

3. Existing Land Use and Planning Policy

- 3.1 The Site comprises one single parcel of land of approximately 59.3 hectares, with a proposed area for development within extending to approximately 25 hectares.
- 3.2 The Site forms part of the land allocated for development by Policy PR9 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan – Oxford’s Unmet Housing Needs.

Existing Land Use

- 3.3 A full description of the Site, the wider allocation and the surrounding area can be found in the Planning Statement accompanying the application, but in summary:
- 3.4 The Site is predominantly arable farmland lying to the west and north of Yarnton. It includes the Yarnton Medical Practice and associated car park. The area within the Site which is proposed for housing development is outside the designated Green Belt land.
- 3.5 The Site is within an area of historic agricultural land including historic field systems. There are existing hedgerows within the Site and trees along field boundaries.
- 3.6 Various public footpaths and a bridleway (Dolton Lane) fall within the Site (see Movement Parameter Plan for more detail).

Planning Policy

- 3.7 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning policy operates at national, regional and local levels.
- 3.8 **At a national level**, Central Government adopted a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (‘the NPPF’) in July 2021.
- 3.9 The NPPF sets out the Government’s economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. It summarises, in a single document,

all previous national planning policy advice contained within Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') and Planning Policy Statements ('PPS'). Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally to meet local aspirations.

3.10 Sections of NPPF policy which are particularly relevant to assessment of the Development Proposal are:

- Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Promoting sustainable transport
- Making effective use of land
- Achieving well-designed places
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

3.11 In March 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government ('DCLG') launched the web-based PPG resource. This aims to provide guidance which is useable in an up-to-date and accessible manner. With regards to decision taking, the PPG is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.12 The Planning White Paper, which was published on 6 August 2020 for public consultation, sets out a package of proposals for "reform of the planning system in England to streamline and modernise the planning process, improve outcomes on design and sustainability, reform developer contributions and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed". A key driver of this proposed reform is to ensure that the planning system enables an increase in the supply of land available for new homes where it is needed to address affordability pressures, supports economic growth and the renewal of towns and cities, and fosters a more competitive housing market.

- 3.13 **At a sub-regional level**, Cherwell District Council ('CDC') has undertaken to work with all other Oxfordshire authorities as part of the Duty to Cooperate to address the need for housing across the Housing Market Area ('HMA'). The Cherwell Local Plan 2015 (see below) made clear that if joint work revealed that CDC, and other neighbouring authorities, needed to meet additional need for Oxford, then this would trigger a 'Partial Review' of the Local Plan 2015 (also discussed below).
- 3.14 In March 2014, prior to the publication of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment ('the SHMA 2014'), the Oxfordshire Councils agreed a process, through a Statement of Cooperation, to address the SHMA's conclusions on housing need, anticipating that there would be unmet need arising from Oxford. Prior to that date, the Councils had been working together as the Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership. This became the Oxfordshire Growth Board ('OGB') – a joint committee of six Oxfordshire Councils alongside other bodies including Oxford University, the Environment Agency, Network Rail, and the Highways Agency. It facilitates and enables joint working on economic development, strategic planning and growth by overseeing the delivery of projects that the Councils are seeking to deliver collaboratively.
- 3.15 In November 2014, the OGB agreed that there was limited capacity in Oxford to accommodate the homes required and the resulting shortfall would have to be provided for in neighbouring districts. A joint work programme was agreed, through the OGB, for quantifying the level of unmet housing need and how it should be apportioned between the neighbouring authorities.
- 3.16 Oxford City's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment December 2014 ('the SHLAA') sets out the potential sources of supply in Oxford. After testing, the OGB agreed, in November 2015, that Oxford's overall need was 28,000 homes and that 13,000 could be provided within the confines of Oxford itself. That left an unmet housing need for Oxford of 15,000 homes.
- 3.17 The OGB then went on to consider how that figure of 15,000 should be apportioned. This was informed by, amongst other things, a review of the urban capacity of Oxford, a Green Belt Study to assess the performance

of the Oxford Green Belt against Green Belt purposes, and sustainability testing of spatial options.

3.18 This led to a 'Memorandum of Co-operation between the local authorities in the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area', jointly signed in November 2016. The working assumption in the Memorandum is that the agreed level of unmet need between 2011 and 2031 is 15,000 homes. The apportionment agreed by the five signatories is as follows:

	Proportion of unmet need apportioned
Cherwell DC	4,400
Oxford City Council	550
South Oxfordshire DC	4,950
Vale of White Horse DC	2,200
West Oxfordshire DC	2,750
Total	14,850

3.19 **At a local level**, the statutory development plan for the site comprises:

- **The 'Saved' policies of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996, September 2007**

The saved policies are intended to ensure continuity in the planned system and a stable planning framework locally, and in particular, a continual supply of land for development¹

- **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1), adopted July 2015**

Sets out the vision and strategy for the development of the District through to 2031. It explains why, where and how Cherwell will grow over the coming years and contains policies to help deliver the Plan's vision. As mentioned above, CDC Council subsequently committed to working with all other Oxfordshire local authorities to address the need for housing across the Oxfordshire SHMA area.

¹ See letter from the then Government Office of the South East accompanying Secretary of State's Direction of 25th September 2007

- **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need, adopted September 2020;**

Submitted for formal examination in March 2018 and adopted September 2020, this provides a vision and strategy to help meet Oxford's unmet housing need within Cherwell in a way that achieves sustainable development and includes policies for six strategic development sites. One of these is 'Land West of Yarnton', whose development is guided by Policy PR9 and its associated Policies Map.

In addition, there are various cross-cutting policies:

Policy PR1: Achieving Sustainable Development for Oxford's Needs;

Policy PR2: Housing Mix, Tenure and Size: ensuring that development delivers the types of homes (in particular affordable homes) required to support Oxford's unmet need; and is supported by the necessary infrastructure;

Policy PR3: The Oxford Green Belt: clarifies for the six strategic sites the extent of Green Belt to be removed (for Site PR9 this is the removal of 17.7 hectares as shown on the relevant policy map). The policy also emphasises the need for development proposals to contribute to improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of land remaining in the Green Belt;

Policy PR4a: Sustainable Transport: requires the strategic sites to provide proportionate financial contributions related to the development in order to secure necessary improvements to, and mitigations for, the highway network and to deliver necessary improvements to infrastructure and public transport.

Policy PR5: Green Infrastructure: requires the strategic sites to protect and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate green assets and the water environment into the design approach, with provision expected to be made on site.

Policy PR9: Land West of Yarnton

3.20 Within the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need, Policy PR9 allocates a single parcel of land, within which 'the Site' sits, for a village extension, to include housing, amongst other development. The policy sets out that development proposals will be permitted at the Site if they meet the list of key delivery requirements.

3.21 The key delivery requirements of Policy PR9 include:

- Construction of 540 dwellings on approximately 25 hectares of land (the residential area as shown on the PR9 policy map).
- Provision of 50% of the homes as affordable housing
- Provision of 1.8 hectares of land for use by the existing William Fletcher Primary School to enable potential school expansion within the existing school site and the replacement of playing pitches and amenity space.
- The provision of facilities for formal sports, play areas and allotments to adopted standards within the developable area (unless shared or part shared use with William Fletcher Primary School is agreed with the Education Authority).
- The provision of public open green space as informal parkland on 24.8 hectares of land to the west of the residential area and a new Local Nature Reserve accessible to William Fletcher Primary School.
- Creation of an area of a community woodland within 7.8 hectares of land to the north-west of the developable area and to the east of Dolton Lane.
- Retention of 39.2 hectares of land in agricultural use in the location shown.

3.22 Detailed consideration of the outline scheme proposals in accordance with the planning policy are set out in the Planning Statement.

Scoping Response

- 3.23 The Screening Opinion received on 7 August 2020 confirmed that the cumulative impact of the nearby PR8 allocation, for 1,950 dwellings, coupled with development at PR9 would mean the proposals would be considered an EIA development.
- 3.24 As such, due consideration has been given to how development at PR9 interacts with nearby development at PR8.