

**PLANNING APPLICATION 24/00295/PIP**  
**ISLIP RAILWAY STATION, BLETCHINGDON ROAD, ISLIP OX5 2TQ**

**'PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE – REDEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE 9 NO DWELLINGS**  
**(USE CLASS C3) AND 190 SQM OF COMMERCIAL FLOORSPACE (USE CLASS E)'**

**OBJECTION BY SOPHIE BROWNE, BSc (HONS), MSc, LICENTIATE MEMBER OF THE RTPI, OF ONEILL HOMER LTD, ON BEHALF OF ISLIP PARISH COUNCIL**

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**Summary of Objection**

The application seeks Permission in Principle for a development comprising nine dwellings and a commercial (Use Class E) building with 190sqm of floorspace. The site is located on the northern outskirts of Islip and is within the Oxford Green Belt. The application site comprises the south-western corner of a larger site that is a disused oil storage depot and is therefore previously developed land. However, existing development within the application site is limited to hardstanding, a small number of modest single-storey structures, and a single partially-open two-storey structure, and the site therefore has a very open and permeable character and appearance with clear panoramic views of the countryside across it.

The proposed development would introduce significant additional built form to the site, substantially harming the openness of the Green Belt in both visual and spatial terms and is therefore in conflict with both national and local Green Belt policy. The application site is on the edge of a Category C (adopted Local Plan) or Smaller Village (emerging Local Plan) and constitutes minor development, which is in conflict with the spatial strategy of the Local Development Plan as embodied by the settlement hierarchy. The submission package indicates that the development would deliver 100% affordable housing, but planning conditions and obligations cannot be attached to a Permission in Principle and there is therefore no mechanism by which to secure this. Furthermore, no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would meet a specific, identified local housing need, in light of which the proposal fails to accord with the relevant requirements of local policies relating to Rural Exception Sites. In addition to this, no justification has been provided for the proposed provision of new employment premises in a rural area

within the Green Belt on a non-allocated site, thereby failing to fulfil relevant criteria of local policies relating to employment development.

By virtue of its Green Belt location, along with the proposed land uses and the amount of development, the proposal conflicts with numerous relevant policies of the Local Development Plan and would result in substantial harm to the openness of the Oxford Green Belt. No material benefits would arise from the scheme that would outweigh these harms, in light of which the application should be refused.

## 1. Relevant Site History

1.1. 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 granted 12.2.2007

1.2. 13/00311/CLUE 'Certificate of Lawful Use Existing – Oil storage depot'. Permitted 21.5.2013

## 2. Relevant Policies

2.1. The following policies of the Local Development are considered to be of most relevance to the proposed development:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), revised 2023

§77, §85, §§152-154, §226

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

SLE1 'Employment Development'

ESD14 'Oxford Green Belt'

Policy Villages 1 'Village Categorisation'

Policy Villages 3 'Rural Exception Sites'

Emerging Local Plan (published for Regulation 18 consultation September 2023)

Core Policy 27 'New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites'

Core Policy 35 'Settlement Hierarchy'

Core Policy 44 'The Oxford Green Belt'

Development Policy 7 'Rural Exception Sites'

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review (September 2020)

PR3 'The Oxford Green Belt'. This policy modifies the Green Belt boundaries to allow strategic allocations and support the delivery of Cherwell District's apportionment of

Oxford's unmet housing need. This does not have any direct bearing on the current proposal.

2.2. None of the saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan (November 1996), Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (July 1996), or policies of the adopted Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Part 1 – Core Strategy) (September 2017) are considered to be of direct relevance to the proposal.

2.3. The Islip Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated in February 2022 and covers the whole of the Parish of Islip. The Neighbourhood Plan is in its very early stages and carries no weight.

### **3. Principle of Development**

3.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions are made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is an important material consideration in planning decisions. It does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, but policies in the Development Plan need to be considered and applied having regard to the extent to which they are consistent with the NPPF. It is considered that the relevant development plan policies are consistent with the NPPF, and they should be attributed full weight.

3.2. The application is for Permission in Principle. According to the PPG (Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615), the matters that are in scope for an application of this type are limited to location, land use and amount of development. In the event that permission is granted, a further application for Technical Details Consent (TDC) will be required, which will include the detailed aspects of the scheme including layout, design, access, drainage etc.

### **4. Location**

#### Housing

4.1. Policy Villages 1 of the adopted Local Plan categorises the District's villages and sets out the types of residential development that are considered suitable for each category. Islip is identified as Category C, in which infilling and conversions are considered appropriate. §C.264 of the supporting text defines infilling as "*the development of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage*". Core Policy 35 of the emerging Local Plan similarly sets out the Settlement Hierarchy for the District, classifying Islip as a 'Smaller Village' wherein limited infill development within existing built areas or on allocated sites will be supported, provided proposals are in keeping with local character, proportionate in scale, and meet local housing needs. As the proposed development is neither infill nor conversion, nor located on an allocated site, it fails to accord with either of these policies.

4.2. In addition to the above, the application site is located within the Oxford Green Belt, in light of which Local Plan Policy ESD 14, emerging Local Plan Core Policy 44, and Section 13 of the NPPF are applicable. The Local Plan Policies seek to preserve the special character and landscape setting of Oxford, check the growth of the city and prevent ribbon development, urban sprawl, and the coalescence of settlements, safeguard the countryside from encroachment, and assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land, in accordance with §143 of the NPPF. §154 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate with a number of specified exceptions, of which the following are relevant to the current proposal:

*“(f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*

*(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*

*- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*

*- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”*

4.3. The application site is a small section of a disused oil storage depot, given which it is considered to be ‘previously developed land’, and the covering letter submitted in support of the application states that the proposed development seeks to deliver 100% affordable housing. Given this, Policy Villages 3 of the adopted Local Plan and Development Policy 7 of the emerging Local Plan are also of relevance, both of which relate to Rural Exception Sites.

4.4. Although the application site is previously developed land, the existing development on the site primarily comprises a tarmacked parking area with three modest single storey shed-type structures adjacent to the road and a taller partially-open structure with a similarly modest footprint. Development within the wider former oil storage depot is largely below ground, as a result of which the site is currently very open with clear views across it to the open countryside. The introduction of the proposed built form to the site would substantially reduce this openness, contrary to NPPF §154(g).

4.5. In addition to the harm to the openness of the Green Belt, it is noted that although the covering letter states that the proposal would seek to deliver 100% affordable housing this is not reflected in the description of works and there is no mechanism available under a Permission in Principle through which the Council could secure this percentage of affordable housing. The proposal therefore fails to accord with the requirement of both Policy Villages 3 and Development Policy 7 to secure arrangements to restrict the occupancy of the housing in perpetuity on Rural Exception Sites. Furthermore, the submission package references only District- and

County-wide affordable housing needs. Policy Villages 3 requires that proposals for rural exception sites must “*meet specific, identified local housing needs that cannot be met through the development of sites allocated for housing development*”, a requirement that is repeated in emerging Local Plan Development Policy 7. No evidence has been provided that the scheme would meet a specific, identified local need within Islip and its immediate surrounds, nor that any such need could not be met through the development of allocated sites. Given this, the proposal fails to accord with the relevant requirements of adopted Local Plan Policy Villages 3, emerging Local Plan Development Policy 7, and the exceptions set out under NPPF §154(f).

4.6. In light of the above, the location of the proposed development for housing is considered unacceptable owing both to its failure to accord with the spatial strategy of the District as set out in the settlement hierarchy and to the resultant inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

### Employment

4.7. Policy SLE1 of the adopted Local Plan relates to Class B employment, but pre-dates the 2020 Use Class changes and can therefore be viewed as relevant to certain other types of employment proposals (Class E uses that would formerly have been Class B1a, B1b or B1c). It states that “*Unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated, employment development in the rural areas should be located within or on the edge of those villages in Category A (see Policy Villages 1).*” It goes on to set out a number of criteria that proposals are required to meet. Of particular relevance are the following:

*“New employment proposals within rural areas on non-allocated sites will be supported if they meet the following criteria:*

- *They will be outside of the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.*
- *Sufficient justification is provided to demonstrate why the development should be located in the rural area on a non-allocated site.*
- *They 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.*
- *There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites in the rural areas.”*

4.8. The proposed employment use is small scale, as set out in the applicant’s covering letter, and therefore fulfils this criterion. However, Islip is a Category C village (as defined by Policy Villages 1) and the site is in the Green Belt. The applicant has provided no evidence of exceptional circumstances nor any other justification for the proposed employment use in this location, nor demonstrated that there are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites. Given this, the employment element of the proposal fails to accord with the relevant criteria of Local Plan Policy SLE1.

4.9. Similarly, Core Policy 27 of the emerging Local Plan supports proposals for new Class E(g), B2 or B8 employment on unallocated sites in or on the edge of Larger Villages where there are exceptional circumstances – but Islip is categorised as a Smaller Village under Core Policy 35 of the emerging Local Plan. Core Policy 27 requires that employment proposals in Smaller Villages meet the following criteria;

*“i A demonstrable need for the employment that cannot be accommodated on existing allocated sites;*

*ii The effect on the amenity of nearby residents and businesses;*

*iii The provision of safe site access for pedestrians and cyclists and for all types of vehicles likely to visit the sites, and measures to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport where possible, and*

*iv The scale, nature and appearance of the employment development on, and its relationship with, the settlement, its character and its landscape setting*

*v The proposal cannot reasonably be accommodated on existing employment land identified as vacant or developable, and*

*vi It can be demonstrated that the proposal will benefit the local economy and will not undermine the delivery of the strategic employment allocations.”*

4.10. The submission package does not provide any evidence in relation to criteria (i), (v) or (vi), which relate to the principle of the location, and therefore fails to accord with emerging Local Plan Core Policy 27.

4.11. No justification has been provided for the proposed inclusion of employment development in this location, as required by relevant policies of the adopted and emerging Local Plans, and this element of the proposal is therefore considered unacceptable.

## 5. Land Use

5.1. The proposed land use is for mixed residential and employment (Class E) uses. As set out in section 4, this constitutes an inappropriate use in this rural, Green Belt location, conflicting with adopted Local Plan Policies SLE1, ESD14, Villages 1 and Villages 3, emerging Local Plan Core Policies 27, 35 and 44 and Development Policy 7, and NPPF §§152-154.

## 6. Amount of Development

6.1. The application site presently has an open character and appearance with very limited existing development above a single storey and clear views across it to the open countryside beyond. Whilst the amount of development proposed would allow for some visual permeability to be retained, it would nevertheless substantially impact the current openness of the site. Given the Green Belt location, this impact on the visual and spatial openness of the site would conflict with NPPF §154(g).

6.2. As set out in section 4, both Policy Villages 1 of the adopted Local Plan and Core Policy 35 of the emerging Local Plan set out the settlement hierarchy, classifying Islip as a Category C or Smaller Village. In such settlements, Policy Villages 1 seeks to restrict residential development to limited infill or conversions, whilst Core Policy 35 restricts it to limited infill within existing built areas or on allocated sites. The proposed development is for nine dwellings and a commercial building and is therefore considered to constitute a minor mixed-use scheme exceeding the parameters of 'limited infill' development as set out in §C.264 of the supporting text in the adopted Local Plan. The amount of development does not therefore accord with the requirements of Local Plan Policy Villages 3 or Core Policy 35.

## 7. Benefits of the Proposed Development

- 7.1. The submission package sets out potential benefits that the applicant considers would arise from the proposed development, which must be weighed in the planning balance against the identified harms.
- 7.2. The applicant contends that the proposal would improve the appearance of the disused and unkempt site and that the reinstatement of the extant lawful use of the site would result in harmful impacts to the local area arising from associated vehicular movements. Whilst the limited existing structures on the site are dilapidated, as previously noted the site has a generally open, rural character and appearance and is does not materially detract from the local landscape setting of the village or the openness of the Green Belt. There is no evidence that the reinstatement of the lawful existing site use represents a realistic fallback position and any harms arising from this are not, therefore, a material consideration.
- 7.3. The covering letter suggests that the provision of employment floorspace would support the local community, but no evidence is provided in support of this assertion and it can therefore be afforded limited weight. As set out previously, no mechanism is available to secure the provision of 100% affordable housing from the scheme and this benefit cannot therefore be afforded any weight. References to the illustrative layout plan, including the provision of shared green amenity space and an outdoor play area, can similarly be afforded little weight given that the application is for Permission in Principle only and the applicant emphasises elsewhere that the submitted layout is illustrative only.
- 7.4. In addition to the above, the covering letter makes much of the sustainability of the location, citing the presence of a railway station and the provision of active travel links from the site. This does not, however, align with the assessment and categorisation of Islip in the settlement hierarchy in either the adopted or emerging Local Plans and can therefore be afforded very limited weight.
- 7.5. Overall, very limited material benefits would arise from the proposed development. In the planning balance, these do not outweigh the substantial weight that must be attached to the identified harms that would arise to the Green Belt, in light of which the application should be refused.