

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL
LOCAL PLAN 2031: PART 1 – STRATEGIC SITES AND POLICIES
REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF
MACTAGGART AND MICKEL HOMES



December 2014

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This representation is made in respect of the Vale of White Horse District Council's (the Council) Local Plan Part 1 consultation on behalf of our client, Mactaggart and Mickel Homes.
- 1.2 The representation supports the Council's decision to allocate Land East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor at Core Policy 4 and 8 in its Local Plan 2031. The site is being promoted by Mactaggart and Mickel Homes on behalf of the landowners and is available for development immediately.

2.0 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031: Part 1 - Strategic Sites and Policies

- 2.1 Preparation of the Council's new Local Plan started in November 2007 and has been through a number of iterations since. The Council published its Local Plan 2031: Part 1 – Strategic Sites and Policies in February 2013 with housing targets based on those in the South East Plan (13,294 new homes over the plan period). However, the South East Plan was revoked in March 2013 meaning that it no longer had any statutory weight in planning terms.
- 2.2 Since then, an Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has been produced jointly between all the Oxfordshire local planning authorities. This assessed housing need in all of the Oxfordshire housing market areas. The results showed a higher housing need for the Vale of White Horse District than that being provided for in the February 2013 plan. As a result, housing targets for the Council were increased. This was reflected in a further Strategic Sites and Policies 'Housing Delivery Update' version of the plan published for consultation in February 2014. This version had a higher target of 20,560 new homes which matched the requirement for the Vale in the SHMA.
- 2.3 Following the February 2014 Housing Delivery Update consultation, a number of amendments have been made to the plan. These are now being consulted on prior to its submission to the Secretary of State.

3.0 Allocation of Land at East Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor

- 3.1 Land at East Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor is a new allocation in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area as identified at Core Policy 4 and 8 of the plan. Mactaggart & Mickel fully supports the allocation and can confirm that the site is available and deliverable. Early development of the site would assist the Council in achieving its housing targets. The site can be fully developed in accordance with the allocation within five years of the receipt of an outline planning permission.

4.0 Suitability of Land at East Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor for Allocation.

- 4.1 Page 36 of the plan sets out the 'Settlement Hierarchy' for the district and designates Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor as a larger village with employment, services and facilities. Page 33 of the plan explains the sustainable strategy for the Vale. Part of the strategy is to allocate housing growth at the larger villages to help sustain their services and facilities. The allocation at East Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor is consistent with this strategy.

4.2 A number of assessments have been carried out on the site by our client and the Council. They all show the suitability and deliverability of the site for development. The key points from the assessments are summarised below:

- **Landscape**

A Phase 1 Landscape Study of the site has been carried out on behalf of the Council and concludes that there is potential for development on the site subject to a more detailed study, particularly of the settlement pattern and Conservation Area.

A High Level Landscape and Visual Appraisal has also been prepared for Mactaggart & Mickel. The appraisal concludes that:

“there are no overriding landscape or visual constraints to development on the site and is therefore considered suitable to be allocated for residential development of an appropriate scale, as a logical extension to the east of Kingston Bagpuize, perceived within the existing urban influence of the village and recently consented housing on the adjoining site to the west of the A415.”

- **Access and Traffic**

The Council state that safe access onto the Witney Road could be achieved via the Oxford Road, to the south of the site. A Site Appraisal and Access Strategy produced by Glanville concurs with this. An access proposal is in the process of being prepared.

- **Flood Risk**

The whole site is Flood Zone 1 meaning it has the lowest risk of flooding. Our client has already had a permeability investigation carried out and an indicative infiltration drainage design has been prepared. A Flood Risk / Surface Water Drainage Appraisal has also been carried out on the site which concludes that the site is considered to be at low risk of flooding from all sources and is therefore in a suitable zone for development in terms of flood risk. It also states that it should be possible to drain surface water by means of infiltration based SUDS.

- **Pollution**

A geo-environmental appraisal has also been carried out by Glanville on the site on behalf of Mactaggart & Mickel. It concludes that there should be no significant geo-environmental issues on the site that would prevent it from being developed.

- **Ecology Survey**

An Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken, and with regard to protected species, some badger foraging and two badger latrines (dung pits) were found at the north-eastern boundary of the site, although no badger setts were observed on site. Shrubs and trees offer nesting opportunities to breeding birds, but the assemblage is likely to be typical of lowland farmland and thus, of no particular merit. None of the trees offers any shelter to

roosting bats and there are no wetlands for breeding amphibians on site. There are no suitable habitats for reptiles. A follow up badger survey has been carried out in November 2014 and it confirmed that no badger setts or other evidence of badger activity were recorded during the survey. The badger latrine that had previously been observed along the eastern side of the site was no longer present and no fresh evidence of badgers was noted within the site.

- 4.3 There are a limited number of issues that have been identified by the Council and highlighted in Topic Paper 3, Strategic Site Selection. In terms of ecology, reference is made to the fact that the site is adjacent to the Kingston Bagpuize Millennium Green which contains a pond housing a population of Great Crested Newts. It states that this may have an impact on the site's potential layout and capacity. This has been reviewed by Windrush Ecology who have advised that "the habitats on the site are largely unsuitable for great crested newts during the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle and the arable fields offer no habitat to this species. Indeed, the arable fields are likely to be a hostile environment for amphibians due to disturbance of the ground through ploughing. However, the plantation woodland and peripheral grassland areas are considered to offer some shelter to amphibians and small numbers of great crested newt may be present within the rough grassland margin along the south side of the southern arable field. The presence of small numbers of amphibians within these peripheral areas is considered to be of ecological value within the local context." Through careful design of the site along the southern edge, the Great Crested Newts can be protected and ecological betterment delivered through the creation of more permanent habitats.
- 4.4 In terms of historic environment and cultural heritage, it has been noted that the north-western part of the site is adjacent to Appleby Cottage, which is Grade II listed. Our client would like to reassure the Council that through careful design the setting of the listed building will at the very least be preserved. A Heritage Assessment of the Listed Building will be undertaken and submitted as part of a future outline planning application.
- 4.5 The Council also notes that there is the potential for road noise from the A420 affecting the site and that consequentially an appropriate buffer would be required. Land to the west of Witney Road which lies on the opposite side of the Witney Road to our client's site has recently been granted permission for 63 dwellings and 45 unit extra care facility (ref: P12/V1836/O). Similar to our client's site the A420 runs along the northern edge of the site. The noise assessment that accompanied that application shows that with a 3.2m high acoustic barrier, standard thermal double glazing along with passive acoustic trickle vents will allow suitable internal noise levels to be met across the site. This was agreed with the Council. Our client will deliver all the necessary and appropriate mitigation to reduce the impact of noise on the site and of the future residents.
- 4.6 The Council's Sustainability Appraisal (SA) found minor positive effects for the site against SA objectives. The objectives sought to provide suitable homes (including affordable housing), allocate development on sites that have good access to services and reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable travel. There were also neutral effects on SA objectives which sought to improve health and well-being, support a strong and sustainable economy and protect cultural heritage, townscape and landscape.

4.7 The Council's assessment of the site identifies a number of other positives for the proposal including:

- There are no issues regarding water supply to the site,
- The site may contain sand deposits which could form part of a workable resource for the development,
- Kingston Bagpuize has good level of services and facilities with access to Abingdon and Oxford by public transport, and
- There is the potential for improvements to services and facilities through the development such as an expansion to John Blandy Primary School, and
- There is an opportunity to enhance the route 66 bus with improved frequency and level of service.

5.0 Reducing Pressure on the Green Belt.

5.1 Kingston Bagpuize lies within the Abingdon on Thames and Oxford Fringe sub-area. Paragraph 5.1 of the Local Plan 2031 explains that 40% of this sub-area is within the Oxford Green Belt. It also states that:

'The sub-area provides housing for residents working in Oxford and also functions as a significant employment area in its own right. The sub-area has good access to the strategic road network, including the A34 and A420.'

5.2 As this sub-area helps to relieve some of the housing pressure for Oxford by providing housing in a location with good access to the city, and as such a high percentage of the sub-area is Green Belt, it is inevitable that there will be pressure to take land out of the Green Belt to provide housing sites.

5.3 Government guidance is clear on the protection of the Green Belt. Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that:

'The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.'

5.4 The allocation at Kingston Bagpuize will help reduce pressure on the Oxford Green Belt by providing a site for housing in a sustainable location which is not Green Belt. The land is available, suitable and achievable and benefits from good access to Oxford. The site will also deliver a significant number of affordable homes close to the City of Oxford, where the need for new housing is greatest.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion.

6.1 Mactaggart & Mickel fully support the allocation of land east of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor at Core Policy 4 and 8 of the Local Plan.

6.2 The site is available for development immediately. Moreover, there are no land ownership or other issues that would prevent the site from coming forward.

6.3 The site's close proximity to Oxford means that the development will provide much needed housing to help reduce the pressure on Oxford City. Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor sits within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe sub-area, 40% of

which is in the Green Belt. Therefore, the allocation of the site reduces the pressure to find other sites which may have been in the Green Belt.