

Planning Application Comments

**Planning Application Number:** 21/09119/OUT

**Drawing Number(s):** PO2, PO3, Design & Access Statements Part 1 & 2

**Site Name:** Q8 Fuelcare, Tramway Road, Banbury, OX16 5TD

**Planning Officer:** Linda Griffiths

**Date of Comments:** 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**Comments by:** Natalie Harvey

This Planning Application proposes a total of 143 units; the total number of affordable units, calculated at 30%, is therefore 43. This provision is confirmed by the applicant in the Housing Strategy section in their Design & Access Statement Part 2.

The plans for the site are for a wholly flatted development, in four main blocks. Overall, we are supportive of the application because it will help meet the need for more affordable housing, but because the type of flats that are suitable for affordable housing differ from market housing, there are some changes that we would like to be considered. We also need further details for Heads of Terms for the S106, although we appreciate that this is an outline application at this stage.

For management reasons, we would look to taking an entire block for the affordable housing contribution. The block which has the closest number of units for the affordable housing allocation is Block D, with 44 flats.

As mixed tenure blocks (i.e. some rented flats with others as shared ownership) are undesired by Registered Providers because it complicates the management and units are more difficult to sell, we propose that the block is comprised of wholly rented units. This is a deviation from our policy position of the normal 70:30 split of rented to shared ownership but we feel this is arrangement would be justified in this situation.

Another element that we wish to be considered is the number of bedrooms. It is noted that all the blocks comprise of a mix of studio, 1-bed, 2-bed and 3-bed apartments. Ordinarily, 1-bed 2-person flats or maisonettes are our preferred choice; any more bedrooms than this in a flat make it difficult to rent, because dwellings with 2 bedrooms or more generally house families with children. We would therefore like the studio and 3-bed flats to be converted to (preferably) 1-bed 2-person flats, although we would accept a limited number of 2-bed 4-person flats that were no higher than the first floor. We are pleased to note the table on Page 72 of the D&A statement shows that all the flat sizes comply with the DCLG Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard, which is a requirement for rented affordable units.

## **Housing Strategy & Development Team Housing Service**

Our preference would be for social rent; however, maintenance and service charges are likely to be cost prohibitive for many of our households because of factors such as a lift and communal gardens, and this will affect the affordability. As we seek to ensure that the total occupation costs to affordable housing occupiers remain affordable in the long term, on this basis, affordable rent would be acceptable, as this includes the service charge. This is to be capped at LHA rates or 80% of market rent, whichever is the lower.

We normally expect at least 50% of rented dwellings to meet Approved Document Part M4(2)(2) but in this instance it would be acceptable for just the ground and first floor units being compliant, even if this meant it was below the 50% of units overall. This is because if the lift was out of action, using the stairs would be more manageable for those less mobile if they were on the lower floors.

We also expect that 1-bedroom dwellings will have a minimum of 1 parking space per unit, and dwellings with 2 or more bedrooms would have a minimum of 2 parking spaces per unit. It is noted that on this development car parking provision is reduced, with a maximum of 98 spaces proposed, due to the proximity to public transport links and town centre amenities. We would accept 1 allocated parking space per unit; any variation to this must be discussed with Strategic Housing, as it would mean that some of flats would need to be advertised as not having a parking space and this may make them harder to let, resulting in unwelcome voids.

We are open to further negotiation with the developer if they have alternative suggestions to our proposals above.

The Registered Provider taking on the affordable housing units would need to be agreed with the Council.