

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Planning Committee**

**2 December 2021**

### **Development Brief for Local Plan Partial Review site PR7b – Land at Stratfield Farm**

#### **Report of Assistant Director - Planning and Development**

This report is public.

#### **Purpose of report**

To seek the Planning Committee's approval of the Development Brief for Local Plan Part 1 Review allocated site PR7b – Land at Stratfield Farm.

#### **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve the Development Brief for site PR7b (Land at Stratfield Farm) of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Partial Review, presented at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 To authorise the Assistant Director - Planning and Development to publish the Development Brief subject to any necessary presentational or other minor corrections in consultation with the Chairman.

#### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need was adopted 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020, effectively as a supplement or addendum to the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, and forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the district.
- 2.2 The Partial Review Plan provides a vision for how Oxford's unmet housing needs will be met within Cherwell, which seeks to respond to the key issues faced by Oxford in providing new homes, in addressing the unaffordability of housing, in supporting economic growth and in dealing with its land supply constraints.
- 2.3 The Partial Review Plan allocates land to deliver 4400 houses across six sites:
  1. Land East of Oxford Road, North Oxford (policy PR6a) - Gosford and Water Eaton Parish

2. Land West of Oxford Road, North Oxford (policy PR6b) - Gosford and Water Eaton Parish
3. Land at South East Kidlington (policy PR7a) - Gosford and Water Eaton Parish
4. Land at Stratfield Farm Kidlington (policy PR7b) - Kidlington Parish
5. Land East of the A44 at Begbroke/Yarnton (policy PR8) - Yarnton and Begbroke Parishes (small area in Kidlington Parish)
6. Land West of the A44 at Yarnton (policy PR9) - Yarnton and Begbroke Parishes

- 2.4 For each of the six sites, the Local Plan policy includes a requirement for the application to *“be supported by, and prepared in accordance with, a comprehensive Development Brief for the entire site to be jointly prepared and agreed in advance between the appointed representative(s) of the landowner(s) and Cherwell District Council”*. It further states, *“The Development Brief shall be prepared in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council”*.
- 2.5 The development brief will then be a material consideration in the determination of any future planning applications for the site to which it relates.
- 2.6 Further to the Partial Review Plan’s requirement, Development Briefs are being prepared for each of the six sites. The first two to be ready are those relating to sites PR7b and PR9.
- 2.7 Design consultants appointed by the Council have prepared the briefs working with officers and with the benefit of input from technical consultees, stakeholders and public consultation. This report presents the proposed, final brief for approval and in doing so explains how it meets the Council’s objectives and the requirements of the Partial Review’s policies.
- 2.8 The Development Briefs have been the subject of public consultation, for six weeks from 11 August to 22 September 2021. This report summarises the representations received and explains what changes have been made in response.

### **3.0 Report Details**

- 3.1 Policy PR7b of the Partial Review of the Local Plan relates to land at Stratfield Farm, located to the southern edge of Kidlington, to the north of Stratfield Brake sports ground and east of the Oxford Canal. The site comprises a number of fields along with the Grade II listed Stratfield Farmhouse and outbuildings (some of which are in a poor condition) and associated orchards. The site includes areas of important habitat including ponds, hedgerows and trees and a Conservation Target Area and is adjacent to the Oxford Canal Conservation Area.
- 3.2 The site is allocated for 120 homes on 5 hectares of land, of which 50% is required to be affordable housing. There are policy requirements for the provision of facilities for play areas and allotments to adopted standards within the developable area; the improvement, extension and protection of the existing orchard on the site for community benefit; the creation of a nature conservation area on 5.3 hectares of land, incorporating the community orchard; a new bridleway/green link suitable for all-weather cycling and connecting Land at Stratfield Farm with the PR8 (Land East of the A44) site on the western side of the canal and to key facilities on the A4165

including proposed sporting facilities at the PR7a (South East Kidlington) site and Oxford Parkway.

3.3 The Development Brief sets out its background, purpose and status, its structure and the community involvement that has taken place (Chapter 1); the strategic vision and context, the role of the site, its economic relationships and movement corridors (Chapter 2); the planning policy context, spatial context and the site's attributes (Chapter 3); a site appraisal including opportunities and requirements (Chapter 4); the vision and objectives for the site (Chapter 5); then the development principles (Chapter 6); and closes with a section on delivery and monitoring (Chapter 7).

3.4 Preparation of the Development Brief included review of baseline information and the planning policy context, preparation and agreement of the scope for the Brief, identification of opportunities and constraints, workshops to establish the vision, the principles concerning movement, water management, landscape, biodiversity, heritage and archaeology, and subsequent workshops and one to one engagements with technical consultees including the preparation of parameter plans, review of early drafts of the Brief and discussion with the site promoters.

3.5 The vision for Land at Stratfield Farm, set out in Chapter 5 of the Brief, is as follows:

*Stratfield Farm will become a new Kidlington neighbourhood of a traditional, informal character and scale, to provide an attractive and outward facing edge to the village, overlooking Stratfield Brake. The historic farmhouse and barns at the site's centre will be retained and sensitively integrated as a local landmark within a corridor of green space to retain the open setting of the farmhouse within the new development. The development will provide an enhanced area of habitat extending to the Oxford Canal Conservation Area and connect to the wider strategic green walking and cycling routes into Oxford, and to Croxford Gardens to the north, Stratfield Brake to the south and planned development to the west.*

3.6 Each Partial Review policy sets out a detailed list of required elements for the Development Brief. There are common elements to each site, for example:

- a scheme and outline layout for the delivery of the required land uses and associated infrastructure,
- protection and connection of existing public rights of way (where applicable) and an outline scheme for pedestrian and cycle access to the surrounding countryside,
- design principles which seek to deliver a connected and integrated extension to the adjacent built settlement,
- outline measures for securing net biodiversity gains informed by a Biodiversity Impact Assessment, and
- an outline scheme for vehicular access by the emergency services.

3.7 Policy PR7b sets out the following particular requirements for inclusion in the Development Brief:

- Points of vehicular access and egress from and to existing highways with, unless otherwise approved, at least two separate points: first, from the Kidlington roundabout junction, and second, from Croxford Gardens.
- An outline scheme for public vehicular, cycle, pedestrian and wheelchair connectivity within the site, to the built environment of Kidlington, to the allocated site to the east of the A44 (Policy PR8) enabling access over the Oxford Canal

and to existing or new points of connection off-site and to existing or potential public transport services. The scheme shall include an access road from the Kidlington Roundabout to the easternmost development parcels and the Stratfield Farm building complex.

- Design principles which seek to deliver a connected and integrated extension to Kidlington and a high quality landscape setting which responds to the historic environment of the farm and the Oxford Canal.
- The maintenance and enhancement of significant trees, existing tree lines and hedgerows.

- 3.8 The Development Brief for PR7b sets the development framework for the site. The parameters for the brief are established by the Local Plan. The brief is intended to provide additional detail to help implement the Local Plan policy and guide the preparation and consideration of applications for planning permission.
- 3.9 The Brief provides a scheme and outline layout for delivery of the required land uses and associated infrastructure. There is no material change in the extent of the residential area between the policy map for the site (page 118 of the Partial Review Plan) and the development framework plan (page 24 of the draft Development Brief). The LAP/LEAP play area for the site and allotments (shown as an extension of the existing orchard) are shown outside of the site, within the wider site but on retained Green Belt land. However, in common with all Partial Review site policies, Policy PR7b allows for the consideration of minor variations in the location of specific land uses where evidence is available. Recreational land uses and allotments are capable of being appropriate uses of land within the Green Belt and their location outside of the residential area will enable delivery of this particular site. Officers consider this change to be acceptable as a minor variation from the policy requirement.
- 3.10 The Development Brief for PR7b provides an outline scheme for vehicular, cycle, pedestrian and wheelchair connectivity within the site, for pedestrian and cycle access to the surrounding countryside, and for vehicular access by the emergency services. It also provides outline measures for securing net biodiversity gains, provides for the maintenance and enhancement of significant trees, existing tree lines and hedgerows.
- 3.11 The Development Brief for PR7b sets the design principles for the site, which seek to deliver a connected and integrated extension to Kidlington and a high quality landscape setting which responds to the historic environment of the farm and the Oxford Canal.
- 3.12 The Brief requires that the majority of the built form is 2 - 2.5 storey houses. "2.5 storeys" means a two-storey eaves with accommodation in the roof, achieved through a combination of dormers and rooflights. This is distinct from the 3 storeys permitted in one development block close to the Oxford Road roundabout which may also include apartments in addition to houses. The outline layout for the site sets out the positions of key frontages for buildings. These are labelled 'indicative' but importantly show no frontages facing towards existing Garden City properties – development adjacent to these neighbours will need to be 'side-on' or gardens to new dwellings.
- 3.13 The location of the Grade II listed building, and curtilage listed buildings surrounding it, in the middle of the site is a distinctive component of PR7b relative to other Partial Review sites, and the Development Brief includes a section which sets out clear development principles for this part of the site.

- 3.14 One of these development principles responds to this challenge (page 41 of the draft Brief), by requiring that the part of this primary street that lies to the south of the farmhouse responds appropriately to this historic setting. The Brief requires that this stretch of the primary street is subtly demarcated, through the appropriate choice of surfacing materials such as resin bound gravel, stone kerbs and flags, with the character of a shared surface and a maximum width of 7 metres. This will be an unusual design challenge for developer and highway engineers alike, but is a direct result of the provision of the non-provision of vehicular access from Croxford Gardens.
- 3.15 The importance of its design is underlined by the fact that this section of road will also run through retained Green Belt land. Officers are satisfied that this road design can be achieved and that it will preserve the setting of the listed building and be an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt. It is also noted that the pedestrian and cycle access through the site will run to the south of the community orchard rather than adjacent to the carriageway, which should aid the delivery of this bespoke design solution.
- 3.16 Other development principles for this central part of the site include a list of the buildings that make up the farmhouse complex, and whether they will be retained, converted or demolished and where new buildings may be permissible on the footprints of former buildings.
- 3.17 This requires historic walls within the complex to be retained and repaired (and rebuilt where needed); it requires the depths of the new built structures to be shallow, with traditional roof pitches, so that the farmhouse remains the dominant building on the site. It requires the 'gardens' and orchard landscape around the farmhouse and the farm courtyard to retain the historic character. It prohibits garden sheds, greenhouses and overly domestic paraphernalia and boundary treatments, and the integration of garden storage within the footprint of existing buildings and their protection from future conversion to additional accommodation. And, it requires any demarcation of amenity spaces to be subtle.
- 3.18 A deviation in the proposed Development Brief from the requirements of Policy PR7b is that the Brief shows only a single vehicular access, from the Oxford Road roundabout, and no vehicular access from Croxford Gardens. This has been raised in responses to the public consultation. This change has been worked up through detailed discussion between CDC officers, OCC as local highway authority and the site's promoter. Part 10(b) of the policy, which includes this requirement, features the words "unless otherwise approved".
- 3.19 Officers consider that the local highway authority's contentment with the proposal for one vehicular access, for a site of this size, is an acceptable change from the policy's requirement. Your officers have also sought advice from the Council's legal team, who consider this change not to have significant implications. It is worth nothing that the Brief does nonetheless include the requirement for two points of pedestrian and cycle access onto the site from Croxford Gardens.
- 3.20 One of the key implications for the provision of only one vehicular access into the site is that the residential area in the western 'half' of the site must be accessed from the east, and therefore the main distributor road must run past, and close to, the Grade II listed farmhouse in the centre of the site.

## *Consultation*

- 3.21 The brief was published for public consultation from 11 August to 22 September by way of advertisement on the Council's website, emails directly to parish councils and technical consultees, and invitations to parish councils to a virtual meeting to raise or seek or clarification on particular matters. A total of 14 representations were received. The representations have been made publicly available alongside this report and a schedule containing a summary of each and officer responses is provided at Appendix 2. A precis is provided below.

### Begbroke Parish Council

- 3.22 The comments raised from Begbroke Parish Council are summarised as follows:

- Believes Sandy Lane should be kept open both ways if the Railway Station is built and section 106 money could be used to find a bridge on Sandy Lane to provide a crossing.
- No need for a community orchard. Could lead to waste of space in future if neglected
- Vehicular access to roundabout not ideal and roads need to be wide enough for street parking. Visitor spaces need to be provided.
- Concerns regarding resin bonded gravel surface for roads as proposed in brief. Issue with repair when it cracks

### Councillor Ian Middleton

- 3.23 The comments raised by Councillor Middleton are regarding both PR7B and PR9 and are summarised as follows:

- Would like the Council to hold developers to a high standard of sustainable development
- The Council should make sure biodiversity enhancements are applied and maintained long term
- Seems to be a lack of health and education provision provided for both development briefs
- Consideration into the effect on local roads the development and closure of Sandy Lane will have on traffic.
- Pedestrian crossing are vital pieces of infrastructure and should respond to the local need.
- Recommendation to set up a local forum consisting of councillors and residents to give back feedback to the LPA and developers.

The majority of Councillor Middleton's comments pick up those made by other responses, and the majority are matters more appropriately picked up at planning application stage.

### Members of the Public

- 3.24 The comments raised from members of the public are summarised as follows:

- Implications on flooding as Stratfield Farm and Stratfield Brake act as fall away for rainfall
- Established wildlife and trees with nesting birds on boundary between proposed development area and sports field
- Environmental impact with raised carbon emissions levels
- Concerns to loss of light for existing dwellings who would become neighbours to this development

#### Site Promoter Manor Oak Homes

- 3.25 Supports the Council in its Development Brief strategy and supports the Council in due course to formally endorse and adopt the Development Brief. Intends to submit a planning application at the soonest opportunity following adoption of the final version of the development brief.

#### Tripartite (owner of part of PR8)

- 3.26 Believes strengthening of wording in certain areas of the development briefs is required. Regarding heads of terms for development contributions, clarity required in briefs on the way shared infrastructure across the Partial Review's strategic housing sites is to be delivered.

#### Oxfordshire County Council

- 3.27 The County Council's comments are:
- Supportive of purpose of the development briefs but believes affording them the status of Supplementary Planning Document would give them a stronger status.
  - Development Brief should set out enhancement and beneficial use of the Green Belt land in the allocation will be achieved.
  - Requests certain additions to the text of the Development Brief regarding transport development control and Public Health sections.

#### Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

- 3.28 Welcomes the intention of providing a multi-functional green infrastructure network providing a range of ecosystem services however concerns with public access to modern orchard could lead to the decline in condition of the priority habitat.

#### Canal and River Trust

- 3.29 Comments that the towpath will require improvement to the north and the canal should be considered an integral part of the site. Believes that the full benefits of being located by the water are not fully exploited and during lockdowns use of towpaths have increased so residents are likely to use towpath.
- 3.30 The Trust advises that it is not obliged to accept a new bridge over the canal however they will work with the Council and others to facilitate if a suitable design and location can be agreed.

- 3.31 The Trust welcomes the mention of enhancements for Otter, Water Vole and Great Crested habitats and links with local areas of habitat.

Highways England

- 3.32 Would expect transport assessments on Strategic Road Networks.

Historic England

- 3.33 No comments

Sport England

- 3.34 No objections to the development briefs but has one concern, that the location of proposed new road into the Sports Ground is too close to main rugby pitch.

Thames Water

- 3.35 The scale of development will likely require upgrades of the water supply network. Asks for housing phasing plan at earliest opportunity. Advises that developer should liaise with local lead flood authority to agree an appropriate sustainable surface water strategy but the scale of proposed development doesn't materially affect the sewer network.

Woodland Trust

- 3.36 Welcomes the commitment to a multi-functional green infrastructure network and commitment to work with the Trust on the proposed new canal bridge and towpath improvement.
- 3.37 Would welcome further discussion regarding Stratfield Brake site owned by the Trust and topics that affect the site. The Trust has put forward multiple recommendations regarding the environment on the site.

Officer Response to Representations

- 3.38 Responses to the representations made are included in the summary schedule at Appendix 2. Several comments relate to matters which either relate to the principle of development – which has already been set in the adoption of the Local Plan – or to matters relevant to the planning application. Where this is the case it has been noted as such in Appendix 2. In certain cases specific comments have been made by respondents which are not been taken forward in the final Development Brief – where this is the case explanation is provided in the summary schedule at Appendix 2. Officers are pleased to recommend to planning committee that some minor changes are made to the text of the Development Brief.

Summary of Changes

- 3.39 In response to a comment by the Woodland Trust, the text has been amended in relation to the creation of new scrapes connected to the existing canal-side ditch network.
- 3.40 In response to comments by Kidlington Parish Council,

- the development principles have been amended to require that all houses backing onto Garden City must not exceed 2 storeys rather than 2.5 storeys, i.e. no dwellings to have dormer windows on Garden City facing elevations.
- Figures 13 and 19 have been amended to reflect the importance of not overloading the drainage ditch along the site's northern boundary
- amendments have been made to the text in relation to cycle route connectivity to emphasise the importance of natural surveillance

3.41 In response to comments by Oxfordshire County Council,

- the early part of the Brief has been amended in relation to enhancement and beneficial use of the Green Belt land
- various minor edits have been made to the text, including in relation to the main site access, the promotion of health and wellbeing, cycle parking, cycle route connectivity, and additional tree planting.

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Overall, officers are happy to conclude that the Development Brief for the site accords with Policy PR7b and the vision and objectives for the site, and that it provides an appropriate framework for the development of the site – adherence to the Brief will be important in achieving an acceptable form of development.
- 4.2 It is recommended that the planning committee endorses this Development Brief as a framework for the development and delivery of site PR7b - Land at Stratfield Farm and that it will be a material consideration in the determination of any future planning applications for the site.

## **5.0 Consultation**

Councillor Colin Clarke - Lead Member for Planning (briefing only)  
Councillor George Reynolds, Chairman – Planning Committee (briefing only)

## **6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to endorse the Development Brief. Since Policy PR7b requires the planning application for the site to be supported by and prepared in accordance with a Development Brief, this option would require a new Brief to be prepared, adding significant expense for the Council and delaying delivery of the development.

Option 2: To request further significant changes to the Development Brief. Officers consider that the final brief presented to Members represents an appropriate

response to Local Plan policy and will assist in achieving high quality development. This option would also delay the determination of any planning application and may require further public consultation, thereby creating uncertainty.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 External work on the development briefs is being funded by the respective site promoters through Planning Performance Agreements but controlled directly by Council officers. Otherwise, existing budgets are being used.

Comments checked by:

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### **Legal Implications**

- 7.2 The brief has been prepared to be non-statutory guidance to support the implementation of the statutory Development Plan. It is generally consistent with the Local Plan policy it supports and its preparation has been assisted by stakeholder engagement and public consultation. Approval of the brief by the Committee would enable it to be taken into account as a material consideration

Comments checked by:

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### **Risk Implications**

- 7.3 The relevant Local Plan policy requires a Development Brief to be produced. Whilst not a reason for approval, not approving the brief may require re-consideration of the Planning Performance Agreement with the respective promoter.

Comments checked by:

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### **Equality & Diversity Implications**

- 7.4 The proposed brief supports Local Plan policy that has been the subject of Equalities Impact Assessment and has been reviewed in line with this report. As there are no new impacts arising from this report, no new mitigations are required.

Comments checked by:

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## 8.0 Decision Information

### Key Decision

**Financial Threshold Met:** N/A

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** N/A

### Wards Affected

Kidlington East

Other wards affected by Partial Review sites: Kidlington West

### Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Business Plan Priorities 2021-2022:

- Housing that meets your needs
- Leading on environmental sustainability
- An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres
- Healthy, resilient and engaged communities

### Document Information

**Appendix 1:** Development Brief – Land West of A44 (Site PR9)

**Appendix 2:** Summary of representations and officer responses

### Background papers

None

### Reference Documents

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Partial Review:

<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/83/local-plans/215/adopted-cherwell-local-plan-2011-2031-part-1-partial-review---oxfords-unmet-housing-need>

### Report Author and contact details

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