

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V0709/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	7.5.2013
PARISH	GREAT FARINGDON
WARD MEMBER(S)	Roger Cox Mohinder Kainth Alison Thomson
APPLICANT	Bloor Homes Ltd Western
SITE	Land South of Park Road, Faringdon, SN7 7PL
PROPOSAL	Outline application for residential development (up to 380 units including up to 64 extra care units), employment development, primary school, allotments, public open space and associated infrastructure with new access from Park Road.
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	429069/194485
OFFICER	Peter Brampton

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application site is located on the southeastern edge of Faringdon. The site is an area of land totalling around 27.8 hectares. To the northern boundary lies Park Road (A417), beyond which lies Folly Park, a recent residential and commercial development allocated within the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. To the west lies existing residential development and the grounds of Faringdon Community College. The A420 runs along the south and east of the site. A working quarry lies beyond, to the southwest of the site.
- 1.2 Rogers Concrete Limited lies within the southwestern corner of the site and has a lawful use within Classes A1, B2 and B8, primarily acting as a working quarry and concrete yard. There are a number of functional buildings on this part of the site. The remainder of the site falls within three ownerships and is largely open rolling farmland used for grass and arable crops and pasture.
- 1.3 The highest part of the site is a ridge part way across the site, with its highest point on the western boundary. From this point, the land slopes downwards in a southeasterly direction to the A420, and a north and westerly direction to Park Road. The southerly fall to the A420 is around 8.5 metres, whilst the longer, gentler, northerly fall is around 20 metres.
- 1.4 There are a number of trees and hedgerows on the site, none of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders although most are mature. Generally, these hedges consist of native plants such as hawthorn, crab apple, field maple and elder. Whilst, taken individually, the trees are largely unremarkable; many of the groups collectively offer good screening.
- 1.5 The site is located approximately 1.2 kilometres southeast of Faringdon town centre. The commercial facilities of Park Road, the medical centre and Faringdon community college are all closer than the town centre.
- 1.6 The application comes to committee as thirteen letters of objection have been received.

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

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 This application seeks outline planning permission for the following:

- Up to 380 residential units in a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties
- Up to 3 hectares of employment development, occupying the present site of Rogers Concrete Works
- A site for a two-form entry primary school
- A 64-bed extra care home, located within the residential portion of the site and included within the
- Open space, including a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) and a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)
- Allotments
- Associated landscaping, planting and natural drainage.

All matters are reserved except for access.

2.2 The new houses will generally be two-storey in height, although the applicant considers there is scope for 2 ½ -3 storey dwellings close to Park Road. 40% of the units (152 units) will be affordable. The precise mix of the affordable units has been agreed with the council's housing team and includes some of the extra care units.

2.3 The illustrative masterplan indicates a density of around 35 dwellings per hectare across the site as a whole. Approximately 6.8 hectares of public open space will be provided, principally by way of a landscaped buffer between the development area and the A420. The applicants propose that much of this landscaping will take place at an early stage of the development to strengthen the visual containment of the site and town.

2.4 Vehicular access will be from a new roundabout junction with Park Road. The existing Sands Hill Lane, which runs parallel with the western boundary of the site, will be retained as a footway and cycleway. A new joint foot and cycleway will be provided along the southern side of Park Road, linking into the existing footpath network to encourage walking and cycling to the town centre and local facilities.

2.5 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.

2.6 County Council requests

- Primary Schools - £3,841,000
- Secondary Schools - £1,117,120
- Tertiary/Sixth Form - £185,710
- Special Education Needs - £55,181
- Temporary Education Facilities - £346,500
- Libraries - £80,750
- Adult Learning - £10,800
- Youth Support Services - £16,600
- Waste management - £60,800
- Museum resource centre - £4,750
- Social and Health Care - £163,900

- Public Transport improvements - £380,000
- Highway Improvements and Bus Shelters - Secured as part of a Section 278 agreement with the highways authority

2.7 **Vale of White Horse requests**

- Sport and recreation - £843,177
- Public Open Space maintenance - £1,107,969
- Improvements to off site children's play at Tuckers Park - £80,000
- Public Art - £45,000
- Waste - £64,600
- Street Naming – TBC
- Police – TBC

2.8 Faringdon Town Council has made requests for financial contributions to the provision/improvement/maintenance of public services within the town. These requests have been passed to the applicant, with further discussions needed to agree a final sum.

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 Faringdon Town Council** – *“No objections on the proviso that the Town Council is involved in any discussions regarding Section 106 contributions for the town.”*

3.2 **Neighbour Representations** – Thirteen letters of objection from neighbouring residents have been received to this application. The main concerns can be summarised thus:

- Query need for additional housing in Faringdon
- Concerned any new housing will be complete before the necessary employment development is brought forward
- Number of houses exceeds that proposed in template for site within consultation version of Local Plan Part One 2029
- Development will cause loss of a greenfield site
- Impact on quality of landscape on southern edge of town
- Impact on local facilities, in particular health care
- Harm to highway safety from increased traffic on local roads
- Inadequate access road to commercial parts of site
- Will adequate parking be provided?
- Increased risk of flooding
- Harm to water supply and water pressure in area
- Impact on capacity of sewer network
- Loss of light, outlook and privacy to rear of properties along Town End Road
- Concern over height of new dwellings to rear of Town End Road
- How will buffer between Town End Road and new properties be maintained?
- Reduction in property values on Town End Road
- Indicative layout inappropriate, not respecting existing surroundings
- Increased noise disturbance for Town End Road
- Insufficient amount of allotments on site
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Harm to strength of TV and radio signals

In addition, a petition of 22 signatures from residents of Town End Road has been received, reiterating some of the above concerns.

- 3.3 **Great Coxwell Parish Council** – Supports the application as it is on an allocated site in the emerging Local Plan 2029 and the scheme will provide appropriate infrastructure
- 3.4 **Oxfordshire County Council Transport Strategy** – Supports the principle of residential development on this site. Supports the retention of Sands Hill as a footpath/cycleway. Supports the extension of the foot/cycleway along the site frontage. Requests financial contributions to public transport improvements and bus shelters
- 3.5 **Oxfordshire County Council Highways** – No objections subject to conditions relating to access, pedestrian safety and construction traffic.
- 3.6 **County Archaeologist** – No objections subject to conditions requiring provision of archaeological investigation and implementation of watching brief during construction
- 3.7 **Oxfordshire County Council Rights of Way** – No objections
- 3.8 **Oxfordshire County Council Drainage Engineer** – No objections subject to condition requiring SUDS strategy for entire site
- 3.9 **Oxfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste team** – Seeks confirmation detailed layout of scheme will not conflict with or prejudice complicants with the restoration or aftercare conditions that apply to the adjacent Sandshill quarry, which will cease operations in February 2042.
- 3.10 **Drainage Engineer** – No objections subject to agreed of County Council drainage engineer, Thames Water and the Environment Agency, and the implementation of appropriate conditions
- 3.11 **Environment Agency** – No objections subject to conditions relating to SUDS drainage and contaminated land assessments.
- 3.12 **Thames Water Development Control** – Has indicated an incapacity of the existing sewage treatment works to accommodate additional housing and development within Faringdon. Requires conditions relating to the phasing of development and a foul drainage strategy to be agreed prior to works starting on site. Also raises concern about water supply and water pressure, with a pre-commencement condition requiring a water impact study requested.
- 3.13 **Housing Development Team** – 40% of the units are required to be affordable. Proposed acceptable mix to applicant, which has been accepted.
- 3.14 **Natural England** – No objections
- 3.15 **Countryside Officer** – No objections subject to conditions relating to badger surveys, a relocation strategy for lizards and a habitat management plan for the quarry.
- 3.16 **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”. Some initial concerns about proximity of new houses to important trees will need resolving at detailed stage

- 3.17 **Equalities Officer** – General comments on design of scheme provided
- 3.18 **Health and Housing – Noise** – No response received at time of writing, verbal update at committee
- 3.19 **Health and Housing – Contaminated Land** – No response received at time of writing, verbal update at committee
- 3.20 **Landscape Architect** – Concerned about number of units being proposed on site and how close residential development projects south towards the A420. Also concerned that proposals for Rogers Concrete site does not re-grade the land but will re-use existing ground level, making development prominent within the landscape. Good to see the phasing plan starts with the open space adjacent to the A420. Bund and acoustic fence will need careful detailing. What is the proposal for the orchard? Tree planting within the school site would help reduce the impact of this building within the landscape. Who will maintain landscape buffer between Town End Road and the new dwellings on this part of the site?
- 3.21 **Waste Management Officer** – General comments about the council's waste contract provided. Financial contribution of £170/dwelling sought.
- 3.22 **Oxfordshire Geology Trust** – Exposures on the Rogers Concrete site are important. There should be some retention of outcrop at both the north and south exposures in Faringdon quarry, with access to visitors.
- 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
 - H16 - Size of Dwelling and Lifetime Homes
 - NE12 - Great Western Community Forest
 - NE7 - The North Vale Corallian Ridge
- 5.2 **Emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029**
- 5.3 **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

5.4 **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 site is an unallocated site within the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. Thus, 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. 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 planning sites suitable to address the housing shortfall whilst meeting the relevant sustainability and design criteria of the NPPF.
- Emerging policy position*
- 6.5 The emerging Local Plan Part One identifies Faringdon as the market town of the Western Vale sub-area. Within this emerging strategy, Core Policy 3 identifies this site as a site suitable for new housing. Within the sub-area, Core Policy 17 states 1468 houses will be provided by 2029, of which around 350 units from this total will be provided for on this site.
- 6.6 The Development Template for the site states the council would expect the following key objectives to be achieved:
- Around 350 houses and up to 3 hectares of business development compatible

- with neighbouring uses
 - To provide for a new primary school on site
 - To deliver a high quality, sustainable and mixed use urban extension, providing 40% affordable housing and a suitable mix of housing
 - To ensure the development integrates with the existing development in Faringdon whilst minimising the impact of the development on the town's landscape setting
 - Providing requisite infrastructure to mitigate the impact of growth
- 6.7 At this stage, the emerging Local Plan only has limited weight, as it has only undergone an initial public consultation. This application is submitted ahead of the strategic site allocation in the emerging Local Plan, but the Development Template outlined above has been a central factor in the evolution of the submitted scheme.
- 6.8 At this time, the overriding definition of sustainable development against which this application must be assessed remains that of the NPPF and its associated sustainability tests
- Sustainability assessment*
- 6.9 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. From the centre of the site, the town centre is around 1.2 kilometres away. This is a reasonably direct walk or cycle along Park Road. The applicants propose to provide new links to the existing foot and cycleway network in the town. The existing infant and junior school lie on the northern side of the town centre, so are a slightly further walk from the site, whilst, as outlined in Section 2, a new primary school is an integral part of this scheme. The overall distances from the site to the facilities of the town are not unreasonable for a settlement of this size.
- 6.10 Furthermore, there are a number of key facilities closer to the site that will be easily accessible for the new residents. These include the new Tesco superstore on Park Road, the White Horse Medical Practice which lies opposite the site, Faringdon leisure centre and Faringdon Community College. The indicative masterplan for the site includes a suggested link from the western boundary of the site directly into the college site for easy access. The masterplan also includes a proposed link from the northeastern corner of the site into the existing employment allocation on the eastern side of Faringdon.
- 6.11 This site also has good access to and will support and enhance the existing public transport network of the town. The applicants propose that one of the existing bus routes will loop around the site. This, coupled with the provision of new bus stops, will ensure that all residents live within 400 metres of a bus stop.
- 6.12 In line with the requirements of the emerging Local Plan development template, Sands Hill Lane will be retained as a footpath and cycleway. This continues onto Galley Hill where it connects to a network of public footpaths and bridleways.
- 6.13 The development will also provide three hectares of employment land on the Rogers Concrete site. Neighbour representations have quite rightly queried whether the employment opportunities in Faringdon will grow alongside the housing. In this case, the emerging Local Plan is clear this site should deliver appropriate employment land and this proposal complies with this request.
- 6.14 Bloor Homes have an option, agreed with all the landowners, to develop the whole site. They have confirmed they intend to move quickly to implement the scheme and that it is

deliverable within the eighteen month time period proposed. Given the clear demand for additional housing in the district, the provision of three hectares of employment, a new primary school and 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.

6.15 *Cumulative impact considerations*

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 915 people (rounded). Using the latest data, this represents an increase in the population of 12.1%. 380 houses represents an 11.7% increase in the number of households in the town. These increases are not considered inappropriate for growth of a sustainable market town such as Faringdon

6.16 However, it is also important to consider the cumulative impact of this development and the recent resolution by planning committee to approve 200 houses on land at Fernham Fields (Application: P13/V0139/O). Building on this data, the overall increase in the population of Faringdon will be 17.2%; whilst the overall increase in the households will be 19.8% (all figures are rounded).

6.17 It is important to note there are two other applications for residential development in the town at the time of writing. These are on the western edge of Faringdon and are undergoing negotiation with council officers.

6.18 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, and will improve its long term sustainability.

Infrastructure

6.19 One of the key aspects of this scheme is the provision of a two form primary school on the site. Oxfordshire County Council is clear this development would trigger the need for the construction of a new primary school, as the existing infant and junior schools would not be able to expand sufficiently to cope with the new pupils who will live in the new housing developments in the town. This scheme will result in new pupils equivalent to half a one form entry school, so in building a two form entry school, this will create some additional capacity in the town.

6.20 Consequently, this proposal, again following the development template in the emerging Local plan, allocates land for this new school. The overall strategy is for the existing infant school to relocate into this new primary school, with an expanded age range. The current junior school will remain where it is, and will also expand its age range to become a primary school. This strategy has been formed following consultation with the Multi-Academy trust and local residents as part of the neighbourhood plan process. It is the county council's preferred option for increasing the primary school capacity of Faringdon and so the provision of the school on this site is a cornerstone of the strategic allocation of this land in the emerging Local Plan. Financial contributions for this project have also been sought from the Fernham Fields development and will be requested from the other residential developments in the town, should they progress in a positive manner.

- 6.21 The County Council has some concerns over the phasing of works and that the new primary school may not be provided before the school population exceeds the capacity of the existing schools. Accordingly, a financial sum to the provision of temporary school accommodation has been requested from this development and is the subject of negotiations between the applicant and officers.
- 6.22 The County Council also request a financial contribution to the expansion of Faringdon Community College. There is room for the College to expand on its current site to accommodate the growing school population in the town.
- 6.23 In terms of public transport, Oxfordshire County Council wishes to increase the frequency of the No.66 bus route which runs between Oxford and Swindon from 30 minutes frequency to 20 minutes frequency. Financial contributions from new residential development along the A420 are requested to pump-prime this service. This development will be liable for this contribution, and will also provide bus shelters as part of the highway works to improve the access to public transport in this part of Faringdon.
- 6.24 This development will also make substantial financial contributions to sport and leisure facilities, waste management, health care and other facilities and services in the town. These contributions are sought in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council and Faringdon Town Council. This recommendation incorporates a three month period for officers at both the district and county councils to complete negotiations on the Section 106.

Use of land

- 6.25 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.
- 6.26 The applicant’s geological survey reveals the site largely consists of mudstones, sand and clay. 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

- 6.27 The applicant has indicated their acceptance to the requisite affordable housing provision on the site. This is 40% (152 units) to accord with local plan policy. This provision will be secured through a legal agreement should the recommendation of approval be agreed. The mix of affordable housing has been agreed between the council and applicant in line with the identified housing needs of the district.
- 6.28 Of the 152 units, all of the 64 units within the Extra Care Home will be affordable. 48 one-bed apartments and 16 two bed apartments are proposed. Within this, 3 of the one-bed and 11 of the two-bed units will be offered as shared ownership, whilst 45 one-bed and 5 two-bed will be offered as affordable rent.
- 6.29 This leaves 88 houses as affordable units on the rest of the site. The agreed mix for this housing is 4 one-bed apartments (4.5%), 4 two-bed apartments (4.5%), 45 two-bed houses (51.1%), 25 three-bed houses (28%) and 10 four plus-bed houses (11.4%). (All figures are rounded.) The mix of tenures (affordable rent/shared ownership) is also agreed.

- 6.30 The council will require an appropriate spread of affordable units across the site, mixed in with, and indistinguishable from, the market housing.
- 6.31 Oxfordshire County Council has confirmed that providing more Extra Care accommodation within the Faringdon area is a strategic priority. Thus, there is strong support for the proposal within this scheme for a 64-bed extra care scheme, centrally located within the site and enjoying good access to the town centre and other facilities. The extra care scheme will be expected to have a day care/social facility open to older people in the Faringdon area. As such, no financial contribution for adult social care is sought.

Visual impact – landscape, layout, design and appearance

- 6.32 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.*” In consultation, the council’s landscape officer has raised concern at the number of units, how close the residential development will project to the A420 and the proposal to provide the new employment at existing land levels, again increasing the prominence of the development from the A420. The applicant’s landscape and visual impact assessment report contends the development will not significantly adversely affect the landscape character of the area, the setting of Faringdon or its visual relationship with the wider landscape.
- 6.33 Faringdon sits in a dip in a limestone escarpment that runs on a southwest to northeast alignment. The site lies on the southern side of this dip, between Faringdon Hill to the north and Galley Hill to the south. The vegetation within the site consists of a small number of mature hedgerows and some areas of scrub. The masterplan identifies and retains the majority of hedgerows and groups of trees that offers screening and landscape value.
- 6.34 There are a number of key concepts within the submitted layout that the applicant contends are to the advantage of the scheme:
- Retains Sands Hill Lane and the mature hedgerows as integral features of the layout
 - Locates the primary school next to the secondary school
 - Locates the school away from the noise of the A420
 - Keeps the main distributor road through the site away from the school frontage
 - Provides a circular route for cars and coaches to access the school without turning round
 - Limits housing development in the southern end of the site in order to leave a substantial buffer to the A420.
- 6.35 The landscape strategy within the development seeks to achieve the following:
- Residential development along Park Road, set behind a landscape buffer
 - A belt of communal open space (native planting) to improve conservation, biodiversity and amenity and contribute to the creation of the Great Western Community Forest (Policy NE12)
 - Creation of necessary SUDS swales and ponds (including a wildlife pond)
 - Native screen planting along the A420 and the southern site boundary
 - Earth mounding along the southern boundary to the primary school, and the public open space along the southern boundary between the housing and the A420.
 - Provision of NEAP and LEAPs
 - Provision of buffer along the rear boundaries of properties on Town End Road

- 6.36 One of the key elements of the landscape strategy is the phasing of development. The applicants commit that the first phase of development will be the planting of the Community Forest along the southern and eastern boundaries. This planting will play a crucial role in establishing the landscape setting of the development before work advances on the housing and school, which will be part of Phase 2. The employment development on the Rogers Concrete site would be the fourth and final phase.
- 6.37 The landscape assessment contends the main value of the existing site is the network of mature hedgerows and trees. As discussed, there will be retained and will form part of the structural landscape within the site. This approach is welcome.
- 6.38 The landscape assessment splits the visual impacts of the development into two groups, from adjacent land and more distant views from the higher ground to the north and south.
- 6.39 Most views from the site are from the adjacent land and in particular from the three roads that encircle the site (the A420, Park Road and Sands Hill Lane). These views are generally restricted to localised glimpses through the vegetation that surrounds the site. Park Road is already heavily developed, serving recent developments such as Folly Park, the new Tesco superstore and the existing Esso garage. As such, the overall character of Park Road is already suburban in nature and so the overall harm to the vistas from this road will not be significant.
- 6.40 There is one public footpath that cuts across the northeastern corner of the site. Clearly the impact on the view from the footpath is severe, but this harm is limited to within the confines of the site. The footpath will be retained and will serve as part of the expanded public right of way network this development will provide. Overall, the harm to the view from this short section of footpath is outweighed by the benefits of this proposal.
- 6.41 Similarly, the impact of views from Sands Hill Lane will be affected severely. However, the function of this lane will change as part of the development, being retained as a key foot and cycle way. Thus, the harm to the views from this public vantage point is not significant.
- 6.42 From the A420, the development will undoubtedly be prominent. This is a major trunk road running between Oxford and Swindon and so it is from here that most people will gain a view of the new buildings. The land slopes upwards from the A420 to the ridge part way across the site. Of course, the presence of this major trunk road has an impact on the quality of the landscape, but nonetheless, mitigating the harm to these views has been a central factor in the evolution of the landscape strategy.
- 6.43 This is where the phasing of the development becomes important. The belt of tree planting that forms part of Phase 1 will be the major change in these views. These trees will establish by Year 5, and will be offering good screening by the time building works on the residential part of the site are complete. The Council's landscape architect has confirmed that this phasing plan is acceptable and will play an important role in mitigating the impact on views from the A420.
- 6.44 It is important to note that, from the A420, views of the Rogers Concrete Plant site are, and will remain, prominent. This is the closest part of the site to the A420. Nonetheless, further planting is proposed to soften this part of the scheme. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the functional nature of this site as it stands. Although part of the reserved matters application, it is likely the new B1 employment

provision will be of a much higher quality than the existing buildings on site. As the council's landscape architect identifies, it is regrettable that these new buildings will be built on the same ground levels as the existing buildings. Sitting within a quarry, there is scope to reduce the floor levels of the buildings. However, on balance, it is considered the visual impact of this part of the site would not be sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission. The scale, appearance, layout and landscaping of this part of the site will need careful detailing at reserved matters stage.

- 6.45 Turning to more distant views of the site, these are particularly from public rights of way on Galley Hill to the south and Faringdon Hill to the north. From Galley Hill, the central portion of the site and Rogers Concrete are particularly visible. The mitigation measures outlined above will also play a role in softening the impact from this view. The residential development will merge into the existing housing on the current southern edge of Faringdon, particularly once the planting has established. Furthermore, the closest part of the site to Galley Hill will be the large recreational area. This will blend in with the intervening planting. Overall, the impact on this vista will be negative, but it is considered that the harm will not be sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission.
- 6.46 From Faringdon Hill to the north, the central, highest portion of the site will be seen clearly (in particular the school), although the northern section of the site will be screened by existing development and planting. From here, the new woodland planting on the eastern side of the site will be seen, given a sense of containment to the new housing. Again, given the distances involved, new housing on this land will be seen in conjunction with Faringdon as a whole and the impacts are not considered severe.
- 6.47 Overall, the scale of this development, coupled with the prominence of the site, means that some negative impacts on the quality of the landscape cannot be avoided. Thus, it is a question of balancing the benefits of this development against this harm. As discussed, Faringdon is seen as a strategic growth point for this council, to provide some of the new housing the district needs to meet growing demand. The scheme will bring forward 152 units of affordable housing and will provide a new primary school as part of the overall education strategy for Faringdon. It will also improve accessibility to footpath and cycle ways, and public transport, in this part of the town. Given the clear stance of the NPPF to support sustainable development, it is considered the positive aspects of the proposal will comfortably outweigh the harm to the local landscape.
- 6.48 The indicative layout of the scheme shows a good degree of permeability. A single main street runs north to south through the development, from the new roundabout to the employment site. This street is "kinked", and will incorporate on-street parking and changes to surfacing to discourage high vehicle speeds. This street will also accommodate the bus loop and have bus shelters on it to ensure all residents live within 400 metres of a bus stop. The primary school is located off this main street, on a secondary road. This ensures a convenient and safe drop off point for pupils, whilst forming part of the bus loop so that school buses can enter and leave the development in a single direction, again for safety purposes. This secondary road will also provide access to the extra care home.
- 6.49 A number of smaller residential streets will project from this main bus loop. Again, shared surfaces will be used to limit vehicular speeds and manage the transition into residential zones. Block sizes are appropriate, so there are no overly large swathes of residential development with poor access and little natural surveillance. All roads have active frontages, and there is good surveillance of the new woodland and associated public rights of way. The school is well linked to the rest of the scheme and this will encourage parents to walk or cycle with their children to school.

- 6.50 At this stage, this layout is indicative, and there are some areas of concern. In particular, the NEAP and LEAP are not particularly well related to the development and, in their current positions, would not enjoy a good level of natural surveillance or use. They will need to be incorporated more centrally in the final layout, which is a reserved matter.
- 6.51 Other areas of concern that will need addressing for the reserved matters application is the amount of public open space that is located within the heavily landscaped and woodland parts of the site along the western boundary. It is not clear how usable this space will be, particularly given the manner in which the land falls away, the lack of natural surveillance and the distances involved. Furthermore, by having the majority of public open space on this side of the development, some of the housing blocks are likely to appear over-urbanised. It is likely that some of the public open space will need to be relocated more centrally to the housing, encouraging use and giving the residential areas more breathing space. However, this would likely increase the developed area of the site, which may have implications on the landscape impact of the scheme. Subject to further consideration of these points, this is an acceptable indicative layout that confirms this quantum of development can be supported.
- 6.52 The average density of the scheme is 35 dwellings per hectare. The design and access statement confirms that the new housing will be largely between 2 and 3 storeys in height. A few bungalows are proposed close to Town End Road. The tallest buildings will be located along the main street, reaching three storeys and a maximum height of 12 metres. The largest swathe of the site will be residential zones with buildings reaching a maximum height of 10.5 metres (2.5 storeys). Along the southern part of the development, the school will reach a maximum height of 10 metres, whilst the adjacent housing will be a maximum of 8.5 metres. The employment buildings will largely be two storeys, reaching a maximum of 10 metres.
- 6.53 Overall, this approach is reasonable and will ensure an efficient use of the land. It is not possible to use the entire site and achieve a lower density as that would cause unacceptable harm to the landscape. Generally, the highest density development will be located on the northern portion of the site, closest to the existing town. The lower density parts of the scheme are to the south and east, closest to the most prominent views.
- 6.54 The development will be broken up into different character areas that will take their cue from the local vernacular. The use of occasional three storey buildings, differing roof designs and materials and sensitive boundary treatments will create a good sense of place for the scheme. These details will all form part of the reserved matters application.
- 6.55 Overall, this site can accommodate the proposed development. Although only indicative, the proposed layout is quite detailed, showing a hierarchy of streets, acceptable block sizes, active frontages, good links to pedestrian and cycle ways and an appropriate approach to the density and scale of the development. The proposed layout is broadly acceptable and can form the basis of the subsequent reserved matters application. The council's urban design officer will be asked to input into this process.
- Impact on residential amenity*
- 6.56 Given the sites location on the outskirts of the town, there are few neighbours immediately affected by the indicative layout. However, there is a clear potential impact on Town End Road, which faces eastwards across the site. These are two-storey properties and sit on lower ground than the application site. The indicative layout shows two-storey properties of 8.5 metres in height backing onto Town End Road.

6.57 The indicative layout incorporates a planted buffer along the rear boundaries of the properties that back onto Town End Road. This will ensure a good degree of privacy for these neighbouring properties. The applicants have confirmed that the maintenance of this buffer will be the responsibility of each individual house owner, secured by a covenant at the time of sale.

6.58 The council's Residential Design Guide requires back-to-back distances of 21 metres. The indicative layout achieves this comfortably. Thus, whilst the loss of the current rural outlook from the rear of Town End Road is regrettable, the overall impact on the amenity of these properties is not considered sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

Living conditions of future occupiers

6.59 Given the indicative nature of the layout, it is not possible to assess whether individual plots will benefit from appropriate amenity space. However, the reserved matters application will need to demonstrate appropriate garden sizes for all new homes.

6.60 Thus, the main concern with this application is the potential noise implications from housing being so close to the A420, which is clearly a fast, busy and noisy road. The applicants have acknowledged this and provided a full noise assessment with the application. At the time of writing, the council's environmental health team are reviewing this assessment and a verbal update will be offered to the committee. 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.

Highway Safety

6.61 Some local objections have raised concerns about the impact on highway safety from this proposal, with particular regard to the increased traffic on the town's roads. The applicants have provided a full transport assessment in support of the application.

6.62 The Highways Authority has assessed the proposal for a new roundabout on Park Road, to allow access to the new development, and confirms it is acceptable. The roundabout is a sufficient distance from the main roundabout that forms the junction between the A420 and Park Road. This roundabout will have the benefit of reducing traffic speeds along Park Road further and ease capacity at the A420 junction by regulating traffic flow.

6.63 Internal roads are confirmed to meet the required standards within Manual for Streets and will allow access for all forms of transport, including buses, lorries and emergency vehicles.

6.64 As discussed previously, pedestrian and cycle ways are a key feature of the layout. There is some concern about the number of vehicles that will need to cross Sands Hill Lane when it becomes a pedestrian and cycle way. It is likely that some traffic calming measures at these crossovers will be necessary to encourage use by pedestrians and cyclists, particularly as this land will serve the new school.

6.65 The applicants have confirmed that car and cycle parking will meet County Council standards. This will form part of the reserved matters application.

6.66 The Transport Assessment incorporates a detailed assessment of the local road network, existing vehicular trips on roads that serve the site or pass near by, and then

applies accepted standards for trip generation for the new development. These assumptions incorporate an allowance that some trips to school and work will be wholly within the confines of the site.

- 6.67 In summary, the trip generation from this development will not have a significant impact on the operation of the main routes in this part of the town. The Highways Authority has confirmed their acceptance of the Transport Assessment. There are a number of mitigation measures necessary to make the highway safety impacts of this development acceptable, which include the provision of the roundabout and new pedestrian crossings on Park Road. These improvements form part of the suggested conditions for this permission, or will form part of the Section 278 agreement the applicants will need to enter into with the Highways Authority to deliver improvements to the highway.

Drainage and Flooding Issues

- 6.68 As with other housing applications in the town, 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.
- 6.69 The applicants have been made aware of this situation, which also affects the other applications in the town. At the meeting of the planning committee on 27 November, the Fernham Fields application was accepted on the basis the developer behind that scheme will enter into the necessary agreements with Thames Water to bring forward the upgrades to the sewage treatment works. The commencement conditions on that recommendation reflected the need for these upgrades to happen before work started on site. These same conditions are recommended for this scheme. It is likely that the financial contributions from this scheme will need to be adjusted to take account of the cost borne by the Fernham Fields developer to upgrade the sewage treatment works. How this cost is "equalised" across the two schemes will be the subject of further negotiations before the Section 106 agreements are completed.
- 6.70 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.
- 6.71 The application site falls wholly within Flood Zone 1 and so passes the Sequential Test in the NPPF which seeks to direct residential development to those areas at least risk of flooding. There are no historic flood incidents recorded for this site. Accordingly, the Environment Agency has no objections to this scheme, subject to the relevant conditions recommended in Section 8 of this report. The applicants propose a SUDS strategy for the entire site, which includes an attenuation basin along the northern boundary. As is normal for this type of application, conditions covering a SUDS scheme and a foul and surface water drainage strategy for the entire site are recommended.
- 6.72 Finally, Thames Water requires a condition relating to a water supply impact study. This will require the developers to ensure there is an adequate supply of clean drinking water in the area, and that this can be delivered at an acceptable pressure.

Ecology

- 6.73 A population of common lizards has been found in the northeastern part of the site.

These will need to be relocated in order for the development to proceed without harming the species. This relocation strategy can be covered by condition.

- 6.74 Two disused badger setts have been found close to one of the mature hedgerows. It is unlikely that any specific mitigation for badgers will be necessary, provided the setts remain inactive. However, badgers are mobile species and so wildlife surveys will need updating through construction works. Again, a condition can cover this.
- 6.75 The large area of woodland planting along the eastern boundary of the site will provide opportunity for new wildlife habitats to be established, mitigating the loss of grassland and arable farmland. The details of these new habitats will form part of the reserved matters application.
- 6.76 Both the council's countryside officer and the Oxford Geological Society have identified that the Rogers quarry site offers the most ecological importance on the site. It is important the geological exposures of the site are retained and maintained throughout the development and thereafter. The indicative layout shows the northern quarry will be retained as a "wildlife area", whilst the southern quarry will be largely given over to employment. However, there are exposures of interest in both quarries, so access to these will need to be maintained for future study. This access will be covered by a clause of the Section 106 agreement with the district council.
- 6.77 The future management of the quarry will need to form part of the reserved matters application, as this is an important local site.

Other Issues

- 6.78 The reserved matters application would require the applicant to demonstrate adequate provision of refuse and recycling storage. This is to meet the requirements of the council's waste contractor.
- 6.79 It is currently proposed that the development would achieve the equivalent of Level Three when measured against the Code for Sustainable Homes. However, the Fernham Fields application achieves Code Level Four, and it is considered this scheme should aim to achieve the same. Details of this would form part of a reserved matters application.
- 6.80 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. There are some concerns that residential development will project too close to some of the more important trees of the site.
- 6.81 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 site is proposed as a strategic housing allocation in the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part One 2029. At this stage, this document (and allocation) have only been through an initial public consultation and so have limited weight in the decision making process. Nonetheless, this application has been submitted in

anticipation of this strategic allocation and closely follows the template for development within the emerging Local Plan.

- 7.2 Despite the above, this proposal does not accord with the current 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, and the clear guidance of the emerging Local Plan the proposal is considered acceptable
- 7.3 When assessed the definition of sustainability in the NPPF, Faringdon is one of the most sustainable settlements in the Vale of White Horse and so is seen as a growth area. It has all the necessary facilities to support an increase in the population, and will benefit from further employment allocations in the emerging Local Plan. It is a town that will need to accommodate some of the increased housing demands placed on the district.
- 7.4 This site is considered the most appropriate for large-scale residential development in Faringdon. This is particularly the case due to the excellent links along Park Road to the town centre and the proximity to other facilities such as Faringdon Community College. This proposal will increase access to footpaths, cycleways and public transport for new and existing residents, increasing the sustainable nature of the proposal. It will also provide a new primary school that is needed to cope with the expansion in pupil numbers that Faringdon will experience in the next plan period.
- 7.5 The site is prominent, and will have some negative implications for the quality of the landscape around Faringdon. However, the applicants propose a substantial landscaping and planting strategy that will be brought forward before building works commence. This will mitigate the impact of the new housing from all local and more distant vantage points. Subject to appropriate detailing at the reserved matters stage, the harm to the landscape from this proposal will be comfortably outweighed by the benefits it will bring to the town.
- 7.6 There are no technical concerns with the application, subject to the recommended conditions. Appropriate financial contributions will be sought to offset the impact of this development on the town's infrastructure. Importantly, there is a house builder on board with an option on the entire site. This makes the site deliverable within eighteen months. This makes a measurable contribution to help address the current housing land shortfall. Therefore, this application is recommended for approval.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that authority to grant outline planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the committee chairman, vice-chairman and local ward members subject to:

1. A S106 agreement with both the County Council and District Council in order to secure affordable housing and the following infrastructure:

- **Education**
- **Strategic highways and public transport**
- **Outdoors sport and green infrastructure**
- **Indoors sports and leisure**
- **Other community infrastructure**
- **Waste management**
- **Local labour and training scheme and**
- **District and County Council monitoring costs**

2. Conditions as follows

- 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 : Phasing of Development (Full)**
- 14 : Drainage Details (Surface and Foul) to be agreed**
- 15 : No occupation until Faringdon STW upgrade works complete**
- 16 : Sustainable Drainage Scheme to be agreed**
- 17 : Details of sewer connections to be agreed**
- 18 : Water Supply Infrastructure study to be agreed**
- 19 : Construction traffic management plan to be agreed**
- 20 : Works in accordance with Flood Risk Assessment**
- 21 : Tree Protection to be agreed**
- 22 : Wildlife Surveys to be updated prior to each phase**
- 23 : Reptile Translocation Strategy to be agreed**
- 24 : Habitat Management Plan for quarry to be agreed**
- 25 : Refuse Storage to be agreed**
- 26 : Noise mitigation as per submitted statement**
- 27 : Contamination Assessment to be agreed**
- 28 : Scheme of Archaeological Investigation to be agreed**
- 29 : Programme of Archaeological Investigation to be agreed**
- 30 : Noise levels at boundary of school not to exceed 50 db**
- 31 : Position of Fire Hydrants to be agreed**
- 32 : Crossing facility between primary and secondary school to be agreed**
- 33 : No one architectural firm to design more than 80 units**

3. If the required section 106 agreements are not completed, and planning permission cannot be granted by 18 March 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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