

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V0139/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	24.1.2013
PARISH	GREAT COXWELL
WARD MEMBER(S)	Roger Cox Mohinder Kainth Alison Thomson
APPLICANT	SGR (Faringdon) Limited
SITE	Fernham Fields, Land to the East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon
PROPOSAL	Outline planning application for residential development, public open space, associated infrastructure and new access (As amended by Drawing No: 2360.3000 Revision F accompanying agent's letter dated 11 November 2013).
AMENDMENTS	As above
GRID REFERENCE	428207/194250
OFFICER	Peter Brampton

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is located on the southwestern edge of Faringdon. It comprises one large field which totals approximately 7.36 hectares in area. Along the western boundary runs Coxwell Road, a main route into Faringdon from the south. The A420 runs along the southern boundary and is the southern by-pass to the town. Fernham Road is a narrow lane running along the eastern boundary, the use of which has been truncated by the A420. Finally, to the north lie residential properties and an area of land with planning permission for 35 dwellings, currently under construction.
- 1.2 Adjacent to Fernham Road is Willow House, a single residential property. The application site borders this property on two sides. There are three accesses to the application site, two on Coxwell Road and one from the A420. These are all agricultural field gates.
- 1.3 The application site is largely featureless. There was a large derelict barn close to the southernmost entrance on Coxwell Road, which was removed earlier this year due to safety concerns. A mature hedgerow lines the western Coxwell Road boundary, whilst a belt of semi-mature trees define the southern boundary with the A420. These trees are planted on the embankment that supports the A420. The site slopes gently upwards in a southwest to northeast direction, with the total rise being around 12 metres.
- 1.4 It is important to highlight at an early stage that this land falls within the parish of Great Coxwell. The main part of Great Coxwell lies to the southwest, to the west of the A420. At the closest point, the application site is around 1 kilometre from the conservation area of Great Coxwell, where the majority of the historic core of the village lies. Perhaps the most important buildings in Great Coxwell are St Giles Church, a Grade II* listed building around 1.15 kilometres from the application site, and The Great Barn, a Grade I listed building owned by The National Trust, which is around 1.1 kilometres from the site.
- 1.5 Despite falling within Great Coxwell parish, the applicant treats the site as part of Faringdon. To that end, the site sits around 1.4 kilometres to the south of the historic

core of Faringdon, where the main facilities of the town lie. Historic maps show Faringdon has grown to the south and west over the last century. When approaching the town from the south, the Coxwell Road forms the first visual introduction to the town.

1.6 The application comes to committee as Great Coxwell Parish Council recommends refusal, and as 120 letters of objection have been received.

1.7 A location plan is **attached** as Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 This application seeks outline consent for the erection of 200 dwellings on the site. All matters are reserved except for means of access. The illustrative masterplan shows a range of dwellings types, ranging from 2 to 5 bedrooms. The majority of the units are houses, but some two-storey flats are provided. The buildings are generally of two storeys. 40% of the houses (i.e. 80 units), will be affordable units. The application has been amended to incorporate additional landscaping and a parameters plan to show the approach to the master planning of the site

2.2 To achieve 200 houses on this site, a density of 27.3 dwellings per hectare is necessary. Approximately 2.2 hectares of public open space will be provided within the development. This open space will take the form of a village green in the centre of the development, with an area of informal open space along the southern boundary and areas of formal open space within the site. The applicants propose to strengthen and enhance the existing landscaping along the boundaries of the site, including a new buffer along the northern boundary.

2.3 The one vehicular access to the site will be positioned around halfway up the western boundary of the site, opening onto Coxwell Road. Highway improvements are proposed as part of this scheme, with a ghosted right turn allowing access to the development. The applicants also propose financial contributions to allow improvements to the junction of Coxwell Road with the A420. A number of pedestrian and cycle routes are proposed, onto Coxwell Road and Fernham Road.

2.4 Financial contributions towards off-site services are required to mitigate the impact of the additional residents who will occupy the proposed development. As well as ensuring affordable housing and public open space is achieved on site, the applicants will provide financial contributions to a number of infrastructure requirements. The contributions currently proposed by the applicant can be summarised thus. They are the subject of further negotiations with both the county and district council.

2.5 County Council agreement

- Education - £2,096,569 – Meets full request of council
- Libraries - £41,738 – Meets full request of council
- Youth support services - (incl. in Sport, leisure and open space contribution)
- Waste Management - £32,576 – Meets full request of council
- Museum Resource Centre - £2,545 – Meets full request of council
- Social and Health Care - £45,150 – Meets full request of council
- Public Transport improvement - £200,000 – Meets full request of council
- Highway Improvements - Secured as part of a Section 278 agreement with the highways authority – to meet full request of council
- Community Bus Service - (incl. in Sport, leisure and open space contribution)
- Bus Shelters - Secured as part of a Section 278 agreement with the Highways Authority – to meet full request of council

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- Monitoring and Administration - £10,116 – Meets full request of council
- 2.6
- **Vale of White Horse agreement** – Meets full request of council
 - Street Naming - £3,938 – Meets full request of council
 - Sport , Leisure and open space – £427,647 – Meets full request of council
 - Public Art – £45,000
 - Police – £20,820
- 2.7 Both Faringdon Town Council and Great Coxwell Parish Council have made requests for financial contributions to the provision/improvement/maintenance of public services in their respective parishes. The sums proposed are £25,026 and £18,010 respectively
- 2.8 It should be noted that the Applicant has agreed to finance through the appropriate processes the upgrade of the Faringdon Sewage Treatment Works processing capacity (see [6.60]). Should the upgrade works provide additional capacity for other developments then the extra over cost shall be offset from the above contributions, in agreement with the Council. It is then anticipated that such costs would be recouped through the other forthcoming developments. A unilateral undertaking has been provided by the applicant confirming their intentions in this regard. This undertaking also covers road upgrades at the junction of Coxwell Road and the A420.
- 2.9 Extracts from the applications plans are **attached** as Appendix 2. Documents submitted in support of the application, included the planning statement, design and access statement, flood risk assessment and transport statement are available on the council's website.
- 3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**
- 3.1 **Great Coxwell Parish Council** – Recommends refusal for the following main reasons:
- The proposed development is unsustainable when assessed against the definition of sustainable development within the NPPF
 - Harm to the landscape of the area
 - Road safety will be compromised by the additional traffic movements associated with 200 houses
 - Scheme represents an overdevelopment of the site
 - Insufficient highways improvements proposed
 - Increased flood risk
 - Light pollution
 - Insufficient infrastructure to support this amount of development – in particular schools, sewerage and water pressure
 - Coalescence of Faringdon and Great Coxwell as a result of this development, which will triple the number of houses within Great Coxwell parish
 - Harm to the setting of the historic setting of Great Coxwell, which includes the Tithe Barn and St Giles Church, both listed buildings
 - Unacceptable levels of noise for the proposed dwellings near the A420
- The Parish Council have provided several responses to this application, which are **copied** in full as Appendix 3
- 3.2 **Great Faringdon Town Council** – Recommends refusal for the following main reasons:
- This is not a sustainable location for residential development in Faringdon
 - Increased flood risk
 - Obstructive in an area of significant landscape value
 - Only one access road

- Increased risk to highway safety
- Noise pollution from A420 will affect quality of life for new residents
- Increased pressure on car parking/traffic concerns in town centre
- Water pressure
- Lack of capacity in existing sewer network
- Disproportionate amount of development for town
- Contrary to emerging Faringdon Local Plan
- Proposal does not provide employment prospects for residents

The Town Council objections to the original and amended schemes are **copied** in full as **Appendix 4**

3.3 Neighbour Representations – One hundred and twenty letters of objection have been received to this application. The main concerns can be summarised thus:

- The site is too far removed from the town centre to be a sustainable location for development – it will be too far to walk to and difficult to cycle to the town
- Development will triple the number of houses in Great Coxwell parish
- Harm to setting of historic core of Great Coxwell
- Contrary to emerging neighbourhood plans
- Insufficient infrastructure to cope with the increase in population – in particular schools, health centres, dentists etc
- The development of this site will harm the character of the area
- The scheme will cause the loss of a vital green space that separates Faringdon from Great Coxwell
- The loss of a well-used green space for recreation purposes and by wildlife
- 200 houses represents an overdevelopment of the site
- Lack of landscaping within the site to mitigate the visual impact of the development
- The existing local roads in Faringdon and Great Coxwell are already at capacity and the additional traffic from this development will endanger highway safety
- Will increase traffic movements at dangerous junction of the A420, with insufficient upgrades to junction proposed
- Insufficient parking within the development
- Increased flood risk
- Lack of capacity in existing sewer network
- Reduction in water pressures
- Loss of farming land
- Increase in light pollution
- Lack of jobs in area to support population growth
- Cumulative impact of housing will harm the community spirit in Faringdon
- Lack of community spirit within site
- Noise from A420 will harm living conditions for future residents
- General increase to noise and pollution in the area
- Poor footpath links to Great Coxwell
- Inappropriate public open space
- Lack of demand for housing in the area
- Lack of parking in the town to support further growth

In addition to the above representations, an online petition set up by Great Coxwell Parish Council against extensions to Faringdon within the boundaries of Great Coxwell has, at the time of writing, attracted nearly 400 “signatures”

3.4 Oxfordshire County Council Highways – No objections subject to conditions relating to the new access, footway improvements, bus stops, residential travel plan, construction traffic management plan, SUDS compliant drainage, parking and road

- layout
- 3.5 **County Archaeologist** - No objections following completion of archaeology field survey
- 3.6 **Drainage Engineer** – No objections subject to conditions relating to surface and foul water drainage strategy and the provision of a SUDS complaint drainage scheme
- 3.7 **Thames Water Development Control** – Has indicated an incapacity of the existing sewage treatment works to accommodate additional housing and development within Faringdon.
- 3.8 **Environment Agency** – Objection received to any drainage solution that involves the on-site storage and the tankering of waste off-site. Recommends borehole is resampled given initial results of slightly elevated levels of nickel
- 3.9 **Housing Development Team** – No objections subject to provision of 40% affordable housing
- 3.10 **Natural England** – No objections
- 3.11 **Coutryside Officer** – No objections subject to condition requiring adoption of mitigation measures, particularly those relating to badgers, in accompanying species survey
- 3.12 **Forestry Officer** – Detailed layout will need to show compliance with the requirements of the relevant British Standard 5837 of 2012 – “Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction”
- 3.13 **Equalities Officer** – General comments on design of scheme provided
- 3.14 **Health & Housing - Noise** - No objections following review of noise assessment provided in support of application. Condition requiring adoption of mitigation measures proposed within that report necessary
- 3.15 **Health and Housing – Air Quality** – No objections
- 3.16 **Health & Housing – Contaminated Land** – No objections subject to undertaking of further surveys as proposed by reports accompanying application
- 3.17 **Conservation Officer** – *“It is disappointing that land to the east of the site has not been added to the application. The layout of the site should safeguard a more direct pedestrian and cycle route from the site to Fernham road. We need confirmation that the open space standards, set out in the council’s SPD, can be achieved on the site bearing in mind that land used as SUDS and as a noise or landscape buffer are not included in the standard. Once the level and type of open space for the site has been established, its location should be reconsidered in order to benefit residents and reduce the density of parts of the site.”*
- 3.18 **Landscape Architect** – *“This is a sensitive site on the southern edge of Faringdon in an area where development will have a high impact on the landscape setting of the town. It is sad to see this proposed expansion of the town spilling over the ridge to the south. The site is quite well contained with the existing trees along the A420 and the hedge adjacent to Coxwell Road, though not all of this hedge is to be retained. The proposed density looks very high for an edge of town development, especially when viewed against existing adjacent houses. Will noise mitigation measures be required in the landscape area adjacent to the A420, this is a very noisy area of the site?”*

3.19 **National Trust** – Objects to the application given the negative impacts on the setting of Great Coxwell, in particular Great Coxwell Barn

3.20 **CPRE** – Objects to the application. Considers the site is an unsustainable location for new development, the scheme would harm the historic character of Great Coxwell, and the landscape. Also raises concerns relating to highway safety, school capacity, flooding and noise pollution

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 None

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

GS1 - Developments in Existing Settlements

GS2 - Development in the Countryside

DC1 - Design

DC3 - Design against crime

DC4 - Public Art

DC5 - Access

DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling

DC8 - The Provision of Infrastructure and Services

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

H10 - Development in the Five Main Settlements

H13 - Development Elsewhere

H15 - Housing Densities

H16 - Size of Dwelling and Lifetime Homes

H17 - Affordable Housing

H23 - Open Space in New Housing Development

NE7 - The North Vale Corallian Ridge

NE10 - Urban Fringes and Countryside Gaps

NE12 - Great Western Community Forest

5.2 **Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/SPG)**

Residential Design Guide – December 2009

Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009

Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008

Affordable Housing – July 2006

Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006

Planning and Public Art – July 2006

5.3 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** – March 2012

Paragraphs 14 and 29 – presumption in favour of sustainable development

Paragraphs 34 & 37 – encourage minimised journey length to work, shopping, leisure and education

Paragraph 47 – five year housing supply requirement

Paragraph 50 – create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities

Paragraphs 57, 60 & 61 – promote local distinctiveness and integrate development into the natural, built and historic environment

Paragraph 99 – Flood risk assessment

Paragraph 109 – contribution to and enhancement of the natural environment

Paragraph 111 – encourage the effective use of land

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Current policy position

- 6.1 This scheme is contrary to Policies GS2 and H10 of the Local Plan, which restrict development on unallocated greenfield sites and housing developments outside the towns of the district. Thus, ordinarily, the council would only consider the potential development of this land through the local plan process given the site's size and location and its potential to be part of a larger strategic housing land allocation. This process would ensure the planning for and management of the necessary combined infrastructure delivery. However, the council must assess this application on its own merits.

Principle of development

- 6.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is clear that council's should grant planning permission where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, unless any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole (Para 14 refers).
- 6.3 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF confirms the need for a council to have a demonstrable five-year supply of housing land, with a 20% buffer to accommodate a persistent under-supply of housing land. It is well documented this council does not currently have this five-year supply and has persistently under-delivered on housing. This lack of a five-year housing land supply requires some flexibility in line with the NPPF when assessing applications that do not accord with local plan policies.
- 6.4 This approach is necessarily for a limited time, and is aimed at identifying sites suitable to address the housing shortfall whilst meeting the relevant sustainability and design criteria of the NPPF.
- 6.5 It is clear this application is contrary to local plan policies GS2 and H10. However, whilst the council does not have a five-year housing land supply, these two policies are inconsistent with the NPPF. Therefore, the council must assess the proposed application on its site-specific merits and whether, under the NPPF, it is a sustainable form of development.
- 6.6 This assessment needs to balance the desire of the council to assess the scheme through a strategic sites allocation process against the NPPF's tests, which primarily relate to location, design, landscape impact, drainage, and highway safety.

Emerging policy position

- 6.7 The emerging Local Plan Part One identifies Faringdon as the market town of the Western Vale sub-area. Within this sub-area, 1468 houses will be provided by 2029, of which sites for 337 units remain to be identified (not including planning permissions granted since April 2012).
- 6.8 Within the emerging strategy, land south of Park Road in Faringdon is identified as a site suitable for new housing. Given this potential allocation, the developer of this site has bought forward an application for residential development. This site was considered against land of which this application site forms part for its suitability as a strategic allocation. The Park Road site was preferred for its good quality public transport routes and the lesser landscape impact.
- 6.9 It is important to reiterate this emerging local plan only has very limited weight at this stage, as it has only undergone an initial public consultation. Thus, at this time, the overriding definition of sustainable development remains that of the NPPF and its associated tests, which are outlined above.

Coalescence of Faringdon and Great Coxwell

- 6.10 One of the key local objections to this proposal has been that this development will result in the coalescence of Faringdon with the village of Great Coxwell, particularly as the application site sits within the boundaries of Great Coxwell parish. Officers accept that it is entirely proper to resist proposals that would allow the urban sprawl of Faringdon into the countryside or significantly reduce the separation between these two settlements, which are of very different sizes and characters. However, officers do not consider this particular proposal would cause an undue amount of coalescence between the two settlements.
- 6.11 The scheme has been designed to appear and function as an urban extension to Faringdon. As outlined in Section 1, at the closest point, the site is over 1 kilometre from the Great Coxwell conservation area, which delineates the historic core of the village. It is also 0.8 kilometres from the eastern edge of the village itself. Thus, there will remain a good distance between the two settlements.
- 6.12 Crucially, the site will be physically contained by Coxwell Road and the A420 from the village of Great Coxwell. These roads in particular act as a strong barrier that separates the two settlements. Furthermore, the existing and future landscaping will visually contain the site in a manner that ensures it will appear as part of Faringdon, not part of Great Coxwell. Whilst views into Great Coxwell from the site will be possible, and the new development will be seen from Great Coxwell, against the backdrop of the rest of Faringdon, the two settlements will remain visually entirely separate and distinct.
- 6.13 The Parameter Plan also demonstrates how the proposal is designed as an extension to Faringdon. The pedestrian links are designed to allow easy access to Faringdon town centre. No footpaths are proposed that would enable direct access to Great Coxwell. Officers are satisfied that any resident of this development would consider themselves to be living in Faringdon, not Great Coxwell. Officers' assessment of this scheme leads from this basis.

Sustainability credentials

- 6.14 As outlined, Faringdon is identified as a growth point in both the current and emerging local plan. The council believes the town has the requisite facilities to meet the growing demand for housing in the area. Faringdon Town Council contends this is not a sustainable location for development, predominantly given the distance it will be from the town centre and its amenities. The applicants own information confirms the distance between the site and the town centre is around 1.4 kilometres. Officers agree to walk into the town from the site would take some time, particularly given the hilly nature of the landscape. However, this is not unreasonable for a market town, particularly one which has evolved from a historic core.
- 6.15 Furthermore, the distance between an application site and the local facilities is just one aspect of whether a development is sustainable. The application includes a number of improvements to the accessibility and linkages between this part of Faringdon and the town centre. Pedestrian and cycle routes will be provided within the site, linking to the existing local road network. This existing network will be improved, with the Coxwell Road footway being widened, the public right of way along the southern boundary being improved and improvements to the footway that links towards the college/leisure centre on Fernham Road. Furthermore, contributions to public transport provision will ensure all residents live within 400 metres of a bus stop.
- 6.16 Officers accept, given the distance involved, some residents will be tempted to drive into the town centre. However, equally, officers consider the applicants have taken

reasonable steps to encourage residents to use sustainable methods of transport to access Faringdon. A condition attached to this consent requires the applicants to agree a Residential Travel Plan with the council, which will be passed to all new residents of the development.

- 6.17 There has been strong local objection to this scheme based on the impact on local services, with particular focus on schools, health facilities etc. The applicant accepts the need to provide financial contributions to offset the impact of this development on local services. In terms of primary school provision, this development will contribute to the provision of a new one form entry primary school (210 pupils) in the town. Over £1.3 million will be provided by this development to the construction of this school. In terms of secondary education, the county council intend to extend the existing college in the town, with over £710,000 requested from this development to support this approach.
- 6.18 The current level of contributions is summarised in Paras. 2.5 and 2.6 and includes financial contributions to a wide range of services, including social and health care. As confirmed by Section 8 of this report, a period of three months is proposed to negotiate and secure appropriate financial contributions for the area. These contributions will include monies for the local town and parish council for projects that can be justified against the requirements of Paragraph 204 of the NPPF. This requires all financial contributions requested to be necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the impacts of that development and reasonable in scale to that impact.
- 6.19 The applicants have agreed that 40% of the 200 units on the site will be affordable, in line with Local Plan Policy H17. This provision of 80 units is an important benefit of this scheme, given the acute need for additional affordable housing in the district.
- 6.20 Officers have discussed the deliverability of this site with the applicant. The NPPF is clear that for a site to be considered a sustainable location for new development, it must be deliverable. The applicant has an option over the whole site, which is currently within a single ownership. There is a national house builder on-board, whilst initial discussions with a registered provider to take on the affordable units are also ongoing.
- 6.21 Given the clear demand for additional housing in the district, the sustainable nature of Faringdon as a settlement, the reasonable proximity of the site to local services and the improvements to sustainable methods of transport proposed as part of the planning gain of this development, this site is a suitable location for housing development when assessed against the tests of the NPPF.

Cumulative impact considerations

- 6.22 To calculate the impact of this development, it has been assumed to be part of Faringdon, despite falling within Great Coxwell parish boundary. This is for the reasons outlined in Paras. 6.11-6.13. Using the latest population data available to the council, which assumes an occupancy rate of 2.409 people per house, this development will increase the population of Faringdon by 482 people (rounded). Using the latest census data, this represents an increase in the population of 6.85%. 200 houses represent a 6.64% increase in the number of households in the town. These increases are not considered significant.
- 6.23 However, it is also important to consider the cumulative impact of this development and the emerging allocated site south of Park Road. This application is only at outline stage and at the time of writing is less advanced than this scheme. It proposes circa 380 dwellings. Using the same data, the overall increase in the population of Faringdon will

be 1397 people, a 19.86% increase; whilst the overall increase in the households will be 19.25% (all figures are rounded).

- 6.24 It is important to note there are two other applications for residential development in the town at the time of writing. These are all on the western edge of Faringdon and are undergoing negotiation with council officers.
- 6.25 Overall, a near 20% increase in the population, with the possibility of further schemes coming forward does represent quite a significant increase in the population of the town. However, the emerging Local Plan makes clear that Faringdon is a strategic growth area for the district up to 2029. When the permissive approach to new housing in Faringdon and the current housing shortfall in the district are considered, officers conclude the increase in the population of the town is not so high as to be harmful to the character and vitality of the town.

Use of land

- 6.26 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states, “*planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.*” The site is presently agricultural land, so it is not brownfield land. This greenfield site lies in relatively open countryside, albeit on the edge of Faringdon. Neighbouring objectors have highlighted the need to retain agricultural land.
- 6.27 The site mostly consists of mudstones of the Ampthill Clay formation. The site is considered low-grade agricultural land. Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states, “*Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a high quality.*” Given this stance, there is no objection to the loss of this land from agricultural production.

Affordable Housing and Housing mix

- 6.28 As outlined in Para 6.19, the applicant has indicated their acceptance to the requisite affordable housing provision on the site. This is 40% (80 units) to accord with local plan policy. This provision will be secured through a legal agreement should the recommendation of approval be agreed.
- 6.29 The distribution of the affordable housing within the site will be confirmed by the reserved matters application, should this outline planning permission be granted. The council will require an appropriate spread of affordable units, mixed in with, and indistinguishable from, the market housing.
- 6.30 The affordable housing mix currently proposed will be 1 bed (33.8%), 2 bed (44.3%), 3 bed (17.6%) and 4 bed (5.1%). The precise make up of this mix is under negotiation with the council’s housing team at the time of writing. The mix of the market housing will be 1 bed (3.3%), 2 bed (15%), 3 bed (48.3%), 4 bed (28.2%) and 5 bed (5%).

Visual impact – landscape, layout, design and appearance

- 6.31 The NPPF is explicit in seeking a high quality outcome for good design in terms of layout and building form, seeing as a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 109 states, “*the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.*”
- 6.32 As outlined in Section 1, the site is visually quite well contained by Coxwell Road, the A420 and boundary planting. The applicants propose to retain and supplement most of this planting.

- 6.33 Policy H15 indicates the new residential development in this location should achieve a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare, provided that a high quality living environment can be achieved and the character of the area not harmed. 200 houses on a site of this size achieve a gross density of 27 units per hectare, marginally below the policy requirement. Net density is 38.8 dwellings per hectare.
- 6.34 However, as identified by the council's landscape officer, in reality, in this location, the proposed density appears high relative to the surrounding residential development. Given the edge of town location, housing densities are noticeably lower, with developments such as Carter Crescent and Tollington Court having extremely low densities. In contrast, the development to the immediate north of the site, yet to be built, has a density of around 40 dwellings per hectare.
- 6.35 Overall, the assessment of density is a balancing act between the need to secure an efficient use of the land whilst preserving the character of the area. Given this layout complies with Policy H15, and the permissive stance taken on a higher density scheme on an adjacent site; officers conclude this scheme does not represent an overdevelopment of the site.
- 6.36 The layout of the site is a reserved matter, so is not part of this application. However, detailed indicative layout plans, showing the arrangement of 200 units on the site has been submitted and the subject of discussion during the determination of this application. Ultimately, the approach taken was found to be unacceptable for a number of reasons, in particular the poor permeability and legibility of the layout, block sizes and the position of the highest density housing on the southern part of the site, where the landscape impact will be greatest.
- 6.37 Accordingly, the applicants have reverted to a parameter plan, which shows an indicative road layout, on and off site linkages and residential "zones". This plan has been developed in close consultation with the council's urban design and planning officers and is considered acceptable.
- 6.38 This parameters plan positions the largest area of public open space in a central location within the site. The highest density residential development will be around this central zone, with the density dropping from 40-45 dwellings per hectare in the centre to 29-34 dwellings per hectare on the outer edge. This is an appropriate approach in this edge of town location.
- 6.39 The parameter plan now shows an acceptable network of roads, pedestrian and cycle routes. The road hierarchy involves a primary road into the heart of the site, with secondary roads leading from the central zone to the outer parts. This hierarchy reduces the size of the blocks to an acceptable level. It also maximises the amount of pedestrian and cycle links out of the site into adjoining land, encouraging sustainable trips into the town centre.
- 6.40 Policy H23 of the Local Plan requires that 15% of the residential area of a site is public open space. Since the publication of the local plan, the council has adopted a SPD on Open Space, Sport and Recreation Future Provision, which provides further information on the amount and type of public open space a development of this type should provide.
- 6.41 The applicant contends that the overall amount of public open space is consistent with the requirements of Policy H23 and the SPD. 1.07 hectares is proposed, with the majority being the centrally located formal area, which includes a children's play area. There are other areas of informal open space, particularly along the southern boundary,

where an attenuation pond will be provided to secure adequate SUDS.

- 6.42 Overall, officers conclude that this site can accommodate up to 200 dwellings. The parameter plan demonstrates an acceptable layout, with appropriate block sizes, good permeability and acceptable linkages to the surrounding area.

Impact on residential amenity

- 6.43 Given the sites location in the southwestern corner of the town, there are few neighbours immediately affected by the indicative layout. A good sized ecology buffer zone is proposed along the northern boundary of the site. This ensures a good distance to the nearest residential properties to the north, which includes Tollington Court and the approved residential development which remains to be built. The illustrative plan shows a layout that can achieve the requisite back to back distances of 21 metres, as recommended by the council's residential design guide.

- 6.44 Given these distances, officers are satisfied this development will not result in any undue harm to neighbouring amenity.

Living conditions of future occupiers

- 6.45 A number of objections have highlighted the potential poor living conditions future occupiers will experience, particularly given the proximity of the A420, which is a busy, fast and noisy road.
- 6.46 The applicants have acknowledged this and have provided a full noise assessment with the application. The council's environmental health team have reviewed this assessment and confirm it accords with national good practice so the results are sound. A number of mitigation measures are proposed within the report. These results indicate the level of noise experienced within the development will be within tolerable and acceptable levels. Thus, subject to the condition outlined in Section 8, this scheme will not result in unacceptable levels of noise within the new units.
- 6.47 Generally, the proposed layout indicates this amount of development can be achieved whilst providing the requisite back to back distance of 21 metres, as recommended by the council's residential design guide. Some minor tweaking in some areas of the site will be necessary to achieve these distances.

Highway Safety

- 6.48 Local objections have focussed strongly on the potential harm to highway safety this proposal will cause from additional traffic on the road network surrounding Faringdon and Great Coxwell. The applicants have provided a full transport assessment
- 6.49 The County Council Highways Liaison Officer has provided detailed comments on this scheme and has confirmed no objections on highway safety grounds. The 30mph speed limit on Coxwell Road to include the site frontage. Visibility splays will need to be provided at maximum standards due to evidence that this speed limit is regularly exceeded by motorists due to the rural nature of the road.
- 6.50 The applicants propose a number of improvements to the junction between Coxwell Road and the A420 following feedback from their consultation process and the cost of which will be borne by the applicant and the detail is outlined in Section 2 of this report. These include the provision of a kerbed island to allow an easier right turn onto the main road. The liaison officer is satisfied these improvements will provide a safer crossing point when wishing to travel south along the A420, by providing a better central refuge and increase the capacity of this junction and the surrounding road network and so cover the additional impact of this development.

- 6.51 As an aside, an application for housing on the opposite side of Coxwell Road is currently being assessed by the council. This scheme incorporates a roundabout at this junction. The applicants for this application have confirmed they are happy for the financial contributions they propose to be pooled to allow the implementation of the roundabout, if that is the highways authority preferred option when faced with further development in this part of the town. This is covered in the Applicants Unilateral Undertaking and will also be covered in the Section 278 agreement with the Highways Authority. However, it is important to determine this application on its own merits, and the improvements to the junction proposed within this scheme are acceptable.
- 6.52 The applicant has agreed a financial contribution to improve the Swindon-Oxford bus route that passes the site. Furthermore, the applicant will provide two bus stations and a pedestrian crossing on the Coxwell Road. This is part of works to improve the sustainability of the site.
- 6.53 For these reasons, officers are satisfied this proposal will not cause sufficient harm to highway safety to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

Drainage and Flooding issues

- 6.54 A number of respondents have stated that the site is liable to flooding. The applicants have instructed a full flood risk assessment. The investigations undertaken have revealed localised flooding in the southern portion of the site and surroundings. The applicant contends this occurs as the adjacent ditch contains debris, lacks definition and a positive gradient. The applicants propose ditch clearing and re-grading works as part of the construction of the development.
- 6.55 Existing ground conditions are not suitable for infiltration drainage and so surface water will be managed on site using permeable paving, swales and attenuation basis, with a controlled outlet to the existing ditch. The council's drainage engineer has confirmed no objections to the principle of this approach.
- 6.56 Thames Water have indicated that the Faringdon sewage treatment works currently works at capacity and so, currently, there is no option for this development to simply connect to the existing sewer network. The upgrade of the sewage treatment works is currently in Thames Water's development plan for 2015-2020. This delay would not bring this development forward as a contribution to the housing shortfall in the district. For the avoidance of doubt it should be noted that there is sufficient capacity in the pipe network.
- 6.57 The applicants have been made aware of this situation and have liaised closely with Thames Water. The outcome of these negotiations is that the applicant has offered to initiate the funding with Thames Water to bring the necessary works at the sewage treatment works forward. The applicants have provided a unilateral undertaking to that effect, which confirms they will enter into a Section 98 application (or other appropriate application /agreement) with Thames Water. This will ensure the upgrade works will be secured. The applicants have provided the Council with a copy of this unilateral undertaking, so that it can be conditioned as part of any permission. The council's legal representative has confirmed this agreement offers an appropriate level of comfort that these works will happen before any housing on the site is occupied. The conditions attached to this consent will reinforce this position. With this approach agreed between all parties, the council is satisfied the current capacity issues within the local sewage network can be overcome prior to the first unit of this scheme being occupied.
- 6.58 In response to objections relating to low water pressure in the area, the applicants have

provided a flow and pressure report, which is acceptable to Thames Water.

- 6.59 A full surface water drainage strategy for the site, which is SUDS compliant, will be required by condition. This is required by the council's drainage engineer, Thames Water and the Highways Authority. With these conditions in place, and given the outline nature of the application, officers are satisfied the information provided by the applicants is sufficient to overcome initial objections relating to drainage and flooding from the new housing.

Other Issues

- 6.60 The reserved matters application will require the applicant to demonstrate adequate provision of refuse and recycling storage. This is to meet the requirements of the council's waste contractor.
- 6.61 It is proposed that the development will achieve the equivalent of Level Four when measured against the Code for Sustainable Homes. Details of this will form part of a reserved matters application.
- 6.62 An ecology report has been provided in support of the application. The council's countryside officer has confirmed the value of the habitats within the site have been assessed according to national standards. The report confirms there are no habitats on the site of particular importance. The indicative layout of the site includes an ecology buffer that will allow badgers to pass through the site to gain access to nearby areas where badger activity has been recorded previously. A condition is proposed to ensure that the mitigation measures recommended in the report are adopted in the final construction of the scheme.
- 6.63 The council's forestry officer has confirmed that the final layout for the site will need to accord with the relevant British Standard to demonstrate that the retained trees on the site will be adequately protected during construction operations.
- 6.64 The Environment Agency has requested additional surveys for nickel, as elevated concentrations were found during initial surveys. The council's contaminated land officer has agreed this approach, and also to the further works recommended by the applicant's own contaminated land risk assessment that accompanied the application.
- 6.65 Section 106 agreements with the Vale and with Oxfordshire County Council are under negotiation, and officers are confident that planning permission can be granted. However, to allow time for securing a full and proper set of contributions, officers propose a three month period following this committee to finalise the agreements. If unforeseen problems arise, then officers will require authority, in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee and local ward members, to refuse the application.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This proposal does not accord with the development plan and so the council has advertised it as a departure. However, in light of the current shortfall in the council's five year housing supply, the proposal is considered acceptable given the following:
- Character – The site is visually reasonably well-contained, lying on the edge of the town, and will not have a materially harmful impact on the wider landscape
 - Sustainability – The site will improve pedestrian and cycle access from this part of Faringdon to the town centre. Faringdon is one of the districts towns and the growth of the town is planned as part of the emerging Local Plan. The proposed houses will be built to Code 4 for Sustainable Homes
 - Technical concerns regarding flood risk, drainage and loss of wildlife habitats

have been overcome through the provision of additional information and surveys.

- 7.2 The proposal would result in a sustainable development in terms of the relationship and proximity to local facilities and services, when assessed against the NPPF.
- 7.3 Importantly, this site is in a single ownership, with a partner house builder on board. This makes the site deliverable within eighteen months. This makes a measurable contribution to help address the current housing land shortfall. A condition requiring the commencement of development within six months of the date of the approval of the final reserved matter, or the completion of the upgrade to Faringdon Sewage Treatment Works is recommended and is acceptable to the applicant.
- 7.4 Alongside the usual Section 106 agreements with the County Council and the District Council, a unilateral undertaking has been provided by the applicant. This confirms the applicant will enter into the necessary agreements to deliver the necessary upgrades to Faringdon Sewage Treatment Works to increase capacity in the sewage network and to ensure the necessary improvements to the junction between Coxwell Road and the A420 are secured.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that outline planning permission is granted subject to:

1. A S106 agreement with both the County Council and District Council in order to secure contributions towards local infrastructure and to secure the affordable housing.

2. The following conditions:

1. Commencement - 6 months after reserved matters approval, or 6 months after completion of sewage treatment work upgrade, whichever is later
2. Reserved matters submitted within 1 year of outline consent
3. Approved plans
4. Sample materials to be agreed
5. Visibility splays to be agreed
6. Access, park. & turning to be agreed
7. New estate roads to county council standard
8. No drainage to highway
9. Green travel plans to be agreed
10. Submission of landscaping scheme
11. Implementation of landscaping scheme
12. Boundary details to be agreed
13. Drainage details (surface and foul) to be agreed
14. No dwelling to be occupied until sewage treatment work upgrade completed
15. Sustainable drainage scheme to be agreed
16. Details of sewer connections to be agreed
17. Construction traffic management plan to be agreed
18. Works in accordance with flood risk assessment
19. Tree protection to be agreed
20. Wildlife protection as per submitted statements
21. Refuse storage to be agreed
22. Contamination - nickel survey to be agreed
23. Contamination - further surveys to be agreed
24. Noise mitigation as per submitted statement
25. Housing to be built to code 4 cfsh

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3. If the required section 106 agreements are not completed, and planning permission cannot be granted by the determination deadline of 27 February 2014, it is recommended that authority to refuse planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman.

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