



For and on behalf of  
**Laxton Properties**

**Planning Statement**  
**(incorporating Statement of Community Involvement)**

**Redevelopment of land at Dovecote Farm, Fritwell Road, Somerton**

**Prepared by**  
**DLP Planning Ltd**  
**Bedford**

January 2026

**Established in 1991**

**Employee Owned Trust**



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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.0 Site Location and Spatial Context .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Spatial Context .....	7
Application Site .....	8
Planning Constraints .....	12
<b>3.0 Relevant Planning History .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Class Q Prior Approval .....	13
Pre-Application Advice .....	13
<b>4.0 Statement of Community Involvement .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Engagement with Somerton Parish Council .....	15
Public Consultation .....	15
<b>5.0 Proposed Development .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Use and Amount .....	17
Site Layout .....	17
Detailed Design .....	18
Fritwell Road Enhancements .....	20
Community Allotment Space .....	20
Village Public Open Space / Play Space .....	20
Permissive Footpath Route .....	20
<b>6.0 Planning Policy .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Adopted Development Plan .....	21
Other Material considerations .....	22
Supplementary and advisory planning documents .....	22
Emerging Cherwell Local Plan .....	22
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) .....	22
<b>7.0 Planning Assessment .....</b>	<b>28</b>
The Principle of Development .....	28
Design and Layout .....	32
Landscape and Visual Impact .....	33
Access and Parking .....	34
Ecological Considerations .....	36
Heritage and Archaeology .....	38
Other Technical Matters .....	39
Flood Risk and Drainage .....	39



Sustainability Measures .....	39
Contamination.....	40
Mineral Safeguarding.....	40
Refuse collection .....	41
Planning Balance and Benefits of Development.....	41
<b>8.0 Conclusions .....</b>	<b>44</b>

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Public Consultation Event Flyer.....	45
Appendix 2 Public Consultation Information Boards.....	46



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by DLP Planning Ltd for, and on behalf of, Laxton Properties (the Applicant), to accompany a full planning application for the proposed redevelopment of land at Dovecote Farm, Fritwell Road, Somerton, comprising the provision of 10 dwellings and associated operational development including formation of parking, landscaping and amenity space. The application also proposes the formation of a community allotment and a permissive footpath access route. A change of use from pastoral agricultural to public outdoor amenity/leisure space is proposed to a separate land parcel adjacent to the Somerton Play Area.

1.2 The proposed description of development is as follows:

*Redevelopment of an existing yard for the erection of 10 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) including allotments, footpath, public open space and other associated works*

1.3 The following additional plans and documents are submitted to accompany the application and should be viewed in conjunction with this statement:

### Documents

- Completed Application Forms
- Covering Letter (DLP Planning)
- Planning Statement (incorporating SCI) (DLP Planning)
- Section 106 Draft Heads of Terms (DLP Planning)
- Transport Statement (Stomor)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Stomor)
- Ecological Impact and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (ACD Environmental)
- Soft Landscape Specification (ACD Environmental)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement (ACD Environmental)
- Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (Lanpro)
- Geo Environmental Assessment (Main site) (WDE Consulting)
- Geo Environmental Assessment (Allotments) (WDE Consulting)
- Design and Access Statement (BHPH Architects)

### Plans

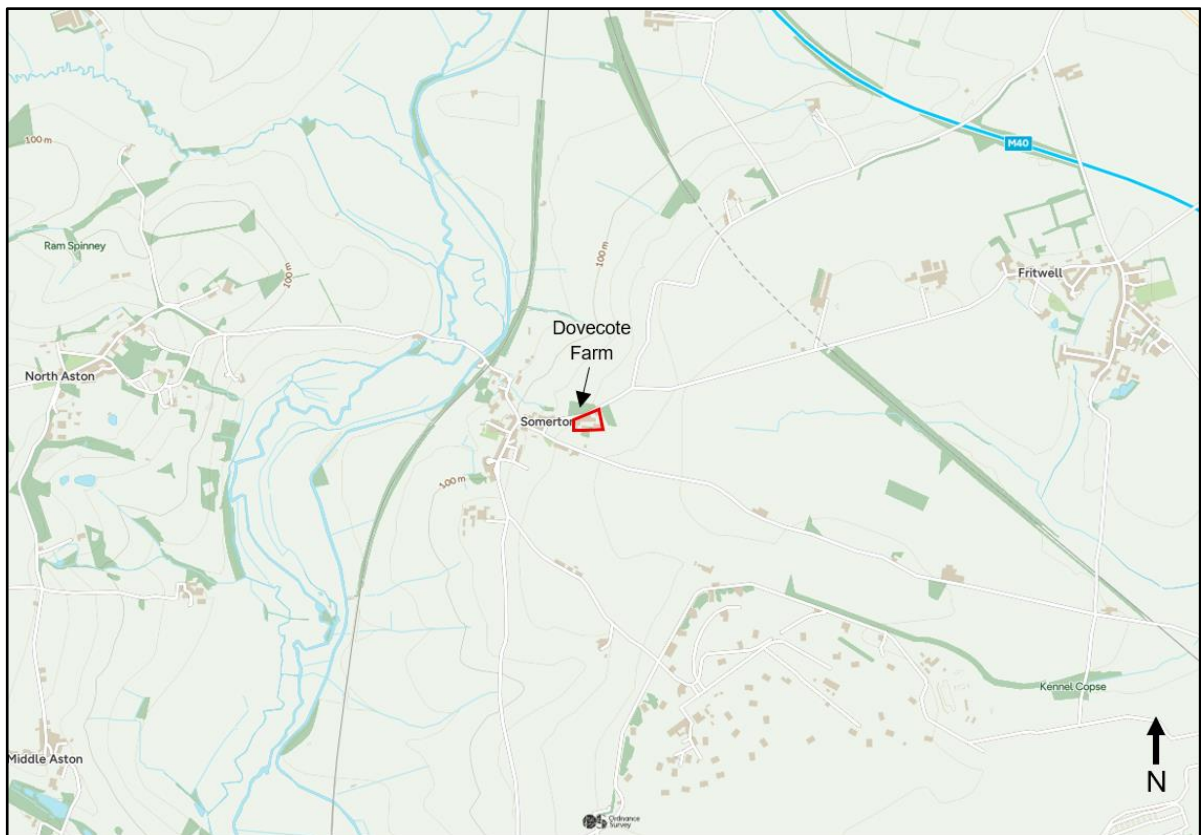
- Scheme Design Issue Drawing Pack (BHPH Architects), containing the following plans:
  - 3904 P.100 Rev C - Site Location Plan
  - 3904.P.101 Rev G – Site Plan
  - 3904.P.102 Rev B – Colour Site Plan



- 3904.P.103 Rev A – Existing Site Plan
  - 3904.P.104 Rev A – Existing Elevations
  - 3904.P.105 Rev B – Plot 1
  - 3904.P.106 Rev A – Plot 2
  - 3904.P.107 Rev B – Plot 3
  - 3904.P.108 Rev B – Plot 4
  - 3904.P.109 Rev A – Plot 5
  - 3904.P.110 Rev A – Plot 6
  - 3904.P.111 Rev A – Plot 7
  - 3904.P.112 Rev A – Plot 8
  - 3904.P.113 Rev A – Plot 9
  - 3904.P.114 Rev B – Plot 10
  - 3904.P.115 Rev A - Carport
  - 3904.P.116\_Rev B Contextual Street Scene
  - 3904.P.117\_Rev C Parking Plan
  - 3904.P.118\_Rev B Refuse Plan
  - 3904.P.119\_Rev C Proposed Footpath Location Plan
  - 3904.P.120\_Rev B Enclosures Plan
  - 3904.P.121\_Rev B Block Plan
  - 3904.P.122\_Rev B Allotments Plan
  - 3904.P.123 Existing Floor Plan
  - 3904.P.124 Existing Contextual Street Scene
  - 3904.P.125 Land Use Plan
  - 3904.P.V01\_Rev A Site Entrance Visual
  - 3904.P.V02\_Rev A Courtyard Visual
- 
- Landscape Proposals – PRI2465 11E Sheets 1 – 4 (ACD Environmental)
  - Tree Protection Plan PRI24625-03 Sheets 1 and 2 (ACD Environmental)
  - Topographical Survey 0354-7-851 to 863 Sheets 1 – 5 (Woods Hardwick)

## 2.0 SITE LOCATION AND SPATIAL CONTEXT

2.1 The primary application site area forms the yard associated with an established agricultural unit known as ‘Dovecote Farm’, which principally comprises five agricultural barns of varying sizes with ancillary yard space. The yard lies just 150 metres to the east of the village of Somerton with existing vehicular access via Fritwell Road and covers an area of approximately 0.78ha. In total, the application site covers 1.3ha.



**Figure 1: Site Spatial Context**

### Spatial Context

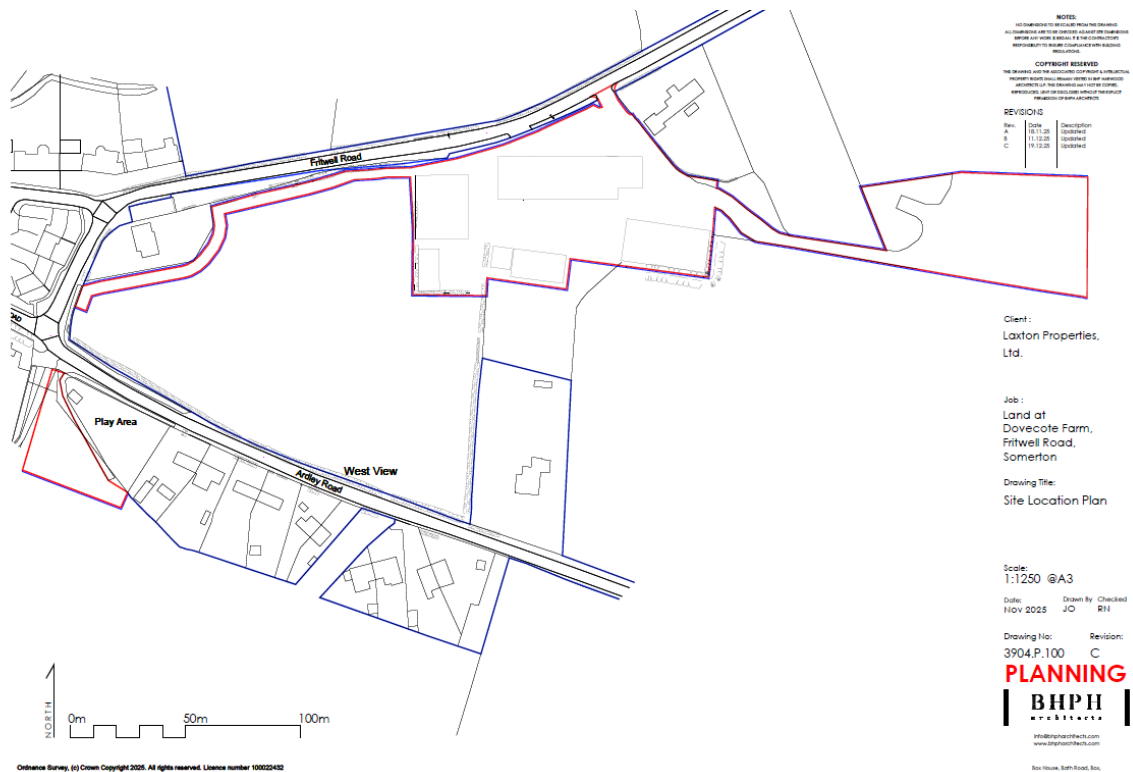
- 2.2 The application site lies in a sustainable location close to the village of Somerton, a small village approximately 10km south of Banbury and 9km northwest of Bicester. The villages of Fritwell and the somewhat larger Ardley also lie within 4km of the site to its west.
- 2.3 The village is served by the No.81 Bus, running between local villages and Bicester up to five times a day, including during morning and afternoon commuting periods. The train station of Heyford is located approximately 5 km to the south of the village, providing regular services

between Banbury and Didcot Parkway.

- 2.4 Approximately 1km south of the site lies the former RAF Upper Heyford, which is allocated in the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (2011-2031) and currently being partially redeveloped to provide a new settlement of circa 1600 dwellings, including a supermarket and medical facilities known as Heyford Park.

Application Site

- 2.5 The redline application boundary of the submitted scheme captures the farmyard complex, its curtilage, and highway access, alongside adjacent areas described below.



**Figure 2: Site Location Plan**

- 2.6 The existing yard is comprised of 5 large barns of varying size, and expansive swathes of surrounding concrete hardstanding reflecting its most recent use as an agricultural yard. Barn structures feature steel framing/corrugated roofs and corrugated cladding atop breeze blocks, sited atop a concrete base. These have most recently been utilised for the wintering of livestock, storage of equipment and other agricultural related uses by the landowner,

although in recent years these operations have been scaled back.

- 2.7 Vehicular access into the site is achieved by an existing dual width paved and gated agricultural access to the south of Fritwell Road a 'C' class road that runs adjacent to the northern boundary of the site and links the villages of Somerton and Fritwell. This access directly adjoins the existing hardstanding yard area of the site which surrounds the barn structures in place. The access also serves the adjacent Oakwood House, a single property that lies directly northeast of the main site area. A secondary gated access into the wider yard area is also in place to the west of the primary access.
- 2.8 Limited areas of planting to boundaries and a small area to the south of the largest barn structure feature existing mature trees. However, the predominant characteristics of the site are its utilitarian and un-landscaped spaces.



**Figure 3: Existing Hardstanding Site Access onto Fritwell Road**

- 2.9 The existing farmyard is now redundant for agricultural purposes as the farmer and landowner is moving into retirement and thus will no longer operate an agricultural unit from the site, with no heir taking on operation of the farm. The surrounding agricultural land does not form part of the application but remains within the ownership of the farmer and will be tenanted to neighbouring agricultural units for continued use where appropriate. As such it

should be highlighted that the application site is no longer required for agricultural purposes, but the proposal will not result in the permanent loss of any productive agricultural land.



**Figure 4: Existing Barn Structures on Site and Hardstanding Yard Area**



**Figure 5: Existing Site Frontage and Adjacent Oakwood House**

- 2.10 Adjacent to the Application Site to the northeast is Oakwood House, which was originally built as an agricultural worker's dwelling following permission in 1995, but the tie condition was subsequently removed in 2013. To the south of the site lies Hilbre House, a large, detached dwelling set within a generous plot that adjoins Dovecote Farm at its northernmost boundary. The site is otherwise surrounded by open fields, albeit the main village area of Somerton lies in close proximity to the west as noted above.
- 2.11 The site location plan captures additional land surrounding the primary farmyard area including a modest parcel of disturbed land to the east most recently used for general agricultural storage to be provided as a community allotment space, and a narrow strip of the adjoining field to the west of the yard to comprise a permissive foot link to the site from the village core.
- 2.12 A separate parcel of approximately 1,064 m<sup>2</sup> is also included within the redline site area to comprise an addition to outdoor play space provision to the Somerton Play Area, approximately 160 metres southwest of the farm yard.



*Planning Constraints*

- 2.13 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore presents a low risk of fluvial flooding. In addition it does not contain any Public Rights of Way.
- 2.14 The site is not subject to any statutory protective designations. It is not situated within the Green Belt, nor does it lie within or adjacent to any national ecological or landscape designations.
- 2.15 The aforementioned Somerton Conservation Area lies approximately 90 metres west of the primary site area, the proposed permissive footpath route abutting the boundary of this designation. The separate land parcel adjacent to the village play area lies within the Conservation Area boundary and within immediate proximity of the Somerton Manor House Scheduled Monument, which comprises earthworks and remains of a hall. There are no listed buildings within the immediate setting of any elements of the site.

### 3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 A search of the Council's online planning portal shows the site has the following relevant planning history which has been listed in the below table.

Application number	Proposal	Decision	Decision Issued Date
<b>13/01047/AGN</b> Valid Date 08/07/2013	Erection of agricultural building	Prior Approval Not Required	31/07/2013
<b>24/03096/Q56</b> Valid Date 22/11/2024	Prior approval application under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO for conversion of an existing agricultural barn to a total of 6 no residential dwellinghouses	Permitted	21/03/2025

#### Class Q Prior Approval

3.2 A Prior Approval application (Ref: 24/03096/Q56) made under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order, and approved on 21/03/2025 permits the conversion of the largest barn in the centre of the site into 6 residential dwellinghouses and accordingly establishes that the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable, with access taken off Fritwell Road.

#### Pre-Application Advice

3.3 A pre-application submission reference 25/00883/PREAPP was submitted to Cherwell District Council in March 2025. This submission proposed a re-development of the site to provide a total of 20 new detached dwellings. Written feedback in relation to the proposals was issued in June 2025.

3.4 Concerns were raised within this response by the Local Planning Authority in relation to the scale and quantum of proposed development, with a view that 20 units is too much for the site and would add to the over-urbanisation of the site and its surroundings. It was noted in this regard that a traditional former agricultural barn style arrangement could be more appropriate to the setting and would reduce its massing and thus urbanising effect.

3.5 In reference to the Class Q permission already issued, it was the officer's view that this did not provide a strong fall-back position for a scheme of 20 dwellings.



- 3.6 It was also indicated that the Local Planning Authority deemed the development to lie in an unsustainable location outside of a defined settlement boundary, and feedback highlighted that there is currently no footpath access to the site from the village. Notwithstanding this the need to travel to reach services led an assessment that this sustainability factor weighed against the proposal.
- 3.7 General feedback was issued in relation to technical information likely to be required to support any subsequent planning application at the site which has informed the preparation of this submission. Feedback received under the pre-application submission and subsequent community engagement undertaken as outlined in the following section of this statement have directly informed the submission scheme for a total of 10 dwellings now proposed, alongside the design, form and layout of these, alongside supplementary benefits offered to accompany the residential development element of the proposal and improve its connectivity to the village.
- 3.8 A separate pre-application submission has been made to Oxfordshire County Council for input in relation to the proposed informal road crossing of Fritwell Road to be constructed in association with the sought permissive footpath route from the site to the village. Further engagement on this matter will take place as part of the planning application process.



## **4.0 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

4.1 This section of the Planning Statement forms a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to accompany this application, providing full details of the pre-application engagement undertaken by the applicant with Somerton Parish Council and the local community.

### **Engagement with Somerton Parish Council**

4.2 Initial, informal discussions regarding the development proposal were held with representatives of Somerton Parish Council in July 2025. The proposals were also discussed at the Parish Council meeting of the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 as recorded within the agenda and minutes for this session.

4.3 Discussions with the Parish Council continued following initial contact, allowing constructive input and feedback and informing several amendments to the draft scheme proposals, in relation to proposed dwelling mix and density. The Parish indicated a belief that a development of 10 dwellings would be acceptable at the limit of the number of dwellings considered appropriate given Somerton's facilities and infrastructure, and suggested they would not be supportive of a larger development.

4.4 Positive discussions also took place regarding opportunities for securing local infrastructure enhancements in association with the development, including the proposed community allotment space and additional public open space provision. A number of tabled revisions to the proposals submitted for pre-application input from CDC have therefore been incorporated following engagement with and feedback from the Parish Council.

### **Public Consultation**

4.5 Following this, a process of public consultation and engagement across the village has been undertaken by the Applicant, in order to introduce the proposals locally and seek the views and input of local residents despite the modest scale of the development and its separation from most residential receptors in the village itself.

4.6 This process comprised notification of households within the village of an upcoming consultation event via a project flyer circulated by the Parish Council. A copy of the flyer is included at Appendix 1. This set out initial details of the proposals and provided details of an upcoming public consultation event to which members of the village were invited for an opportunity to learn more about the development proposal, ask questions and share



feedback.

- 4.7 A public consultation event was held within Somerton Village Hall on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025 between 16:00 and 19:00. This session was attended by approximately 30 local residents who met with representatives from the project team to be introduced to the proposed development in more detail and share initial feedback. The project team were also able to answer any questions from residents in relation to the scheme and its potential impacts.
- 4.8 Project boards used during the public consultation event are attached under Appendix 2 of this statement. These included a dedicated email address to which any feedback, questions or thoughts could be sent by attendees. No public feedback comments were subsequently submitted via this email link.



## 5.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### Use and Amount

- 5.1 As detailed above the proposed description of development is as follows:
- 5.2 Redevelopment of an existing yard for the erection of 10 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) including allotments, footpath, public open space and other associated works. The principal element of the scheme comprises a complete redevelopment of the existing redundant agricultural yard at Dovecote Farm to facilitate the provision of a total of 10no. bespoke, attractive dwellinghouses set within generously landscaped plots, together with access, parking and amenity space. It is proposed that the 5 existing steel framed barn structures and hardstanding on site will be removed and the yard cleared in order to facilitate this redevelopment, noting that the site is no longer required for agricultural purposes.
- 5.3 In line with pre-application feedback issued by the LPA and pre-application engagement with the Parish Council, the scale of development has been substantially reduced from initial proposals at the site for up to 20 units. Resultantly the proposed housing mix for the 10 dwellings now sought is as follows:

Dwelling Size	No.	%
3B Dwelling	6	60
4B Dwelling	4	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

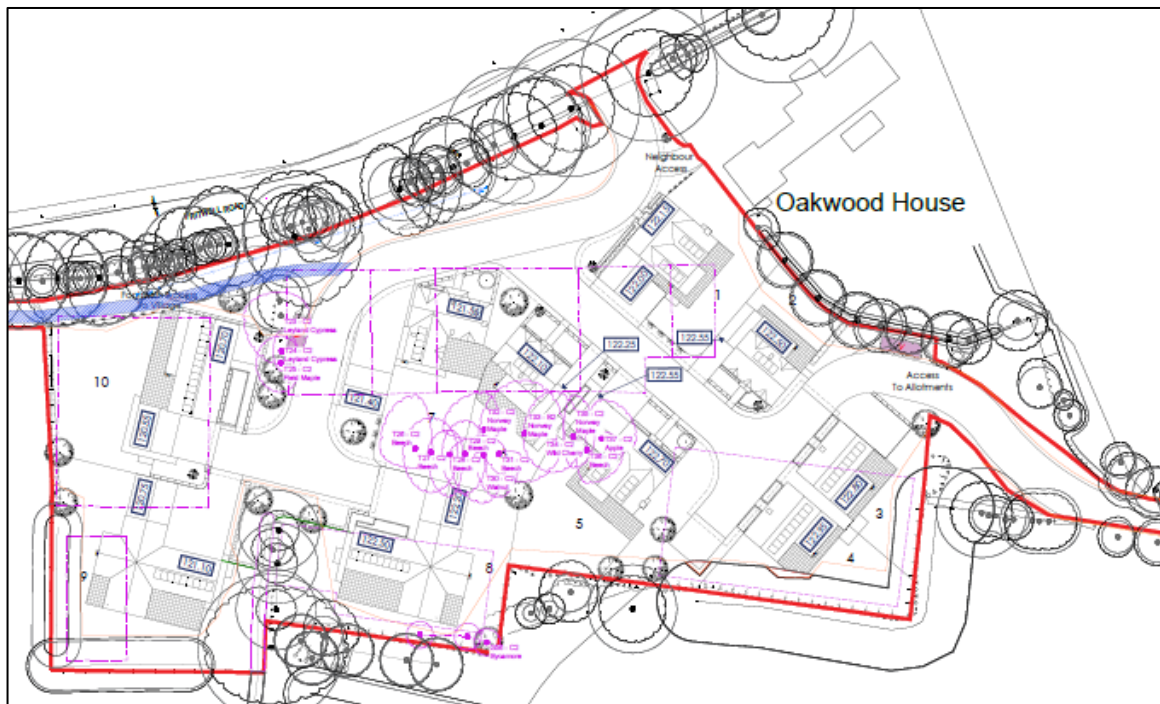
- 5.4 The proposed built form would consist of 1,417m<sup>2</sup> of development, this compares to the existing built form of the barns being 2,880m<sup>2</sup> of development. This represents a 51% decrease of proposed built form on the site. The inclusion of public open space and private gardens would also increase the green space provision from 650m<sup>2</sup> to 8,334m<sup>2</sup>, an increase of 1182%.

### Site Layout

- 5.5 The proposed layout is centred around a forked access design philosophy that provides direct access from the retained vehicular junction off Fritwell Road to the eastern and western portions of the site. Proposed units are broadly orientated around the two spines of this forked arrangement, enabling an inward facing relationship between dwellings that builds a cohesive cul-de-sac or yard type street scene within the site, emulating traditional building

arrangements associated with brick built agricultural yards and complexes.

- 5.6 Notwithstanding this, the proposed layout has been designed to maximise landscaping opportunities, and thus seeks to not only retain all existing boundary planting where feasible, but significantly reduce levels of existing hardstanding, replacing this with considered and useable green spaces. In high level terms, the proposed arrangement will result in a 545% increase in landscaped green spaces (including private gardens) when compared to the existing yard. This also equates to a 48% decrease in hardstanding, and 50% decrease in total built form.



**Figure 6: Proposed Site Layout Plan overlaid on existing site plan**

### **Detailed Design**

- 5.7 The proposed dwellings comprise a mixture of two storey units and bungalows, with 2no detached bungalows positioned to the southwestern aspect of the site. The design typology of the proposed dwellings comprises traditionally detailed detached dwellings of broadly conventional rural style, albeit a feature building is proposed to plot 3 in the form of a barn conversion style unit featuring a large, glazed cart door opening and small secondary window fenestration arrangement.
- 5.8 In unison the dwellings therefore form a contemporary interpretation of a local farmstead

style, and are to feature suitably high-quality details and materials (including limestone walls, natural stone tiled/slate roofing and stone window headers/cills). Sensitive located PV roof panels are also proposed to all plots. Direct inspiration has been drawn from local building appearance and detail in adopting this approach as evidenced further within the Design and Access statement. All units would benefit from the provision of off-street parking provision in alignment with local provisional standards, equipped with EV charge point infrastructure.



**Figure 7: Elevation Plans**

- 5.9 Vehicular access to the site is to be achieved via the existing junction on to Fritwell Road, an arrangement deemed acceptable in highways terms under the approved Class Q consent at the site, reference 24/03096/Q56. This retained point of vehicular access will be upgraded as necessary, as per specifications provided within the submitted Transport Statement. The incorporated permissive foot link to its northwest secures connectivity with the village centre. The internal road alignment also facilities vehicle access via the eastern spine of the site to the proposed community allotment directly to its east.
- 5.10 To accompany the proposed residential units, the scheme incorporates retention and enhancement to existing landscaping features in the form of mature trees and hedgerow that



line the boundaries of the site, including from its most visually prominent aspect onto Fritwell Road.

- 5.11 Following pre-application engagement with local stakeholders including Somerton Parish Council and local residents, a number of supplementary benefits are proposed as part of the application in order to complement the much-needed provision of residential units within a brownfield site above and beyond the 6 already consented via Class Q Permitted Development. These are set out as follows:

*Fritwell Road Enhancements*

- 5.12 Highway safety enhancements east of proposed site access are proposed to Fritwell Road, via proposed extension of 20 mph speed limited beyond site boundary and introduction of additional traffic calming measures.

*Community Allotment Space*

- 5.13 The provision of approximately 1 acre of land is proposed under the application for community allotment use within accessible reach of the village area, to serve both proposed properties and the wider village in line with identified local demand.

*Village Public Open Space / Play Space*

- 5.14 The provision of approximately 1,064m<sup>2</sup> of existing pastureland directly adjacent to village play area is proposed, to be utilised as additional informal public play and amenity space serving the wider village.

*Permissive Footpath Route*

- 5.15 Provision of a permissive footpath link is detailed within the application to facilitate safe pedestrian access from the proposed development site and community allotments to the existing footpath network within the village area.



## 6.0 PLANNING POLICY

6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (The Act) requires that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This established test is further reiterated within the Framework.

### **Adopted Development Plan**

6.2 For the purposes of the application the statutory development plan currently comprises:

- Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (CLP);
- Retained policies of Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (CLP 1996); and
- Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Made May 2019 (MCNP)

6.3 The policies from these documents most applicable to the submitted proposal are as listed below. Relevant extracts from these policies are highlighted within the Planning Assessment section of this Statement.

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

- Policy PSD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy SLE4: Improved Transport and Connections
- Policy BSC1: District Wide Housing Distribution
- Policy BSC2: The Effective and Efficient Use of Land – Brownfield land and Housing Density
- Policy BSC3: Affordable Housing
- Policy BSC4: Housing Mix
- Policy BSC10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision
- Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- Policy ESD3: Sustainable Construction
- Policy ESD7: Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Policy ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation
- Policy Villages 2: Distributing Growth Across the Rural Areas

#### *Retained Policies of Cherwell Local Plan 1996*

- Saved Policy H18 – New dwellings in the countryside
- Saved Policy C28 – Layout, design and external appearance of new development
- Saved Policy C30 - Design of new residential development

#### *Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan*

- Objective D1 – To strongly encourage the use of brownfield sites
- Objective H1 – To ensure that any new housing requires is small-scale, on suitable sites, and with an approved mix of proposed types and size of homes, form and density of development,

and quality of design.

- Objective H2 – to ensure that within any local development affordable housing is provided that meets the needs in particular of the local community, especially young people and older residents.
- Policy PD5 – Building and Site Design
- Policy PH1 – Open market Housing Schemes
- Policy PH3 – Adaptable Housing
- Policy PH5 – Parking, Garage and Waste Storage Provision

### **Other Material considerations**

#### Supplementary and advisory planning documents

6.4 The following supplementary documents have been identified as being of potential relevance to the proposals:

- Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (September 2017)
- Cherwell District Council Annual Monitoring Report 2024 (Republished June 2025)
- Cherwell Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (July 2018)
- Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 Draft Submission

#### Emerging Cherwell Local Plan

6.5 Cherwell District Council submitted its Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination on 31 July 2025, following earlier Regulation 18 and 19 evidence gathering and consultation starting in 2020. Initial questions from examiners were issued in October 2025, and the first week of hearing sessions associated with the new plan are scheduled to commence in February 2026.

6.6 Whilst full weight of policy within the Draft Local Plan will not apply until it has passed examination and is formally adopted, in line with the NPPF the advanced stage of the plan's preparation indicates that appropriate weight may be given to its policies where relevant and justified. In terms of decision taking for the purposes of this application the key policies as to directing residential development remain broadly in alignment with the adopted spatial strategy.

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

6.7 In December 2024, the Government published revision to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out its requirements for the planning system in seeking to ensure sustainable development. The NPPF, whilst not prescriptive, is however a significant material consideration and seeks positively to encourage new development. At its heart it provides a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

### ***Achieving Sustainable Development***

6.8 Paragraph 8 of the Framework sets out the three overarching objectives of sustainable development and defines these as:

- “**an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and,
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

6.9 At Paragraph 11, the NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means that unless material considerations indicate otherwise:

*“Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or;*

*Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless: The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*

### ***Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes***

6.10 Paragraph 61 requires that in order to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land comes forward and that the needs of groups within specific housing requirements are addressed.

6.11 Paragraph 73 notes that Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly.

6.12 Paragraph 78 sets out that strategic policies should include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period, and all plans should consider whether it is appropriate to set out the anticipated rate of development for specific sites. Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.

### ***Rural Housing***

6.13 Paragraph 82 states that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs, including proposals for community-led development for housing. 83 adds that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

### ***Promoting Healthy Communities***

6.14 Paragraph 96 describes the importance of creating healthy, inclusive, and safe places. It sets out that planning policies and decisions should therefore promote social interaction, are safe and accessible environments which reduce the potential for crime and disorder (including fear of crime) and enable/support healthy lives through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health.

### ***Promoting Sustainable Transport***

6.15 Paragraphs 109 to 118 describe the promotion of sustainable transport, recognising that different policies and measures will be required in different communities. Specifically paragraph 110 explains that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

6.16 Paragraph 115 describes that decisions regarding development proposals should ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, being minded of the type of development and its location; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model

Design Code; and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network or highway safety can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.

- 6.17 Paragraph 116 states that development should only be refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios

### ***Making Effective Use of Land***

- 6.18 Paragraph 124 requires that policies and decisions promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

- 6.19 Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, as is considered in Paragraph 129, taking into account:

- The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- Local market conditions and viability;
- The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
- The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- The importance of securing well-designed, attractive, and healthy places.

### ***Achieving Well-designed Places***

- 6.20 As is stated in Paragraph 131, the creation of high-quality, beautiful, and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Further to this, the Paragraph considers that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development which creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

- 6.21 Paragraph 137 considers that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should, where applicable, provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their

proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy, and should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive, and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

***Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change***

6.22 Paragraph 161 sets out that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. Paragraph 163 adds that the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change should also be considered in preparing and assessing planning applications, taking into account the full range of potential climate change impacts.

6.23 Paragraph 174 seeks to steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Paragraph 175 adds specific requirements in respect of the requirement for sequential testing. Paragraph 181 adds when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere, adding that where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment.

***Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment***

6.24 Paragraph 187 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, for example by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity in a manner commensurate with their statutory status (part a), recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (part b), minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity (part d), preventing new development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of pollution (part e) and remediating contaminated and unstable land (part f).

6.25 Paragraph 193 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply a number of principles relating to biodiversity. This includes if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

***Proposals affecting heritage assets***

6.26 Paragraph 212 explains that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the



significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

- 6.27 Paragraph 215 adds that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.



## 7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

7.1 The main planning considerations raised by this application are identified as follows:

- The Principle of Development
- Design and Layout
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Access and Parking
- Ecological Considerations
- Heritage and Archaeology
- Other Technical matters
- Benefits of Development

### **The Principle of Development**

7.2 Assessing the principle of the proposed development necessitates consideration to relevant adopted plan policy, national policy direction and other material considerations, in this case an extant Class Q barn conversion consent.

7.3 Policy BSC1 of the CLP 2015 defines the overall spatial strategy for the district, seeking to focus strategic housing growth to the key urban centres within Cherwell. The plan sets out an intention is to protect and enhance the services, facilities, landscapes and natural and historic built environments of the villages and rural areas. Notwithstanding this it does make provision for appropriate and proportionate growth in rural areas, noting that there is a need for these areas to contribute to meeting local and Cherwell-wide needs.

7.4 Policy PV1 of the CLP designates villages within the authority area in order to direct rural development to settlements considered the most sustainable, and to ensure development is of an appropriate scale for the village with respect to its services and facilities provision. Somerton is designated as a Category C settlement, within which PV1 makes provision for residential development via infilling or change of use within built limits. Correspondingly, Policy ESD1 of the CLP 2015 defines how the Council will seek to mitigate for the impacts of climate change at a strategic level. This includes a strategic level direction to distribute growth to the most sustainable locations as identified within the Plan.

7.5 Saved Policy H18 of the CLP 1996 states that permission will only be granted for the construction of new dwellings beyond the built-up limits of settlements where for essential agricultural workers, related to an allocated site, or for small-scale, low-cost housing development to meet a specific and identified local housing need.

7.6 However, paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that:

*'Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old'*

7.7 Cherwell District Council's most recent Annual Monitoring Report republished in June 2025 identifies that the Authority can demonstrate a housing land supply of 2.3 years, significantly under the 5-year supply requirement defined within the NPPF.

7.8 As a result of this undersupply, and for the purposes of decision making in this instance, in line with the provisions of Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the 'tilted balance' set out under sub paragraph (d) is engaged in favour of the development. Specifically, given that the LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of homes, the policies which are most important for determining the application, namely PV1, PV2, H18, BSC1, as highlighted above, are to be considered out-of-date as per footnote 8. As such, permission should be granted unless:

*'the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

*ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination'*

7.9 In this instance there are no designated assets or protected areas of such importance that a strong reason for refusing the development would be presented. Specifically, the site is not designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, AONB, National Park or Heritage Coast, does not contain any irreplaceable habitats, designated heritage assets, and is not at risk of flooding or coastal change.

7.10 No adopted local policy defines fixed settlement boundaries for villages within the plan area, including Somerton. Nonetheless it is acknowledged that the proposed development site lies a short distance outside of the built-up envelope of the village. It is however within immediate proximity of the settlement, at around 150 metres away. The site is therefore not identified as directed for development by the overarching considerations set out within Policies BSC1 and PV1 of the CLP. Notwithstanding this, given that the site comprises a redundant agricultural yard with consent for residential use, in close proximity of a settlement, and not

a greenfield site in the open countryside, there are clear material considerations that limit the tension against these policies, which are out of date as a result of a lack of demonstrable 5 year housing land supply in any case.

- 7.11 During pre-application discussions, the LPA referenced Policy ESD1 of the CLP and its direction of development to the most sustainable locations, namely the districts towns and largest villages, in the interests of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Whilst as a result of the site's location a degree of dependency upon private car use is unavoidable, to suggest the site is wholly unsustainable fails to take account of the public transport connectivity within reasonable reach. Namely the 81-bus service accessible via stop within 400 metres of the site that provides daily commuting connectivity to the nearest town of Bicester, and the Train Station of Heyford, is a 15-minute cycle journey from the site. Despite the rural location of the site there is therefore viable connectivity to employment and services without total reliance on private vehicle use.

*Fall-back position*

- 7.12 In addition to the above considerations, the extant Class Q consent at the site forms a weighty material consideration for the purposes of assessing the principle of the proposed development. Specifically, this consent permits the implementation of a residential conversion of the largest existing agricultural building on the site to create a total of 6 dwellings. The existing Class Q consent constitutes a reasonable fallback position in planning terms given that it lawfully permits for the formation of 6 units that are genuinely capable of being implemented on the site, and forms a realistic and viable prospect for development of the site.
- 7.13 The principle of fall-back position was established in *R v Secretary of State for the Environment and Havering BC (1998) EnvLR189*. Here Mr Lockhart-Mummery QC, sitting as a Deputy High Court Judge, accepted that there were three elements to the fallback test,
- 1) *whether there is a lawful ability to undertake such a use;*
  - 2) *whether there is a likelihood or real prospect of such occurring.*
  - 3) *If the answer to the second question is "yes" a comparison must be made between the proposed development and the fallback use*



- 7.14 Taking each of these tests in turn, the Class Q permission 24/03096/Q56 was approved in March 2025. There are no prohibitive conditions or constraints and therefore it can be reasonably expected that the conversion of the barn to six dwellings could be undertaken.
- 7.15 The applicant for the Class Q was Laxton Properties, a reputable developer with experience of carrying out development and building conversions. There is therefore a real prospect of the development occurring.
- 7.16 As set out above and in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the proposals included in this full application would lead to a substantial betterment in terms delivery of additional homes in a District with a demonstrable shortage of housing. It would also lead to a significant reduction (circa 50%) in built form and hardstanding when compared to the Class Q proposals. Further there would be other significant community benefits in terms of provision of allotments, open space, permissive path routes and biodiversity net gain, all of which would not be realised if the conversion permitted under application 24/03096/Q56 were to be advanced.
- 7.17 The materiality of a fallback position was then confirmed in *Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council* ([2016] EWHC 2832 (Admin), where Mr Justice Garnham confirmed that *'appropriate regard must be had to material planning considerations including the permitted development fall-back position'*.
- 7.18 The Class Q therefore sets a definitive precedent and planning principle for the introduction of residential use on the site, albeit via utilisation of an existing structural form. The proposed development under this application comprising a total of 10 units does comprise an increase over the 6 that may be formed via the Class Q, but remains a modest and considered quantum of development given the scale of the site. Importantly, the re-development proposal under this submission would facilitate the delivery of significant and material benefits detailed within this Statement, to which the existing Class Q consent is not subject.
- 7.19 With view to this it is submitted that the package of benefits delivered by the scheme detailed under paragraphs 7.61 – 7.63 below, not least its important contribution to meeting the clearly established need for deliverable residential development within the authority area, patently outweighs any harm that could reasonably be attributed to 4 additional dwellings above that achievable under the Class Q consent, should this be identified in terms of the sustainability of the site or any other relevant consideration. Resultantly the principle of development

should be deemed acceptable when all relevant material considerations are weighed accordingly.

### **Design and Layout**

- 7.20 Policy ESD15 of the CLP seeks to support development of a high standard where it would contribute positively to the character of its setting and identity through reinforcing local distinctiveness. Policy ESD13 adds that development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, noting proposals will not be supported where resulting in undue visual intrusion into the open countryside, harm to landscape features or be inconsistent with local character. These policies are reinforced by comparable requirements set out within saved policies C28 and C30 of the CLP 1996.
- 7.21 As detailed above the submitted scheme proposes a comprehensive redevelopment of the existing agricultural yard which is currently characterised by large steel framed barns and concrete hardstanding. The proposals comprise the complete removal of existing built form to facilitate the creation of a bespoke, high-quality residential scheme that seeks to sensitively draw design inspiration from existing residential form of Somerton and surrounding settlements in terms of layout, density and appearance, whilst maximising the amenity standards of the new units.
- 7.22 The proposed site layout represents a considered and balanced re-development of the site that will significantly reduce overall levels of built mass with substantially increased landscaped green space. The density and layout of the development is reflective of its rural location and context as a former agricultural site, with comparatively low density, inward facing development that replicates the traditional form of farm holdings.
- 7.23 This approach to design is reinforced through detailed dwelling design, which adopts attractive, high-quality materials and detailing that carefully respects and responds to local built form, with particular reference being drawn to existing properties of varying age within the main village area.
- 7.24 All proposed dwellings are positioned such that they would benefit from requisite levels of privacy, with appropriate distance separations achieved both between units and existing properties off-site, most notably Oakwood House immediately to the northeast. The layout and dwelling arrangement would achieve high amenity standards for future occupiers in terms of light and privacy, with no constraints evident in terms of overlooking or overbearing

forms, a reflection of the considered density of the proposal as submitted. Furthermore, dwellings propose would not adversely impact the amenity conditions of Oakwood House, the only immediately adjacent neighbouring property.

- 7.25 With view to the above the proposal directly accords with the requirement under Policies ESD15, ESD13 and PD5 that development should be designed to a high standard which responds to the distinctive character of the settlement and respects landscape value.

*Landscape and Visual Impact*

- 7.26 The site as existing is well contained in visual terms, with all built form concentrated within the existing yard area, with comparatively extensive mature planting screening surrounding this which is to be retained. The only notable public vantage point from which the site is currently appreciated is Fritwell Road, which itself features a row of mature trees save for existing gated access points. The overall visual impression of the site from this aspect is that of imposing utilitarian agricultural barns presenting large aspects of concrete blockwork and corrugated cladding. Whilst structures typical to a use of this nature in a semi-rural edge of village location, the removal of these buildings and replacement with 10 well proportioned detached dwellings would undoubtedly result in a decrease in visual prominence of built form from the Fritwell Road aspect. Where views into the site remain, the landscaped and high quality form of the development would enhance visual amenity through introducing a low density residential form reflecting characteristics of a traditional stone-built farm complex. The following street frontage elevation visualisation illustrates these features.



**Figure 8: Street Frontage Elevation as Proposed**

- 7.27 The reduction in visual prominence of the proposal in comparison to the existing yard is

evidenced further through the 50% reduction in built form area referenced above, illustrating that the density of development is a balanced reflection of its village edge location.

7.28 In terms of proposed unit mix Policy BSC4 states new residential development will be expected to provide a mix of homes to meet current and expected future requirements in the interests of meeting housing need and creating socially mixed and inclusive communities. The policy refers to the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014, which indicates an overall conclusion of need split for market properties at 1 bed 5%, 2 bed 25%, 3 bed 45%, and 4 bed 25%. The draft Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 indicates a revised split, albeit indicating an increased level of 2 bed at 35-40% and decrease in 3 and 4 bed need at 30-35% and 15:20% respectively.

7.29 As detailed above, the proposed unit mix of the development comprises a mix of 3 and 4 bed units at 60% and 40% respectively. Given the limited scale of the development site and the split of unit sizes approved under the Class Q consent at the site (2no.3 bed and 4no. 2 bed units), the submitted proposal is considered to provide a reasonable split of dwelling types that reflect the needs of the village. The incorporation of 2no accessible bungalow units is also highlighted with regards to Housing Needs Assessment of Mid Cherwell undertaken by Aecom in 2023 to inform the renewed Neighbourhood plan, which states:

*'To best meet the needs of the growing cohort of older households expected to be present by the end of the Plan period, it should also be considered whether the existing options are well tailored to older people's requirements in terms of space, flexibility, quality, location and accessibility.'*

7.30 With consideration to the above factors, it is evident for the purposes of planning assessment that the proposed development would not introduce significant harmful visual or landscape impacts when viewed in the context of the existing agricultural form of the site, and its lack of prominence from key public vantage points. The development holds the potential to improve visual amenity from Fritwell Road through the replacement of large, contemporary and unattractive agricultural barns with an attractive and landscaped residential estate that is well contained within its setting and incorporates scales, materials and design features wholly sympathetic to its edge of village setting.

### **Access and Parking**

7.31 A detailed Transport Statement is submitted in support of the application, demonstrating its



acceptability against the key requirements of Policies SLE4 of the CLP, which states development which is not suitable for the roads that serve it and which results in severe traffic impact will not be supported, and Saved TR7 which relates to development attracting traffic on minor roads.

- 7.32 As set out above, the re-developed site is to be accessed by cars via the existing primary farm access off Fritwell Road, a typical priority junction arrangement. Setting aside that this arrangement reflects vehicle access arrangements deemed acceptable as existing under the consented Class Q scheme on the site, the access will be upgraded to achieve requisite visibility splay standards which are to be maintained in perpetuity. Re-development of the site in totality will also remove any potential for conflicts with farm vehicles utilising the same access, notwithstanding the fact the agricultural yard is now redundant for such use.
- 7.33 The applicant also proposes supplementary measures within the highway to further enhance the safety of the vehicular access whilst supporting effective speed management within the village as a whole, acknowledging existing concerns of residents and the Parish Council in relation to vehicle speeds at entry to the village. Namely it is proposed to seek extension of the existing 20mph limit threshold to the east of its current position and beyond the site access, assisting the management of speeds into the village and past the site itself. This is proposed to be accompanied by village entry gateways either side of the carriageway if feasible to reinforce speed management along the road.
- 7.34 Internal roads within the proposed development will align with relevant technical standards for safe access to all dwellings under a 6-metre-wide share surface arrangement and incorporate turning heads at the two internal spines through which refuse collection and/or emergency vehicles could safely enter and exit the site. All proposed dwellings are to feature a private parking provision in line with relevant OCC standards at two spaces per unit, and according cycle storage capacity. Off-street visitor parking spaces are also proposed to both spines of the site. As a result, no excess car parking demand would be generated such as to encourage or result in parking taking place on the existing road network along Fritwell Road or surrounding areas as a result of the scheme. Each dwelling is to benefit from pre-installed EV charger technology.
- 7.35 The Transport Statement sets out calculations undertaken in alignment with TRICS guidance that indicate total daily vehicle movements associated with the proposed development across



AM and PM peaks alongside 12-hour totals.

- 7.36 The development would generate 7 trips in the AM peak hour and 7 trips during the PM peak hour, which was assessed as imperceptible and without detrimental impact overall in the context of the site's location and local road network. Trips are likely to be heavily dispersed within the network, and no overriding capacity constraints have been identified as arising from the scheme. As highlighted above it is also proposed to create a permissive footpath link adjoining the development site with the village, running approximately 150 metres to the west of the site. The entire length of this footpath up to the illustrated exit point on Fritwell Road is on private land controlled by the applicant. The proposed footway would act to enhance the connectivity of the site with the village centre, including access to the proposed community allotment space also to be detailed within the application immediately adjacent to the residential development.
- 7.37 It is envisaged that the described footpath will run in an east-west direction from the western boundary of the application site, and the eastern edge of the village area, extending to the rear of Glyde House (the adjacent property to the eastern side of the road) adjoining Fritwell Road as per the Proposed Footpath Location Plan (Ref 3904.P.119\_C). The route is envisaged to be provided at a width of approximately 1.5 metres, and likely to be constructed with compacted gravel or similar material. At the western end of the footpath route there is a steep change in levels and gradient of approximately 1:2.7, where it enters OCC owned highway land, so solutions will be explored with OCC as to how best to connect into the existing PROW network.
- 7.38 In order to facilitate safe connectivity of this footway with the wider footpath network within the village area the formation of an uncontrolled crossing point is proposed to Fritwell Road, adjacent to the existing off-street parking bay a short distance north of its junction with Ardley Road.
- 7.39 In line with the conclusions of the submitted Transport Statement, it is therefore submitted that the development proposal should be regarded as acceptable from a highways and transportation perspective, in accordance with relevant policy provisions of the adopted development plan and NPPF, particularly Paragraph 116.

### **Ecological Considerations**

- 7.40 An Ecological Impact Assessment is submitted in support of the application. This highlights

that the application site is not subject to any specific ecological designations. Supporting works to inform the submitted assessment has included the completion of a series of on-site surveys, including an Extended UK Habitat Classification Survey, Ground Level Tree Assessment, and Climbing Potential Roost Feature inspection of trees on site.

- 7.41 The assessment records that no evidence of badger presence was identified on site, whilst a low potential for barn owls, roosting bats and commuting/foraging bats was noted. Nesting birds are however likely to utilise existing hedgerows and trees.
- 7.42 The appraisal details that the most important habitats within the site are its existing boundary planting, which will be retained and enhanced through additional landscaping measures where possible to minimise any ecological implications in this regard. A Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) may be secured in due course to outline and control such matters. Conclusions indicate that the development is likely to generate a negligible impact on amphibians.
- 7.43 Otherwise, the remaining expanse of hardstanding surface within the site are assessed as having negligible ecological importance and as such no specific mitigation is required for their removal.
- 7.44 The submitted assessment also highlights the potential for ecological enhancement measures to be secured as part of any consent which incorporates features such as nest boxes for birds and bats to provide supplementary nesting and roosting habitats for these species. Additional mitigation and compensation measures are detailed within the EIA to accommodate relevant protections during construction works and address minor losses to habitat where necessitated by the development. Subject to these the development will avoid significant adverse impacts upon bats and potential nesting bird species.
- 7.45 In addition, a Biodiversity Impact Assessment that includes baseline habitat metric and net gain measures is submitted. This indicates that the proposed development can achieve in excess of 10% BNG within the Site due to the conversion of the low distinctiveness existing habitat within the site to a mix of modified and other neutral grasslands, lowland meadows, ponds and swales.
- 7.46 Specifically, the completed metric calculations indicate that the completed development will result in the net gain of 18.19% in area habitat, translating to an increase of 0.68 units, and

a net gain of 185.53% in linear hedgerow, translating to an increase of 1.54 units. These uplifts lie in excess of statutory requirements and indicate that the proposal would in general terms generate an enhancement for biodiversity across the site. Due to the loss of some existing trees (total -1.53 units) the trading requirements have not been met, despite the plantation of 53 new small trees (total 0.65 units). This is because replanted trees may not reach an equivalent condition or size within 30 years.

- 7.47 As such, 0.88 individual tree units will need to be offset through Cherwell District Council and/or a third party for biodiversity net gains to be claimed in line with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide
- 7.48 In view of these considerations the development would accord with the requirements of Policy ESD10.

#### **Heritage and Archaeology**

- 7.49 Policy ESD15 of the CLP records that development proposals should “*Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated ‘heritage assets’ (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG*”. Saved Policy C25 adds detail in respect of development affecting the setting of a scheduled ancient monument.
- 7.50 As detailed above the primary site area lies outside of the village Conservation Area designation and is not within proximity of any listed buildings. The secondary land parcel included within the scheme for change of use to public amenity space adjacent to the village play area lies within the Conservation Area boundary and adjacent to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Somerton Manor House.
- 7.51 The Desk Based Heritage Assessment submitted to accompany the application outlines that the development site, with the exception of the proposed recreation ground land is visually separated from the historic village core by intervening open land and vegetation. There are therefore very low levels of intervisibility between the core development area and heritage assets, and the site as a whole does not contribute to their significance.
- 7.52 Whilst the play area addition lies within the open setting of the Somerton manorial complex and thus is judged to make a minor contribution to its significance, the proposal for this land

is simply a change of use and does not include any intrusive works that would have a material impact on the setting or significance of any heritage asset. The application would retain the existing boundary treatment of trees and thus would not harm the significance of this asset, or the wider Conservation Area setting.

- 7.53 With respect to archaeology, the assessment confirms that the site contains no recorded assets, and its archaeological potential is considered limited. Any below ground remains are considered to be of low significance and local interest, and potential impacts of development would therefore be negligible. Accordingly in line with the assessment no specific archaeological mitigation is considered necessary beyond proportionate monitoring.

### **Other Technical Matters**

#### *Flood Risk and Drainage*

- 7.54 As referenced earlier in this statement the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore classified as land within the lowest designated risk of flooding.
- 7.55 Surface water drainage associated with the residential redevelopment of the site is to be managed via a combination of soakaways and permeable paving. The 50% reduction in hardstanding across the primary site area facilitates a drainage strategy for surface water run-off generated by the development to be dealt with on-site, without generating adverse off-site impacts. This fully accords with NPPF paragraphs 164a) and 182, as well as Policy ESD7 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1.
- 7.56 Foul water drainage is proposed to be dealt with via a standalone on-site arrangement. Specifically there is an existing foul sewage treatment facility on site which will be upgraded to accommodate the residential development. Full details of the proposed drainage strategy and Flood Risk Assessment of the scheme are set out within the submitted Stomor report.

#### *Sustainability Measures*

- 7.57 All properties proposed under the development are to be constructed to target EPA A efficiency ratings. Specific sustainability measures to be applied across the site include the installation of air source heat pump and roof mounted solar photovoltaic panels to each dwelling.
- 7.58 In unison with the above measures a fabric first approach to design is to be applied, maximising the thermal efficiency of proposed dwellings from conception.



7.59 Electric Vehicle charging points and associated wiring infrastructure is also to be installed for each proposed dwelling as per submitted details.

7.60 Additional information in relation to proposed sustainability measures are set out within the Sustainability Statement embedded within the submitted Design and Access Statement.

#### Contamination

7.61 As an agricultural yard, the site is subject to potential ground contaminants associated with its previous agricultural uses. A Geo-Environmental Assessment has therefore been undertaken comprising Phase 1 desk study and Phase 2 physical investigation works for both the primary site and proposed allotment area. This assessment has identified localised exceedances of the adopted assessment criteria within the site, although these are non-volatile and likely associated with the bituminous materials and asbestos containing materials within made ground on site.

7.62 Resultantly, no large-scale remedial action is identified as likely to be required, with only hotspot removal and pathway control measures required, which may be appropriately addressed via a Remedial Strategy/Verification Plan secured as a condition against any grant of consent for residential development on the site.

7.63 Land within the proposed community allotment space will be made suitable for this use that includes low scale excavation at ground level by either removing contamination from the site and providing a remediation plan and/or providing clean new soil on the site for growing.

7.64 Subject to these measures contamination risks would be appropriately managed under the development with no residual implications for future occupiers.

#### Mineral Safeguarding

7.65 With regard to Policy M8 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Core Strategy 2017 part of the site lies within a designated mineral safeguarding area and therefore consideration of this matter is required to as part of any planning application for non-minerals development.

7.66 Having regard to the size and context of the area of the site contained within the MSA, it is evident that no mineral extraction is feasible or viable in this location. The small scale of the site and its proximity to surrounding residential receptors within the village of Somerton of



informs that mineral extraction would not be economically viable or feasible in this location. Furthermore, and as per paragraph 223 of the NPPF, a MSA should not create a presumption that the resources defined will be worked.

- 7.67 Accordingly it is evident that mineral extraction is not a potential option at the site, either in isolation or on a pre-development basis. This factor should not therefore comprise a material issue to determination of the application. Further information to qualify this position can be provided, if necessary, post submission.

#### Refuse collection

- 7.68 All proposed dwellings are to feature bin storage areas of an appropriate scale, with bins to be moved to site frontages for collection purposes. It is anticipated that refuse collection vehicles will enter the site for collection, utilising the two turning heads incorporated into the site layout to facilitate forward entry and exit of the site.

#### **Planning Balance and Benefits of Development**

- 7.69 The submitted indicative masterplan indicates that the development site can comfortably accommodate the quantum and scale of development proposed, and can be laid out in such way that it is possible to achieve a high-quality residential development that respects and harmonises with existing adjacent built form within the village of Somerton in terms of general scales and densities.
- 7.70 Whilst outside of the defined settlement boundary of Somerton, the site is in a sustainable edge-of-village location and the principle of residential development has been established in this location via the Class Q permission.
- 7.71 As evidenced through a number of technical aspects considered above, the development would deliver a package of significant material public benefits (beyond those that would be secured under the Class Q conversion). These are summarised as follows:
- The proposed residential development of 10 units would re-purpose a redundant agricultural yard and make a **positive contribution to the supply of deliverable homes** within the Local Authority area within the current plan period. Given that the current provisional requirements of the adopted CLP are not being met, with a five-year supply of homes that lies well below 3 years, this benefit of the development should be attributed very significant positive weight in the overall planning balance of the application.
  - The proposed development would facilitate the **delivery of a community allotment space** of 1 acre area to be gifted to the Parish Council for the use of the wider village and community



alongside future residents of the scheme. Access to this provision, and the development will be facilitated via the creation of a permissive footpath route between the village edge and development area.

- The proposed development would facilitate the transfer of a 1,064 m<sup>2</sup> area of existing land to supplement **communal public open space / play space** to the Somerton Play Area for the use of the wider village and community alongside future residents of the scheme.
- A **new permissive footpath** will be provided from the site to the southern end of Fritwell Road and connect into the existing footpath network via a **new pedestrian crossing point**.
- The proposal will facilitate **road safety enhancements** along Fritwell Road through proposed extension of the existing village 20mph speed limit area and associated traffic calming measures.
- Provision of 10 **attractive and sustainably constructed new dwellings (including 2 bungalows)** which would provide opportunities for those within the village to downsize and contribute towards needs within the area for properties of this type.
- In addition, the proposal will deliver **economic benefits** associated with the construction of the proposed development in terms of direct and indirect construction related Gross Value Added (GVA) in the local economy; and the spending power of future residents.
- A **net gain for biodiversity of 18.19%** for habitat units and 185.53% for hedgerow units, in excess of statutory uplift requirements. 0.88 individual tree units are to be offset to meet trading rule requirements.

7.72 Conversely, potential impacts of the redevelopment development are highly limited. The scheme would introduce 4 additional dwellings over and above the extant Class Q permission. Whilst these units are not sited within a settlement area as per the spatial strategy of the development plan, they would be provided through the sympathetic redevelopment of a redundant previously developed site, within close proximity and accessibility to an existing settlement.

7.73 The proposed community allotments, public open space/play space, highways enhancements or permissive footway would not otherwise be delivered under the consented Class Q barn conversion scheme for 6 dwellings, but would be viable as a result of the comprehensive re-development outlined.

7.74 When considering technical matters, the development would not generate unacceptable material harm in terms of design/landscape or amenity impacts, heritage or archaeological impacts, ecological factors, highways capacity/safety or flood risk.

7.75 As such, and in accordance with the paragraph 11d) 'tilted balance' in decision taking that



will apply to assessment of the application, it is submitted that the adverse impacts of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Resultantly, in line with the provisions of the NPPF, planning consent for the development should be granted without delay.



## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 This application proposes the residential development of a redundant agricultural site adjacent to the village of Somerton to provide 10 high quality dwellings including 2 bungalow units, together with public benefits in the form of land for community allotments, a footpath link and open space.
- 8.2 As outlined in the preceding sections, on the basis that a 5-year supply of housing land cannot be demonstrated and in line with presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, the 'tilted balance' in decision taking must apply. This requires that where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 8.3 The only harm arising in this case would be arising in relation to the siting of residential development outside of a settlement area in association with Policy ESD1 of the CLP. However this policy is determined to be out of date by the lack of a 5 year housing land supply, as per footnote 8 of NPPF paragraph 11d). Furthermore, the acceptable principle of siting residential development on this site has already been established by virtue of the Class Q consent, which as detailed above comprises a viable and realistic fallback position in planning terms.
- 8.4 This Statement highlights the suite of substantial benefits that would be delivered via the creation of 10 no. dwellings in an area with a demonstrable shortfall in housing supply.
- 8.5 Overall, it is submitted that the proposals result in no adverse effects that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits in this case, and as a result would respectfully request that planning permission is granted without delay.

**Appendix 1 Public Consultation Event Flyer**

## Consultation Event: Proposed Development at Fritwell Road Farmyard

📅 6th November 2025

🕒 4pm-7pm

📍 Somerton Village Hall

Join us to view the plans, meet the team, and share your feedback on the proposed development



The farmyard off Fritwell Road is no longer required for agriculture, and therefore a new residential development is proposed.

Prior approval has already been granted for the conversion of one of the barns to 6 houses. However, Laxton Properties are now reviewing a comprehensive redevelopment to enhance the site and deliver a higher quality residential development.

Laxton Properties is proposing an alternative development of 10 purpose built, sustainable homes and this proposal would have the opportunity to deliver a suite of public benefits that the existing prior approval cannot deliver, including:


- Allotments
- Public open space
- Footpath connection
- Highway improvements



Previous Laxton Development



Previous Laxton Development



Fritwell Road

Ardley Road

Existing Permitted Residential Development

Proposed Residential Development

Proposed Community Allotments

Proposed connecting footpath

Proposed Public Open Space adjacent to existing playground

## Appendix 2 Public Consultation Information Boards

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FRITWELL ROAD

#### INTRODUCTION

##### WELCOME

Welcome to this consultation event relating to potential future development at Fritwell Road, Somerton.

This exhibition seeks to explain the outline of the proposals and particularly to invite comments and suggestions from the public, which will assist the preparation of the planning application for the site.

Laxton have assembled an extensive team of specialist consultants to develop the proposals and make this opportunity a reality. Representatives of the team are here to assist you with any questions you might have.

We want to hear your views on the proposals for the site and our initial concept and ideas.

##### ABOUT LAXTON

Laxton Properties is a small independent Property Development Company based in Bathwick, just outside of and run by Clive and Catherine Laxton. Founded in 2006, we are focused on the delivery of high quality, well built, sustainable homes and communities in great locations throughout Bathwick, Hamworthy & the surrounding areas.

As a business we take great pride in what we do and we want to ensure that the development we undertake with people's communities are well designed and will stand the test of time. This means good architecture, landscaping, materials, landscaping and generally sustainable homes.

As a company we have committed to only building homes that are 'B' rated and have installed the use of gas central heating across the development. This means that our homes are fully powered by electricity and incorporating renewable energy sources like solar PV. Solar heat pumps to provide space heating and hot water.

We believe in going back and have committed, since 2021, to giving away a minimum 10% of our net profits annually to good causes.

##### ABOUT BHPP ARCHITECTS

At BHPP Architects we pride ourselves on adopting a unique and individual approach to each commission awarded to us. We have great experience in designing schemes in sensitive locations, often requiring particular skills in dealing with listed buildings or buildings within a Conservation Area and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Our experience covers a broad range of projects in both local and national, from the redevelopment of boarded urban sites to sensitive schemes in rural villages and from strategic development sites to one-off houses.

Our philosophy of 'contextual design' means that our architectural style will be derived from the specific site location and so will vary from the traditional to the contemporary as appropriate.

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FRITWELL ROAD

#### APPLICATION DETAILS

##### CLASS Q

In March 2025 Laxton secured approval, under the Permitted Development rules, to convert the existing barn to the centre of the site for residential purposes. The completed mix of three and four-bedroom units, with limited amenity space and no wider benefits to the community.

The approval established a residential use on a large part of the site, albeit it converted the new properties would be surrounded by remaining agricultural uses.

These plans seek to provide a more comprehensive redevelopment of the yard, to provide a high-quality and better planned residential environment and make best use of a site that already contains several buildings and hardstanding.

There is currently a shortage of housing in the area. Chiswell District Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of land for housing against its target, as required by national policy. The Council therefore requested to consider any proposed for new housing and come to a decision as to whether the impact of development would significantly outweigh the benefits.

##### FOOTPRINT COMPARISON ANALYSIS

A footprint analysis has been undertaken to demonstrate that the proposed 10-dwelling residential scheme will result in a reduction in overall built form and hardstanding, alongside an increase in green and landscaped areas. We therefore consider that the proposal will contribute positively to the local setting.

Category	Existing Footprint Analysis	Proposed Footprint Analysis
Green Space	650m <sup>2</sup>	4197m <sup>2</sup> (64% increase)
Built Form	2880m <sup>2</sup>	1420m <sup>2</sup> (49% decrease)
Hardstanding	4352m <sup>2</sup>	2197m <sup>2</sup> (49% decrease)

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FRITWELL ROAD

#### PROPOSAL

##### PROPOSED SCHEME

Laxton Properties' vision is to make best use of an redundant agricultural yard to provide ten high quality new homes in an affordable and spacious environment.

We propose to demolish the existing barn on the site and remove all associated concrete hardstanding.

**Housing Mix:**  
 The scheme proposes 3 bed and 4 bed properties. Two of these are shown as bungalows to give people the opportunity to downsize into a more accessible property.

**Scale & Density:**  
 The density and scale of the scheme has been carefully considered to reflect the edge of village location and respect the surrounding countryside. All houses will be a maximum of 2 storeys.

**Design:**  
 The design of the scheme seeks to reflect the site's agricultural past and takes cues from respective sites and settings/level of the adjacent Dovecote House and elsewhere within the village.

We intend to use traditional materials such as sandstone and natural stone wherever possible, with introduction of more modern features where appropriate.

**Sustainability:**  
 All houses will be built to modern standards and make use of renewable energy generation technologies. Water use will also be limited to 110 litres per person per day in the wettest month.

**Proposed Site Plan:**

- All plots benefit from on-plot parking
- Access to proposed allotments within the northern part of the site
- Provide pedestrian access into the village of Somerton, via the western boundary
- Provide a new access point for Dovecote House
- Retain and incorporate large amounts of existing trees and landscaping features throughout
- Proposed allotments within the eastern parcel of the site
- Associated allotment parking
- PV panels to all plots
- Visitor Parking

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FRITWELL ROAD

#### TECHNICAL INPUT

##### HIGHWAYS

Vehicle access to the site will be via the existing farm access from Fritwell Road, which will be improved or replaced, as appropriate. Visibility splays of the site access commensurate with residential use are to be provided within the extent of the adopted highway. The site access road will take the form of an unsealed surface road extending to two turning heads. Such that the site access road will be suitable for the site, farm and any future farm.

The Internal Highway arrangements are also able to accommodate a fire appliance in case of an emergency as well as typical day-to-day servicing by delivery vehicles. The number of vehicle movements to be generated by the site will be low and will have a negligible impact on the operation of the local highway network and will be imperceptible to existing users.

At the southeastern corner of the development, the site access road will extend towards the east to provide access to allotments.

A footpath will be provided from the site access road at the northeastern corner of the site towards the west along the southern side of Fritwell Road then extending behind Dovecote House before linking with Fritwell Road at the junction with Fritwell Road. It is anticipated that an informal crossing point will be provided in the locality and we are liaising with Oxfordshire County Council. The footpath and crossing point will provide safe pedestrian access between the existing village and the site/allotments.

Car and cycle parking for each dwelling will be provided in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Parking Standards for New Development.

**Drainage**  
 There will be a reduction in hardstanding of over 20%, meaning that any surface water runoff generated by the development will be capable of being dealt with on-site, without impacts elsewhere.

There is an existing roof sewage treatment facility on site which will be upgraded to cope with the additional housing.

##### LANDSCAPE & ECOLOGY

###### Ecological Baseline

A series of ecological surveys have been undertaken, including an Extended UK Habitat Classification Survey to assess the potential for protected species. A Ground Level Tree Assessment for nesting features in the trees and a Climbing Potential Roof Feature Inspection on the trees has also been undertaken.

**Key findings include:**

- No signs of badgers during the survey.
- Low potential for barn owls.
- Low potential for roosting bats in a total of two trees.
- Low potential for commensal and foraging bats.
- Potential presence of nesting birds within the hedgerow and trees.

The planning application will be supported by a subsequent Ecological Impact Assessment to provide a full shading including measures to mitigate and compensate the ecological impacts. The scheme will also look to integrate features such as nest boxes for birds and bats to provide nesting and roosting habitats for these species.

###### Landscaping and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The landyard currently supports predominantly bare ground, hardstanding and trees, modified grassed areas, trees, hedgerows and woodland to the south, important ecological features located along the boundaries such as the woodland, tree line and hedgerows will be retained and protected. New tree planting will be provided across the development to enhance the development's character and create an attractive living environment.

In line with the Environment Act 2021, the scheme will seek to deliver 10% BNG compared to the site's pre-development baseline. As a first priority this will be on-site. However, this is not always achievable within the site boundary so the space has to be accessible, and the policy rules require 'transferable habitat replacement'.

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FRITWELL ROAD

### COMMUNITY BENEFITS

#### VILLAGE INTEGRATION

Following positive discussions with Somerton Parish Council, we are keen to ensure that the future residents of this site are integrated with the wider village and the development brings benefits to the wider community.

As such, alongside the additional homes we are proposing the following community benefits:

- An area of land adjacent to the site will be provided for delivery of new community allotments together with a small parking area
- A footpath is to be created from the western edge of the site to the southern end of Fritwell Road, to provide a safe walking route to and from the site, and significantly, the proposed community allotment space adjacent to it.
- Close to the area of land gifted to the Parish Council to enable expansion of existing village recreation area on Akeley Road
- Improvements to Fritwell Road, including moving the 20mph speed restrictions further north beyond the site entrance



Community Benefits Map

#### ELEVATIONAL TREATMENTS

Our elevational designs have been shaped by a close study of Somerton and the surrounding villages. We've spent time understanding the local character from the materials used in traditional homes to the simple detailing that gives the area its charm.

#### Key design features include:

- A contemporary interpretation of the local farmhouse style
- Limestone walls framed by traditional village buildings
- A variety of roof finishes, including natural stone tiles and slate, echoing the mix seen in Somerton
- Stone window headers and cills, reflecting the craftsmanship found throughout the area
- Our aim is to create a collection of homes that feel naturally part of the village respectful of Somerton's past, while designed for modern living



Proposed Homes



Proposed Barn Conversion

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT FRITWELL ROAD

### FEEDBACK & TIMESCALES

#### LEAVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

It is important to us to take local views and issues into account when planning a new development and we would value your feedback. We would be very pleased if you would take the time to fill out the questionnaire provided if you could place your comments in the box provided or return via post or email to the following address by 12th November:

Please write to us or email us at the following:

2 Amersham House,  
 Mill Street,  
 Bathonhurst,  
 Bath, BA2 2DT  
 or by email to  
[info@laxtonproperties.co.uk](mailto:info@laxtonproperties.co.uk)

We will consider all the comments received, taking them into account whilst the proposals are developed.

#### TIMESCALES

The team is aiming to submit an application towards the end of 2025. This timeline allows us sufficient opportunity to carefully review and consider any feedback received during this consultation period. We want to ensure that the final proposals reflect local views and incorporate constructive comments wherever possible, so that the scheme we submit fully responds to both planning policy and community aspirations.



Proposition Plan



Sketches Street Scene 1



Sketches Street Scene 2



## **Bedford**

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bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk

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