

Planning Application Comments

**Planning Application Number:** 24/00245/OUT

**Site Name:** South Lodge, Fringford Road, Caversfield, Bicester, OX27 8TH

**Planning Officer:** Andrew Thompson

**Date of Comments:** 30/04/2024

**Comments by:** Ewan Stewart

**Support in principle subject to revised affordable mix**

**Proposal and policy requirements**

This outline planning application is for the development of up to 99 homes, with all matters reserved except for means of access which would be from Fringford Road (a new access). All the existing buildings would be demolished which includes a single dwelling and associated annex.

The site is located on the edge of the rural settlement of Caversfield which is a Category C Village, therefore at least 35% affordable housing is required in accordance with CDC Local Plan Policy BSC 3: Affordable Housing.

National policy requires that 10% of the overall scheme is provided as Low-Cost Home Ownership, and that 25% of the affordable element is provided as First Homes.

The tenure split required by BSC 3 is 70% rented and 30% Low-Cost Home Ownership. On this scheme this equates to 35 dwellings (rounded up) with 25 as rented (rounded up to reflect the high level of identified need) and 10 as Low-Cost Home Ownership. This complies with both local and national policy.

The housing mix proposed in the Planning & Affordable Housing Statement submitted with this application is:

<b>Type</b>	<b>1- bedroom</b>	<b>2- bedrooms</b>	<b>3- bedrooms</b>	<b>4+ bedrooms</b>
Social/Affordable Rented	35-40%	25-30%	20-25%	10-15%
Affordable Home Ownership	20-25%	40-45%	25-30%	5-10%
Market Housing	5-10%	35-40%	35-40%	15-20%

**Table 10: Mix of housing by size and type**

## Housing Strategy & Development Team Housing Service

The following are Strategic Housing comments on aspects of the proposal relating to meeting Cherwell's housing need:

### **Meeting Cherwell's housing need**

Part 1 of the Design & Access Statement mentions Caversfield's proximity to Oxford, "making it an ideal location to absorb part of this housing demand through continued growth and development".

It is important to clarify that Cherwell District Council does not view this site as meeting Oxford's unmet affordable housing need. There are other sites which have been identified for this purpose.

The rented affordable dwellings on this development will be allocated to applicants on Cherwell's housing register and First Homes sold to applicants with connections to Cherwell in the first instance in line with the national guidance.

### **Numbers & tenure split**

The required number of affordable properties is 35, rounded up from 34.45 as policy states that **at least** 35% is required as affordable housing.

The tenure mix, based on the above policy requirements, would be:

- 25no social rented dwellings
- 9no First Homes
- 1no shared ownership dwelling

This would also comply with the national policy requirement for 10% of the total number of dwellings to be Low-Cost Home Ownership.

The provision of 1no shared ownership dwelling is subject to discussion as it may not be practicable for a Registered Provider to purchase such a small number. CDC's policies regarding affordable tenures have sufficient flexibility that we can be open to discussions around changing the tenure on a small number of dwellings and to explore options.

In terms of affordability, social rent is the most affordable rented tenure for households on CDC's register. Homes England have recently acknowledged that social rent is the preferred tenure for rented affordable provision and grant is prioritised on this basis. If affordable rent is delivered, we expect this to be capped at LHA rates and for this to be secured in the S106 agreement.

### **Size and type**

The proposed sizes are based on data from the HENA, however we consider CDC housing register to be a more reliable indication of current need as needs and priorities have changed since the HENA was produced. We view housing register data as the most up-to-date, reliable and robust source of data as a basis for any indicative mix. The register shows the following trends for meeting current need:

## Housing Strategy & Development Team Housing Service

- The supply of 1-bed units is largely meeting demand for those who require 1-bedroom properties and who have significant or urgent housing needs.
- We now require 20-25% of the affordable mix to be 1-beds, in the form of maisonettes, houses and/or bungalows. We are not generally supportive of flats.
- 2-bed provision is required in the form of houses. Flats and maisonettes of this size are not in high demand as they are usually allocated to households with children.
- The most pressing needs are for 3 and 4-bed properties, and a small number of 5 or 6-beds where possible. In the last few years, the need for 4-beds has increased, with waiting times of around 3-4 years for those with significant housing needs to secure a 4-bedroom home through our housing register.
- 10-15% of new-build dwellings are required as 4-beds to address this and approximately 35%-40% as 3-bed.

To summarise, the following is a guide to the required mix:

- 1-bed 20-25%
- 2-bed 25-30%
- 3-bed 35-40%
- 4+bed 10-15%

We therefore require the proposed percentages to be adjusted accordingly.

The Planning & Affordable Housing Statement mentions at para 3.8 that the Parish Council have identified a need for larger, family sized affordable housing. We welcome the confirmation that this scheme “would certainly be capable of contributing to that”.

The housing register shows 4no households as having a verified village connection to Caversfield, requiring 1,2 and 4-bed dwellings. There are likely to be more households with verified connections who are not yet on the register and as this is a rural location, allocation of the rented dwellings will prioritise such households in accordance with CDC Allocations Scheme.

### **Accessible & adaptable properties**

The Developer Contributions SPD requires 50% of the rented dwellings to meet M4(2) requirements and 1% to meet M4(3) requirements. It would contribute significantly to meeting identified pressing needs if one dwelling (ideally a large bungalow) is delivered to full wheelchair standard. Housing Services (ie Strategy, Allocations, Standards) teams welcome discussions with the applicant regarding the specifications for this dwelling.

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. This is agreed on a scheme-by-scheme basis as larger clusters work on some schemes better than others.

We welcome confirmation in the Planning & Affordable Housing Statement at para 6.7 that the affordable units will be integrated throughout the site and that the affordable homes should be of the same high-quality design as the open market properties, so that the dwellings are tenure blind.

The affordable dwelling sizes must comply with NDSS dimensions. We require sizes which will maximise occupancy ie 1-bed 2-person, 2-bed 4-person, 3-bed 5 person, ideally 4-bed 7 or 8-person and request that future plans show the dimensions for each property size to demonstrate that they meet NDSS requirements.

### **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.