, is not best and most versatile land, and development will not result in coalescence of any nearby settlement. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with criteria a), b) and e) of Policy PD1.

6.8 The majority of the existing trees and vegetation present on site, largely confined to the northern and eastern site boundaries, will be retained under the development proposals. In addition, new landscaping is proposed across the site to strengthen existing landscape buffers and create a new landscape buffer along the site's southern boundary, to help screen the proposed development upon entry to the village along South Side from the west and from the public right of way that crosses the fields to the south of the application site. This, in combination with landscape within the site itself, will conserve and enhance the existing landscape, as demonstrated in the accompanying landscape planting plans and photomontage images. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with criteria c) of Policy PD1.

- 6.9 The proposal has undergone a number of changes since the last submitted scheme in application 19/01177/F, reflecting the comments from the LPA to that scheme and formal pre-application advice in relation to a further amended scheme. These amendments including re-designing the proposed forms for the dwellings, refining the materials palette, re-aligning the proposed units and garages and looking more carefully at the detailed design features such as flush chimneys and reducing the extent of dormer windows. Although the finer details of the proposed changes are discussed below, it is considered that though these design changes the current proposals reflect the character and appearance of the area, with due consideration to conserving the significance of the conservation area. It is therefore considered that the proposed scheme accords with criteria d) of Policy PD1.
- 6.10 The proposed development accords with all criteria of Policy PD1 and as such fully complies with the Neighbourhood Plan policy. The principle of development is therefore considered acceptable.

Impact upon Character and Appearance of the Area

- 6.11 The planning policies of the Cherwell District Local Plan and NPPF require that development should, in its design, scale, form and appearance, respect and reflect the local built context and fit comfortably within its surroundings and local vicinity.
- 6.12 The settlement pattern of Steeple Aston is irregular, grid-shaped with development along the main routes through the village such as South Side and North Side / Fenway, and along the connecting link roads of Water Lane and Paines Hill. The centre of the village is retained as green space comprising fields, a local watercourse, and extended rear gardens of properties fronting onto the 'grid'. More recently, development in the form of cul-de-sacs have occurred at the edges of the village, notably at Grange Park and Nizewell Head.
- 6.13 The proposed development continues the pattern of linear development along South Side, completing the gap between the telephone exchange site to the west and the existing residential dwellings to the east. The internal access road which serves the proposed dwellings mimics the existing situation of the residential development to the east, adjacent

to Bradshaw Close. Accordingly, the development would be consistent with the existing settlement pattern of the village.

6.14 The proposed site lies adjacent to the Steeple Aston Conservation Area which covers the majority of the village but also includes part of South Side road. The scheme has been designed to reflect the predominant characteristics of the locality which include two storey dwellings on relatively generous plots. The most recent development at the edges of the villages are also located outside but adjacent to the Conservation Area, particularly the areas of Grange Park at the north-western edge of the village, and Nizewell Head at the south-eastern edge.

6.15 Policy BSC2 of the adopted Local Plan states that new housing should be developed at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare unless there are justifiable planning reasons for lower density development. The proposed development density at 10.8 dwellings per hectare is considered entirely appropriate due to the site's edge of village location, adjoining a conservation area, and is in keeping with the linear form of development along the southern edge of South Side.

6.16 This density maximises the development potential of the site whilst respecting the prevalent settlement pattern and site location. It is also reflective of the densities found in the immediate area and actually exceeds those densities. Existing developments found to the north of South Side, immediately north of the application site (4.4 dph), along Water Lane (7 dph), and along South Side to the immediate east (6.7 dph) all have densities lower than the proposed scheme. Given the existing density patterns of development in the area, the site's edge of village location, the prevailing settlement pattern, and the wide ranging mix of housing which accords with the latest SHMA evidence, it is considered that there are material and valid planning reasons to justify a lower density development on the application site.

6.17 The proposed units mimic common built forms found within the village, favouring simple rectilinear forms, with a few more complex types with elongated gabled ends and features as evident for the existing dwellings in the locale. These forms range from detached wide-fronted villas, such as Brunstone along South Side, attached units with different front elevation forms such as the scheme at Shepherds Hill, and detached units with protruding gabled features – such as the existing dwellings along Fenway.

- 6.18 The proposed properties have been designed to be traditional with pitched roofs, chimney stacks, simple facades and a number of detailed architectural features taking cues from the Cherwell District Residential Design Guide (2018). A careful specification of external materials will comprise Cotswold stone and slate roofs to reflect the predominant materials found along South Side. All materials have been specifically chosen to reflect the local vernacular and which respect the character of the area.
- 6.19 The majority of the vegetation on site will be retained and extensive new landscaping is proposed across the site to help assimilate the development into its surroundings, including along the northern and southern boundaries of the site, as well as across the site generally. A new 4m landscape buffer will form the southern boundary of the site and will help screen views of the development from the public right of way which crosses some of the fields to the south. New landscaping in the northern section of the site, along with reinforcement of the existing hedgerows, will also serve to screen views of the scheme upon entering the village along South Side from the west.
- 6.20 A combination of the proposed development forms and materials palette; building features such as flush chimney stacks and simple fenestrations; retained, reinforced and new proposed landscaping; and re-construction of the stone wall that bounds the northern site boundary, where damaged, will serve to provide a suitable gateway into the conservation area and village from the west, and limit any impact on the conservation area.
- 6.21 Overall, the scheme is considered to be of a high quality that will conserve and enhance the character of the area, including the conservation area. As such, the proposed development accords with criterion d) of Policy PD1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan.

Visual Impact

- 6.22 The proposed dwellings are set well within the site area, with at least 30m from South Side road and the proposed units. This ensures that the units not only follow the form of development on the southern edge of South Side, but also to reduce the visual impact of the units from South Side. Similarly, the proposed units have long rear gardens in excess of 20m (in some cases up to 25m), also reducing the visual impact of these properties from the south, in particular from vantage points along the PROW which crosses the fields beyond.

- 6.23 This notwithstanding, a comprehensive scheme of new planting is proposed across the site but more notably at the northern boundary, in terms of reinforcing and supplementing the existing vegetation boundary, and a new significant landscape buffer along the southern boundary. This landscaping regime will help screen the proposed dwellings from the most sensitive areas – considered to be from South Side as one enters the village from the west, and from the PROW. Some of the new specimens will be semi-mature at the point of planting to afford some level of screening immediately. The exact range, species and size of the proposed planting scheme is detailed in the accompanying Planting Plan.
- 6.24 A number of photomontages have been produced and are included with the submitted landscape information. These visuals demonstrate how the proposed scheme will appear from three different locations when constructed; from along South Side west of the site entrance; from South Side to the east looking back towards the site; and from the PROW.
- 6.25 These visuals demonstrate that, when constructed, the proposed dwellings will have a limited visual impact on the key areas outlined above, conserving the landscape setting of the edge of village location. It is therefore considered that the proposals accord with criterion c) of policy PD1.

Residential Amenity

- 6.26 The proposed overall form, scale, siting and orientation of the new dwellings has been carefully considered and positioned to avoid undue neighbour impact. All properties are oriented to front onto the new access road and face northwards, towards South Side, similarly to the row of dwellings located immediately east of the application site. This ensures that the windows serving habitable rooms do not overlook any private amenity space of any existing residential property, and the layout of the dwellings follows the linear part of development on South Side in this part of the village.
- 6.27 In respect of private amenity space, each dwelling has been provided with generous rear garden space with amenity space also to the front of the properties, beyond which is a landscaped area of land between the proposed dwellings and the northern site boundary.
- 6.28 The current boundary treatments between the application site and the neighbouring properties comprises hedgerows and some trees. This boundary vegetation is proposed for

retention as part of the development scheme and will be supplemented by new tree and shrub planting, creating a natural green boundary treatment which will afford some level of screening between the application site and neighbouring properties / land uses.

Noise

- 6.29 The site adjoins a working MOT garage, located immediately west of the application site. In previous correspondence with Cherwell District Council, officers have raised the potential issue of the noise associated with the working practices of the garage to negatively impact on the private residential amenity of future residents of the scheme, in particular in relation to plot 10 (closest plot to the garage).
- 6.30 A Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken to assess the noise levels associated with the garage, and to understand how this might affect future residents of the scheme. Noise measurements were undertaken at three locations, all of which are close to the boundary of the site with the adjacent MOT garage.
- 6.31 For the majority of the time the garage was in operation there was no notable noise. General noise from inside the workshop was recorded as very occasionally noticeable, typically from the use of power / compressed air tools, however the noise was scarce and sporadic. However, a compressor located towards the south eastern part of the garage was noted to be a significant noise source, when in use. Typically, this noise ran for approximately 80 seconds roughly one every half hour during working hours. At the start of the day, however, the compressor ran for a longer period of time (approximately 6 minutes), assumed required to fully-charge the compressed air tank for use throughout the day.
- 6.32 Based on the above, some noise mitigation is considered necessary to reduce the noise levels associated with working practices from the nearby MOT garage on potential residents of the proposed scheme. The mitigation is only needed in respect of the compressor noise, no mitigation is considered necessary for any other noise.
- 6.33 Although there will be no habitable room windows on the side elevation of plot 10 closest to the MOT garage, further mitigation is considered necessary in order provide sufficient noise control. As such, a 2.7m high acoustic screen is proposed to be provided along the

boundary between the two sites, extending to at least 2m beyond the line of the front wall of plot 10, and at least 8m beyond the line of the rear wall of plot 10.

- 6.34 With this mitigation in place, it is anticipated that noise levels associated with the MOT garage in operation, including the compressor, will not be significantly in excess of prevailing background noise levels. As such, the impact on the quality of the private amenity of future residents of the scheme is considered acceptable.

Drainage

- 6.35 In accordance with planning guidance, a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Statement has been submitted in support of the application. This document assesses the risk of flooding from all sources to the development and as a result of the development.
- 6.36 The risk of the development to flooding from all sources has been considered. The site lies within Flood Zone 1, the area considered least at risk to flood events, and as such is suitable for residential development.
- 6.37 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) include measures to manage runoff to mimic surface water flows prior to the development and taking into account climate change, such that any increase in runoff is mitigated and flood risk is not increased elsewhere.
- 6.38 Following tests, infiltration as a method of disposing surface water runoff generated from the proposed development is considered to be feasible. It is proposed that all surface water runoff from roofs and hardstanding areas including driveways and the access road is discharged via permeable block paving.
- 6.39 The system is designed to accommodate a 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change event (i.e. the additional capacity is added to accommodate a 40% increase in storm intensity due to climate change).
- 6.40 Foul flows will be discharged to an existing public sewer located beyond the north west of the site boundary, within South Side.
- 6.41 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy demonstrates that the site is at low risk of flooding and the proposed drainage design will replicate greenfield

conditions, taking account of climate change, such not to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in respect of drainage matters.

Ecology

- 6.42 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site has been undertaken to identify any potential ecological constraints and opportunities on the site.
- 6.43 The appraisal has assessed that all parts of the proposed application site are either negligible or low local value for ecology given that the habitats and features supported are very common and of low botanical and fauna diversity. In addition, the report confirms that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on statutory or non-statutory sites.
- 6.44 The report recommended further surveys in relation to a reptile presence / absence survey and a bat emergence survey of the existing shed. These surveys were conducted and confirmed the absence of bats in the shed / outbuilding and the absence of reptiles using the site. As such, it is highly unlikely that bats or reptiles are using the site and no further surveys are considered necessary. The report concludes that any potential adverse impacts from the proposed development upon specific protected species/habitats can be mitigated in line with relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy.
- 6.45 An Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan has also been prepared and details the proposed mitigation measures for loss of the existing habitats on site, including proposed ecological enhancements to boost the biodiversity value of the site. These measures include bird and bat boxes; insect (bee) boxes; enhanced species-rich hedgerows and planting; and fruit tree planting. A Management Plan is included at Table 2 of the report which details a sensitive management regime over a number of years for the proposed ecology enhancement measures to maintain the quality and value of these features.
- 6.46 Furthermore, the scheme aims to create wildlife corridors across the site in the form of wildflower-rich grassland, hedgerows, and native scrub buffer planting in accordance with Cherwell Local Plan Policy ESD11.

Trees

- 6.47 An Arboricultural report has been undertaken to identify any potential tree constraints at the site and protection measures during the construction phase.
- 6.48 The site layout and positioning of the access have incorporated the findings of the Arboricultural Report produced by Sylva Consultancy and as a result the trees of highest value have been retained. It is proposed to only remove a small number of trees located to the front of the site in order to create the access and at the north eastern corner to facilitate pedestrian access. These trees are category C and are of low quality with limited remaining life expectancy.

Highways, Access and Parking

- 6.49 Vehicular access for the development is proposed to be taken directly from South Side via a simple priority T junction. Sufficient visibility splays are achievable in both directions of the site access / egress. Refuse collections will take place within the site, with the access road designed to allow a refuse vehicle to enter the site, turn and exit in forward gear.
- 6.50 Each property is to be provided within its own dedicated onsite parking within its curtilage. The proposed level of parking exceeds the County Council's adopted parking standards with at least 3 spaces provided per dwelling, to provide ample space for visitors too. The parking is provided in the form of garages and driveway parking.
- 6.51 The cabling to enable electric vehicle charging will also be provided within the roads and private drives. This will allow potential future occupants to utilise the necessary infrastructure to charge electric vehicles.
- 6.52 A new pedestrian footway is proposed along South Side which would enable safe pedestrian access from the development to the rest of the village to the east. The proposal comprises a new 1.2m footway along the highway verge, starting from the front of plot 1 which then becomes a 1.5m 'virtual footway' in buff colour with white lines between the footway and the rest of the highway. A new priority give-way build out is proposed along South Side which would give priority to vehicles leaving the village. Appropriate signage is proposed in both directions and at either end of the application site to inform drivers of the system.

- 6.53 The applicant undertook extensive pre-application discussions with the County Council Highways Team prior to submission of the application in order to examine various options and alternatives for the footpath solution to overcome the objections to the previous 6-unit applications. Further to the submission of an Options Appraisal which presented the findings of further survey work requested by the Highways Authority, a detailed assessment of a series of possible options for addressing the identified concerns, along with an accompany Road Safety Audit, a preferred scheme of works has been derived which are reflected in the proposed footpath solution. Following submission of these details to the Highways Authority, it was confirmed that the principles were acceptable, and it is notable that the Highways Authority had no objection to the proposal as submitted in the previous application.
- 6.54 Following receipt of formal pre-application advice from the Council, a further Road Safety Audit was conducted specifically for the proposed footpath solution. The RSA, which is included in the appendices to the accompanying Transport Statement, recommended a number of minor design changes, the majority of which have been incorporated within the current proposals.
- 6.55 In addition, and at the request of the pre-application officer, a number of scenarios have been prepared and tracked using swept path analysis to demonstrate that the proposed footpath solution / highways interventions will provide a safe pedestrian route from the rest of the village to the east, whilst not making the current situation worse than existing in terms of vehicles passing. These scenarios including the tracking of a bus, a refuse vehicle, a large agricultural vehicle and a lorry, all of which are included within the appendices to the Transport Statement. These plans demonstrate that various-sized large vehicles can negotiate the proposed highways interventions safely, albeit not concurrently with a car travelling in the opposite direction. However, as shown on tracking drawing 8171225/6223, currently, a bus and a car cannot pass each other concurrently along South Side in the vicinity of the application site, therefore it is clear that the proposed highways interventions will not exacerbate the existing situation.
- 6.56 In respect of these matters, the parking and access arrangements are considered to be acceptable and consistent with relevant policy.

Other Matters

- 6.57 Policy BSC11 relates to outdoor recreation provision and requires developments of 10 dwellings or more to provide on-site play areas in the form of a LAP. The policy states *‘the amount, type and form of open space will be determined having regard to the nature and size of development proposed and the community needs generated by it. Provision should usually be made on site in accordance with the minimum standards of provision. Where this is not possible or appropriate, a financial contribution towards suitable new provision or enhancement of existing facilities off site will be sought, secured through a legal agreement.’*
- 6.58 Due to the location of the site right at the village edge and limited area of usable space for outdoor provision available, it is considered that it would not be appropriate to provide outdoor recreation provision on-site in this instance. However, the applicant acknowledges the needs generated by new development and remains committed to providing a suitable contribution towards off-site outdoor recreation elsewhere in the village in more appropriate locations. Such contributions would be secured and delivered through a Section 106 legal agreement.
- 6.59 The application site is located in an area of archaeological interest. As such, intrusive on-site investigation works have been carried out to determine whether there are any archaeological remains of significance within the site area. These investigations concluded with nothing of significance or particular interest found. It is therefore highly unlikely that unknown archaeological assets reside within the site area.

Planning Balance

- 6.60 As demonstrated above, the principle of development on the site is considered acceptable. The site is located in a highly sustainable location with an array of local services and facilities accessible on foot, and local planning policy supports sensitively designed housing developments at the edge of category A villages – subject to a set of specific criteria being met.
- 6.61 The scheme would provide a net gain of 10 dwellings comprising a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties with smaller properties in majority, in line with the preference from

Steeple Aston Parish Council and reflective of the Cherwell District SHMA mix. This is a significant material benefit of the scheme.

- 6.62 There are no highways, drainage or biodiversity constraints to the site, and the scheme promotes good design and preserves the residential amenity of the existing properties. Whilst not representing material benefits, this demonstrate an absence of harm and hence is afforded neutral weight in the planning balance.
- 6.63 A small number of trees and a small section of hedgerow is proposed for removal however, the majority of trees and hedgerows will be retained. Additional trees and shrubs / plants are proposed across the site which as a benefit will significantly exceed the loss of the trees for removal. As such, it is considered that this is positive weight in the planning balance.
- 6.64 The form, design and external materials of the proposed dwellings is considered to reflect the local vernacular, in particular the existing dwellings along South Side. This coupled with the level of new planting to help screen the development and repair of the existing stone wall along the norther boundary is considered to provide a suitable gateway to the village, resulting in an enhancement of the character of the area.
- 6.65 A new pedestrian footway is proposed from the application site to the rest of the village to the east, improving the current situation whereby pedestrians have to walk in the carriageway with little or no protection or mitigation measures in places. This combined footpath solution, along with the appropriate signage, road markings and build out features, will improve pedestrian safety in this part of the village. It is therefore a significant material benefit of the scheme.
- 6.66 Furthermore, the scheme would provide ecological enhancements within the site with a significant amount of new planting and landscaping across the site. This is a benefit of the scheme to be afforded moderate positive weight.
- 6.67 The associated construction jobs and local investment during its build out as well as longer term expenditure in the local economy will be of economic benefit to the local area. This should be afforded positive weight in the planning balance.

6.68 In light of the above, it is considered that the benefits of the scheme significantly and demonstrably outweigh any identified harms, and such planning permission should be granted without delay.

7.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application made by Rectory Homes Ltd for the erection of 10 residential units on land south of South Side, Steeple Aston.
- 7.2 The site is currently unused and comprises an infill area of scrubland and hardstanding located towards the south-western edge of the village, in between existing built form to the east and west of the application site. It is in an accessible location to local services and facilities within the village, and in proximity to nearby bus stops along South Side which provide regular services to large service centres such as Banbury and Oxford city.
- 7.3 The application site is located in a Category A settlement (service village) which is suitable for minor development, infilling and conversions. It adjoins the defined settlement boundary of the village where this scale of development has been identified as acceptable subject to specific criteria.
- 7.4 Accompanying the planning application are a number of specialist technical reports which serve to demonstrate that the proposal would not give rise to any significant adverse impacts which would outweigh the benefits of providing additional housing in a sustainable location. More specifically, matters of ecology, drainage, highways and arboriculture have been assessed and considered not to form a constraint to the future development of the site. The benefits of the proposed development are therefore considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh any adverse impacts.
- 7.5 In relation to the established dimensions of sustainable development, the proposal would represent an economic benefit through the construction phase of the development and increase in local expenditure through the resultant population increase. As far as the social aspect is concerned, it would result in the delivery of a range of new homes in a sustainable location and in a relatively quick timeframe. The new pedestrian footway would also permit safe walking infrastructure from the application site and this part of the village to the village core to the east.
- 7.6 In terms of environmental matters, the scheme would provide ecological gains on the site through the retention of all good quality trees and hedgerows where possible, a

comprehensive landscaping scheme which covers extensive new planting across the site, and implementation of the measures included within the ecology report.

7.7 The proposed development accords with the settlement pattern of Steeple Aston and comprises a logical infill site that adjoins the existing settlement boundary, in accordance with local planning policy, and therefore is considered acceptable in principle. The design, form and chosen materials palette of the proposed dwellings reflects the local vernacular, resulting in a scheme that is in keeping with the character of the area and that can be assimilated into the existing settlement.

7.8 In light of the above factors, it is considered that the proposal accords with the provisions of the NPPF in that it represents a sustainable form of development with no major adverse impacts. Consequently, the planning balance weighs in favour of the application which should therefore be approved by the Local Planning Authority without delay.