

Planning Application Comments

Planning Application Number: 22/03063/F

Site Name: Land East of Larsen Road, Heyford Park

Planning Officer: Katherine Daniels

Date of Comments: 02/02/2023

Comments by: Ewan Stewart

Proposal supported subject to revisions to the proposed affordable housing mix

Proposal and policy requirements

Outline planning permission is sought for up to 126 dwellings with access from Camp Road, provision of public open space and associated infrastructure. Policy Villages 5: Former RAF Upper Heyford of CDC Local Plan requires 30% affordable housing, which on this scheme equates to 38 dwellings. The required tenure split is 70% rented and 30% Low-Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) as required by Policy BSC 3 of the Local Plan.

Paragraph 65 of the NPPF states that where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership. Government policy also requires 25% of the affordable housing element of a scheme to be provided as First Homes.

CDC's Interim Policy Guidance note on First Homes, available on CDC website, states that from 23 December 2021 the preferred tenure mix for affordable housing under Policy BSC 3 will be:

- a) 25% First Homes
- b) 70% Social/Affordable Rented housing
- c) 5% Intermediate housing

Please note that this may vary slightly depending on the numbers generated by the 10% LCHO and 25% First Homes requirements.

A policy compliant affordable housing mix on this proposal would be:

- 25 rented dwellings, social rented unless demonstrated otherwise
- 13 LCHO dwellings (rounded up from 12.6), of which 10 would be First Homes and 3 shared ownership

The Planning Statement for this proposal sets out the proposed housing mix as:

Affordable rent (20)

10 x 1-bed maisonettes
4 x 2-bed houses
2 x 2-bed bungalows
3 x 3-bed houses
1 x 4-bed house

Shared ownership (9)

3 x 2-bed houses
6 x 3-bed houses

First Homes (9)

9 x 2-bed houses

The following are Strategic Housing's comments on this proposal:

Numbers and tenure split

As set out above, the 25% First Homes is taken as a percentage of the affordable element, not the total number, therefore the proposed numbers need to be adjusted, as indicated above, in order to comply with local and national policies.

A revised suggested affordable mix is set out in the conclusion, taking all relevant factors into account.

We expect the rented dwellings to be delivered as social rented as this is the most affordable tenure for the majority of the applicants on the register. If this is not considered viable, we ask that the applicant submits evidence to demonstrate the rationale for the proposed tenure. If affordable rent is considered more viable, we expect that this will be capped at LHA rates and that this is secured in the S106 agreement.

Size and type

Figures from CDC's housing register along with waiting times for certain property types, indicate that higher proportions of 1-bed and 4+-bed dwellings are required. The Housing Allocations team have advised that due to the lack of supply of larger family dwellings, applicants are waiting for several months for properties to become available. To rectify this they have advised that the affordable mix on new schemes needs to contain 10-15% 4+ bed properties.

Waiting times are lower for 1-bed dwellings, however as a high proportion of the register is for 1-bed need, the Allocations team have advised that the affordable mix on new schemes needs to contain 35-40% 1-bed properties. The preferred property types for 1-beds are maisonettes, houses and/or bungalows.

We welcome the inclusion of bungalows in the rented mix, this will help meet identified needs, provided that these are fitted with Level Access Showers from the outset (not baths) and level thresholds. Further details regarding the need for accessible/adapted dwellings are in a separate section below.

Housing Strategy & Development Team Housing Service

We expect the rented dwellings to maximise person occupancy and to meet NDSS requirements for each size. So, as a minimum, 1-beds need to be 2-person, 2-beds need to be 4-person, 3-beds need to be 5-person and 4-beds need to be ideally 7 or 8-person and compliant with NDSS dimensions for these sizes.

Accessible & adaptable properties

The Developer Contributions SPD requires that 50% of the rented dwellings meet M4(2) requirements and 1% meet M4(3) requirements.

There is 1 household currently on CDC's housing register who specifically requires a 4-bed wheelchair adapted property in the Bicester area and they are having to wait indefinitely to be adequately housed due to the lack of supply. I have therefore included this in the suggested revised mix below and welcome discussions with the applicant regarding meeting this need. This would involve further discussions with the adaptations team to ensure that the requirements are up-to-date and also that the property is capable of being re-let in the future.

We would request that all ground level properties have level thresholds and a Level Access Shower installed from the outset as they are likely to be allocated to people with limited mobility.

Layout and appearance

The Developer Contributions SPD requires the affordable units to be indistinguishable from the market units in terms of the materials used, parking arrangements and anything which may cause the affordable dwellings to stand out. It is expected that where appropriate, affordable housing should not be clustered in any more than 10 units of one tenure and 15 units of multiple affordable tenures with no contiguous boundary of the clusters

Parking requirements

Sufficient allocated parking should be provided for each property type and this should reflect the provision made for market housing. Secure cycle storage should be provided in line with the requirements of registered providers.

Energy Efficiency/Climate Change

All affordable housing units will need to deliver high standards/rates of energy efficiency to ensure household fuel (and water) bills are also affordable for the tenants. This supports the delivery of sustainable development and contributes to the government objective to reach Net Zero carbon. Registered Providers (RPs) are currently developing their specifications for energy efficient affordable housing units and the applicant is encouraged to have early discussions with RPs to ensure these specifications can be accommodated and are accounted for in any build tendering process.

Registered Provider

The Council expects to be notified at the earliest opportunity of the RP who will be purchasing the affordable units.

Conclusion

Based on the above details, I would suggest the following revised affordable housing mix:

Social rent (25)

- 12 x 1b2p maisonettes
- 1 x 4b house/bungalow M4 Category 3: Wheelchair user dwelling
- 5 x 2b4p houses
- 4 x 3b5p houses
- 3 x 4b7/8p houses

First Homes (10)

- 10 x 2b4p houses

Shared ownership (3)

- 2 x 2b4p houses
- 1 x 3b5p house

CDC Strategy & Development team welcome discussions with the applicant regarding the above details.