

2 February 2024



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Dear Sir or Madam,

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE
LAND ADJ. ISLIP MOTORS, BLETCHINGDON ROAD, ISLIP OX5 2TQ**

On behalf of our client, NCM Real Returns GP Limited, please find enclosed an application for permission in principle for a residential-led mixed use development at Land Adjacent to Islip Motors, Bletchington Road, Islip (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The proposed development comprises the erection of 9 no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and 190 sqm of commercial floorspace (Use Class E).

In addition to this covering letter this application is supported by the following documents:

- Completed Application Form;
- Site Location Plan;
- Illustrative Site Plan; and
- Illustrative Design Document

For the avoidance of doubt, the Location Plan is submitted for approval whereas the Illustrative Site Plan and Design Document is submitted for illustrative purposes only to demonstrate how 9 no. dwellings and the commercial space *could* be delivered on the site. It is therefore not for approval.

The site area is 0.5 hectares. The application fee of £2,025 (£402 per 0.1 hectares or part thereof) will be paid separately upon request.

Permission in Principle

The permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first ('permission in principle') stage establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.

The Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) dictates that a decision on whether to grant permission in principle shall be made in accordance with the relevant policies

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in the Local Plan, unless there are material considerations, such as those in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2023) and national guidance, which indicate otherwise.

In considering an application for permission in principle, the issues that may be considered are limited to location, land use and amount of development. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage.

The NPPF demonstrates the Government's support for the permission in principle as a route to identify sites that are suitable for residential development at paragraph 38:

"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible."

The Site

The site comprises a 0.5 hectare parcel of brownfield land situated to the east of Bletchingdon Road and north of Islip Motors. The site is north of Islip Village, approximately 3km east from the centre of Oxford. Access to the site is also via Bletchingdon Road.

The site forms the south-western portion of a wider 13 hectare plot of brownfield land which was most recently in use as an oil distribution depot. The depot was granted a lawful development certificate for these operations in 2013 (ref: 13/00311/CLUE). The entire site falls within the Applicant's ownership.

The northern and western edges are bounded by the wider 13 ha plot of land. Islip Motors is located immediately south of the site and comprises an independent automotive garage / workshop (Use Class B2). Bletchingdon Road runs along the eastern boundary of the edge and leads to the A34, providing good connections to neighbouring areas. Islip Station and the London Marylebone–Oxford line runs to the south of the site.

Due to its proximity to Oxford and Islip Station, the site benefits from a range of amenities including commercial, retail, recreational, institutional and transportation land uses. The train station provides a route into Oxford Parkway and directly to London Marylebone. Additionally, the site has a bus route that provides a route between Bicester and Oxford that takes approximately every hour.

The site lies within the Oxford Green Belt. Although not within the Islip Conservation Area, the site is near to the historic core of Islip Village. The conservation area is characterised by a series of areas with different qualities, developed around the church of St. Nicholas with the majority of the houses dating from the 17th and 18th Centuries. There are numerous listed buildings and features within Islip Village. The closest to the site is the Islip (Oxfordshire) War Memorial, which is Grade II listed and located approximately 300m south from the site.

According to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, the site falls within flood zone 1, meaning it has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea, and has a 'very low' risk of flooding from surface

water, with the exception of some small pockets to the south of the site where the risk is categorised as 'low'.

Planning History

A desktop search of Cherwell District Council's online planning register has identified the following planning history for the site and surrounding area, which is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Relevant Planning History

LPA Reference	Description of Development	Decision / Date
13/00311/CLUE	Certificate of Lawful Use Existing - Oil storage depot	Permitted 21/05/2013
12/00776/F	Change of use of former oil storage, distribution and pipeline facility to a groundwork contractors yard for the storage of plant, machinery, equipment and materials and overnight parking of vehicles	Refused 12/10/2012
07/00286/HS	Claim for Deemed Consent - The receipt (by pipeline, road and rail), bulk storage and delivery (by pipeline, road and rail) of refined hydrocarbon liquids including kerosenes, gasolines and gas oils	Deemed Consent 12/02/2007

Proposed Development

This application seeks permission in principle for a minor housing-led development, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended).

As noted above, the scope of this first stage of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. All other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage.

Planning practice guidance ('PPG') is clear that where permission in principle is granted, local planning authorities must provide an indication of the amount of development the site has permission in principle for. It goes on to states that: *'[t]he amount of residential development must be expressed as a range, indicating the minimum and maximum net number of dwellings (i.e. taking into account any existing dwellings on the site) which are, in principle, permitted. Where non-residential development is granted permission in principle, local planning authorities are required to provide a description of the type of development (eg by indicating the use classes of the buildings or land) and the scale of development permitted'* (PPG Paragraph: 052 Reference ID: 58-052-20180615).

The guidance specifies that *"Non-residential development may also be given permission in principle providing housing occupies the majority of the floorspace of the overall scheme. Non-housing development should be compatible with the proposed residential development, and may include, for*

example, a small proportion of retail, office space or community uses.” (PPG Paragraph: 049 Reference ID: 58-049-20180615)

This application seeks permission in principle for up to 9 no. dwellinghouses (Use Class C3) and 190 sqm of commercial floorspace (Use Class E), as indicated on the accompanying Illustrative Layout Plan which has been provided in support of the application. The non-residential use comprises a relatively small provision of floorspace (190 sqm) commensurate to the total proposed residential development on site and therefore the scheme is compliant with the above provisions of the PPG.

The proposed Illustrative Layout Plan identifies the 9 new homes arranged around a central communal green (anticipated to comprise over 600 sqm of usable landscaped amenity space), in addition to new commercial floorspace proposed with associated parking.

The proposal utilises the existing access to the site from Bletchington Road, providing separate entrances for the residential and commercial uses. The houses are fronted by shared green space and planting and a generous footpath wraps around the central open space, continuing down towards the existing footpath at the south, connecting to Islip railway station (subject to agreement with Network Rail).

The rows of terraced houses have generous, private amenity space, with predominantly south-facing gardens. Overlooking a shared green space, there is an outdoor play area which benefits from passive surveillance for increased safety.

The indicative housing mix is provided below.

Unit Size	Number	%
2-Bedroom 4-Person	5	56%
3-Bedroom 5-Person	3	33%
4-Bedroom 6-Person	1	11%
Total	9	100%

A total of 12 residential parking spaces are indicated, integrated into the green spaces to reduce the visual dominance of parked cars on the surroundings. Bin storage would be provided for each dwelling.

A total of 9 car parking spaces are also envisaged for the commercial floorspace.

Planning Considerations

The only matters for consideration are the location, land use and amount of development.

Location

Policy Villages 3 (Rural Exception Sites) of the adopted Local Plan states that the Council will support the identification of suitable opportunities for small scale affordable housing schemes within or immediately adjacent to villages to meet specific, identified local housing needs that cannot be met through the development of sites allocated for housing development.

The policy identifies that (market) housing will only be considered on rural exception sites in the following circumstances:

1. The number of market homes should not exceed 25% of the total number of homes proposed;
2. The market housing must be shown to be required to secure the viability of the proposal and development costs must be justified;
3. No alternative, suitable site is available to provide a rural exception site and a robust site search can be demonstrated;
4. The market housing ensures that no additional subsidy for the scheme is required;
5. The development has the support of the local community; and
6. The total number of dwellings and the scale of development is in keeping with the categorisation, character and form of the village and its local landscape setting.

The proposed development seeks to deliver 100% affordable housing as part of the scheme. The site itself sits immediately adjacent to the existing town of Islip and therefore is considered a highly suitable site for development. The proposals will support the local community by providing much needed affordable housing to the local area (as discussed in detail below), as well as a small proportion of employment floorspace.

In terms of impact on the character and form of the village, the existing site comprises a derelict Oil Depot and has been disused for a number of years, therefore the grassland and buildings on the site are unkempt. The dilapidated condition of the site detracts from the visual attraction of the setting at present. It is considered that reinstatement of the lawful use of the site would result in harmful impacts to the local area in terms of associated vehicle / HGV trips, noise and air pollution. The proposals seek to deliver 9no. new homes arranged around a central communal green, with significant landscaping and open space in addition to new commercial floorspace proposed north of Islip Motors. It is therefore considered to significantly improve the character of the village, its local landscape setting and the openness of the green belt.

Key Theme One of the Emerging Local Plan considers connectivity and transport within developments. Strategic Objective 5 seeks to prioritise active travel and increase the opportunities for public transport use. Given that the site is located within a 5 minute walk to Islip Station it is a prime opportunity to encourage sustainable modes of transport. Equally, there are various opportunities to encourage and promote walking and cycling within the site (as promoted by Core Policy 47 of the draft Local Plan).

The site therefore provides an important opportunity to contribute to the required supply of houses needed in rural areas and would bring previously developed land back into use within a sustainable location on the edge of Islip in accordance with NPPF paragraph 125 and Policy Village 3 of the adopted Local Plan, as well as Key Themes of the Emerging Local Plan.

Land Use and Amount

Development in the Green Belt

While the construction of new buildings should generally be treated as 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, the NPPF provides exceptions to this, including at paragraph 154(f):

“limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites.”

The adopted Local Plan for Cherwell Council remains consistent with the NPPF in this regard. As discussed above, Policy Villages 3: Rural Exception Sites states that the Council will support the identification of suitable opportunities for small scale affordable housing schemes within or immediately adjacent to villages to meet specific, identified local housing needs that cannot be met through the development of sites allocated for housing development.

In addition, paragraph C.241 of the adopted Local Plan identifies that the lack of affordable homes of all types is a key community issue facing the district’s villages and rural areas.

Development Policy 7 (Rural Exception Sites) of the emerging Reg. 18 Local Plan reaffirms the Council’s commitment to rural exception sites, stating that that:

“The Council will support development for small scale affordable housing schemes within or immediately adjacent to villages to meet specific, identified local housing needs that cannot be met through the development of sites allocated for housing development”

The application seeks to provide 9 new homes, all of which would be provided as affordable homes. Subject to agreement with the Council, the Applicant proposes to bring forward these units under the tenure of five shared ownership and four affordable rent homes.

Cherwell’s Housing Strategy (2019-2024) identified three strategic priorities, which included the need to increase the supply and diversity of affordable housing in order to promote home ownership opportunities for households on low and average incomes.

The Oxfordshire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA, 2022) analysed the need for affordable housing in terms of social/ affordable rented housing and affordable home ownership. It identified a significant need for affordable housing in Cherwell, with a need of 660 social rented/affordable rented homes per year and a further 193 homes to meet affordable home ownership needs. There were only 178 net affordable housing completions during 2021/22. Noting this shortfall, it is clear that the Council will need to make allowances to provide as many affordable homes as possible to meet this need.

It can therefore be demonstrated that, owing to the exceptions within the NPPF paragraph 154 (g) regarding the provision of limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan, the proposed development for 9 new affordable homes would meet an identified need within the District and therefore not be considered as inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Policy SLE 1 (Employment Development) of the adopted Local Plan indicates that new employment proposals within rural areas on non-allocated sites will be supported if the development will be *“small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of a village or surrounding environment”*.

The proposals include a small amount of commercial floorspace which is sensitively located adjacent to existing development within the village (Islip Motors). It is carefully incorporated into the wider landscaping and greening features of the proposals to ensure no adverse impacts on the surrounding character of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed floorspace is accords with Local Plan policy, as well as ensuring that that there are no wider material impacts which would otherwise detract from the openness of the Green Belt at this location.

The proposals thereby accord with the provisions of Policy Villages 3 of the adopted Local Plan and Development Policy 7 of the Emerging Local Plan regarding the provision of limited affordable housing within rural exception sites.

Impact on Character

As described within the Cherwell District Council Landscape Character Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (2017), the wider Fuel Depot site *“is not generally in a good state of repair and the remaining buildings on site are not in the local vernacular. The landscape quality and condition sensitivity is low”*. The assessment identifies the depot as having a medium to high capacity for residential, employment and recreational development in landscape terms.

The depot remains with underground and overground oil storage tankers within built-up grassed mounds with a concrete surface and pump buildings across the whole of the site. The application site is derelict and has been disused for a number of years, therefore the grassland and buildings on the site are unkempt. The dilapidated condition of the site therefore detracts from the visual attraction of the setting at present. The Green Belt in this location is contaminated land with no public access. It is previously developed, brownfield land with an urban feel due to the areas of built form within it.

The proposed development seeks to provide 9 dwellings on the application site, served by a remodelling of the existing private accesses off Bletchington Road. The vision for the site focuses on providing for the existing village and its residents. The development would provide a small expansion to Islip Village to introduce much needed new affordable homes and commercial space.

Policy ESD 13 of the Adopted Local Plan and Core Policy 43 of the Emerging Local Plan state that development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character. The illustrative layout plan demonstrates how the proposed development could be set within a carefully curated landscape setting, providing new pedestrian routes and landscaped areas which will enhance the connection between the community and the countryside. This includes the provision of a communal green park, anticipated to comprise over 600 sqm of high-quality landscaped space, to provide future residents with opportunity for rest, relaxation and play for children.

The houses themselves could be set within ample plots and set back from the proposed access road with off-street car parking and space for soft landscaping. Suitable flank to boundary separation distances are achievable and private rear gardens could provide generous outdoor amenity space in line with local guidance.

The indicative layout is therefore able to clearly demonstrate how the proposed density of housing would represent a positive improvement compared to the existing site. This level of development is considered

to be in keeping with the existing character of Islip Village and indeed positively contribute to the surrounding character of the area noting the dilapidated existing condition of the site. The built form would be concentrated to the south, close to the station and the village itself, thus minimising any encroachment into the countryside and related harm. The proposals are therefore in accordance with Policy ESD 13 of the Adopted Local Plan and Core Policy 43 of the Emerging Local Plan.

Conclusion

The site comprises previously developed land in the Green Belt. The proposed development for 9 new affordable homes and small scale commercial floorspace would meet an identified need within the District and in turn acceptable in Green Belt policy terms. As such, the proposal can be considered as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 154(f), Policy Villages 3 and Policy SLE 1 of the adopted Local Plan, as well as and Development Policy 7 of the emerging Reg. 18 Local Plan. It has also been shown that the amount and location of the development would not harm the character of the area.

Permission in principle should therefore be granted for the redevelopment of the site for 9 no. dwellings and 190 sqm of commercial floorspace, with all other matters to be considered at technical design stage.

Yours faithfully



Rob Morgan MRTPI
Associate Director