



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

**PLANNING,
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

TO ACCOMPANY AN OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR

**MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT (LOCAL SERVICES CENTRE) COMPRISING COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS
AND SERVICE USES, AND THE PROVISION OF SPA AND WELLBEING CENTRE WITHIN CLASS E;
MIXED USE RESTAURANT AND TAKEAWAY USE (SUI GENERIS); AND THE PROVISION OF UP TO
16 AFFORDABLE HOUSES (CLASS C3). ALL MATTERS RESERVED EXCEPT FOR ACCESS.**

**ON LAND AT
VICTORS BARNES, NORTHAMPTON ROAD, BRIXWORTH**

**ON BEHALF OF
EKENEY CONSULTING**

**FEBRUARY 2024
PF/10177**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for development off Northampton Road, Brixworth, which comprises:

“Mixed use development (Local Services Centre) comprising commercial, business and service uses, and the provision of Spa and Wellbeing Centre within Class E; mixed use restaurant and takeaway use (sui generis); and the provision of up to 16 Affordable Houses (Class C3). All matters reserved except for Access”

1.2 The site area comprises some 2.6 hectares, including the existing means of access onto Northampton Road.

1.3 The site comprises land north of the access road from Northampton Road, as well as land between the access road and the Cricket Ground.

1.4 The site is bounded by a substantial tree screen on the northern and western boundary, which is formed by Merry Tom Lane. Northampton Road forms the eastern boundary.

1.5 To the south of the site lies Brixworth Cricket Ground.

1.6 Residential development and Saxon Spires Practice (Brixworth Surgery) are located to the east of the site, on the opposite side of Northampton Road.

1.7 Merry Tom Lane is located along the western boundary of the site, with a large residential property located beyond the lane.

Local Services Centre

- 1.8 The proposals for the Local Services Centre and Affordable Homes are illustrated on the Proposed Site Plan (drawing No. A101) and provides an indicative provision for various units of differing sizes:

Unit	Use	Size (sqm)
1	Gymnasium/Dance Hall	316
2	Professional Office	140
3	Small Business Unit	47
4	Small Business Unit	47
5	Small Business Unit	47
6	Small Business Unit	70
7	Small Business Unit	70
8	Small Business Unit	47
9	Small Business Unit	47
10	Small Business Unit	47
11	Small Business Unit	70
12	Small Business Unit	70
13	Convenience Store	418
14	Pharmacy	140
15	Drive-Thru-Coffee	358
16	Spa and Wellbeing Centre	990

- 1.9 The units will be flexible, comprising commercial, business and service uses within Class E.
- 1.10 A letter from Underwoods Property Agents, dated 22nd August 2023, accompanies the application and confirms that *“the proposed new development on the land adjoining Brixworth Cricket Club will provide much needed commercial property that will benefit the needs of the local community. This is particularly relevant as the village continues to expand and demand for public services grows”* (**APPENDIX 1**).

1.11 The Applicant is aware of strong interest locally for community and leisure facilities to include a gymnasium, dance school and small office suites which are becoming increasingly popular to satisfy modern day hybrid working practices.

1.12 The Applicant is in active discussions with one of the country's largest retailers to provide a modern convenience store which can provide enlarged and enhanced local convenience retail floorspace (so avoiding longer journeys by local residents to similarly sized stores).

Affordable Housing

1.13 The proposals also include up to 16 affordable homes. Affordable Housing covers a range of approaches in delivery affordable homes. These approaches are defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (Annex 2).

1.14 The housing mix of these homes will also be provided consistent with affordable housing policy.

Freehold transfer for the continued use of the property as the Brixworth Cricket Club and Tennis Club

1.15 As part of the proposals, the Applicant is proposing that the Freehold of the land edged blue on drawing no. 10177-02 (**APPENDIX 2**) is transferred to a Community Interest Company or to another form of responsible body which takes on full management and ownership, with a covenant that the land shall be retained for recreational use to the benefit of the local community. Draft Heads of Terms have been submitted as part of the proposals and are available at **APPENDIX 3**.

1.16 A Community Interest Company (CIC) is designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good. CICs are intended to be easy to set up, with all the flexibility and certainty of the company form, but with some special features to ensure they are working for the benefit of the community.

1.17 The existing Tennis Club and Cricket Club would continue to occupy the site and it is envisaged that a formal lease will be put in place between the CIC and the clubs. Usually, the lease would be granted for a term of years between 30-99 years.

1.18 This is an unrivalled opportunity to secure this facility as a village asset, and would also represent a significant improvement on the existing annual licence that has been created and can be terminated by both parties on notice.

Submission Material

1.19 The submission comprises the following plans and reports:

- Drawing No. A010 Location Plan
- Drawing No. A101 Illustrative Site Plan
- Drawing No. 25316-01a Proposed Access Arrangement
- Drawing No. 10177-02 Land to be made available to CIC or other responsible body
- Planning Obligations Document
- Planning, Design and Access Statement
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Local Facilities Assessment

- Arboricultural Statement
- Geophysical Survey Report
- Ground Investigation Report
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Landscape & Visual Appraisal
- Transport Statement

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

2.1 The development plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Act comprises:

- West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS), adopted December 2014
- The Countryside and Settlements Local Plan, adopted February 2020
- Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2029, made December 2016 (updated 2021)

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

2.2 The following policies are considered relevant to the development:

- Policy S1 The Distribution of Development
- Policy S2 Hierarchy of Centres
- Policy E2 New Office Floorspace
- Policy R1 Spatial Strategy for the Rural Areas
- Policy R2 Rural Economy

Daventry Settlements and Countryside Local Plan

2.3 The following policies are considered relevant to the development:

- Policy RA1 Primary Service Villages
- Policy RA6 Open Countryside
- HO8 – Housing Mix and Type

- Policy ST1 Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
- Policy ENV1 Landscape
- Policy ENV5 Biodiversity
- Policy ENV10 Design
- Policy ENV11 Local Flood Risk Management
- Policy CW1 Health and Well-being

Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan

2.4 The following policies are considered relevant to the development:

- Policy 5 Local Green Space
- Policy 11 The Rural Economy

Material Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)
 - Paragraph 8a
 - Paragraph 33
 - Paragraph 106
 - Paragraph 107
- Planning Practice Guidance

3.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The starting point for the determination of any application is the provisions of the Development Plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

“if regard is to be had to the development plan, for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the provision of the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”

3.2 Section 70(2) provides that in determining applications the local planning authority shall have regard to... *“(a) the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application” and to “(c) any other material considerations”.*

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

3.3 The WNJCS was adopted in December 2014. A new local plan for West Northamptonshire for the period up to 2041 is currently being prepared. The West Northamptonshire Local Plan will replace the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) and the Part 2 Local Plans which were adopted for the former Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire areas.

3.4 A consultation on spatial options for the Plan took place between 11 October and 24 December 2021. This was the second stage in preparing the new Plan (after the Issues Consultation in 2019). The next stage of the Plan is expected in April 2024.

- 3.5 The weight to be given to adopted planning policies in the Core Strategy should take account of this circumstance, and particularly the changing economic circumstances affecting the country and West Northamptonshire.
- 3.6 Objective 12 of the WNJCS seeks to "*protect and support rural communities to ensure they thrive and remain vital.*"
- 3.7 Policy E2 considers that the scale of office development in settlements such as Brixworth will be proportionate with their function.
- 3.8 The objective of Policy R2 is to "*sustain and enhance the rural economy*" where creating jobs and business will be supported where they are of an appropriate scale. Policy R2 allows for "*small scale employment development to meet local needs*". It is acknowledged that the proposals may not be small scale, however there is a demand in this area for 'E' use classes.
- 3.9 A letter from Underwoods Property Agents, dated 25th August 2023, accompanies the application and confirms that "*the proposed new development on the land adjoining Brixworth Cricket Club will provide much needed commercial property that will benefit the needs of the local community. This is particularly relevant as the village continues to expand and demand for public services grows*" (**APPENDIX 1**).
- 3.10 The Applicant is aware of strong interest locally for community and leisure facilities to include a gymnasium, dance school and small office suites which are becoming increasingly popular to satisfy modern day hybrid working practices.

3.11 The Applicant is in active discussions with one of the country's largest retailers to provide a modern convenience store which can provide enlarged and enhanced local convenience retail floorspace (so avoiding longer journeys by local residents to similarly sized stores).

Daventry Settlements and Countryside Local Plan

3.12 Brixworth is defined in the Part 2 Local Plan as one of the six Primary Service Villages under Policy RA1.

3.13 It is acknowledged that the site lies beyond, but adjoining, the confines of Brixworth as defined on the Proposals Map. Paragraph 5.2.19 states:

*'Taking forward policy R1 of the WNJCS, there may exceptionally be scope for development outside of the confines but only in prescribed circumstances. These are where there is an absence of a five year housing land supply (three years where a made neighbourhood development plan allocates sites for housing and is less than two years old) or where the Housing Delivery Test is not met, the development is needed to meet an identified local need, where it is required to support an essential local service that may be under threat (especially a primary school or primary health service) or is **economic development that enhances or maintains the sustainability of the village or would contribute towards and improve the local economy ...'***

[emphasis added]

3.14 Policy RA1 states that development outside the defined confines will be acceptable only in the following circumstances:

- i. Where the housing land supply is less than five years (three years where a neighbourhood development plan that is less than two years old is in place that allocates sites for housing) or where the Housing Delivery Test is not met; or
- ii. Where the development provided would clearly meet an identified local need, for housing this would be need identified through an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey or Housing Needs Assessment where it is demonstrated that this could not otherwise be met within the defined village confines; or
- iii. Where it is demonstrated that a scheme is required to support an essential local service that may be under threat, especially a primary school or primary health service; or
- iv. Economic development that will enhance or maintain the vitality or sustainability of the Primary Service Village or would contribute towards and improve the local economy; or
- v. Development which otherwise accords with policy EC4.

3.15 Policy RA1 B ii and iv. is considered wholly pertinent to the proposals providing policy support for economic development.

3.16 The supporting context to this policy explains (paragraph 5.2.17):

'The Primary Service Villages are the largest settlements within the District after Daventry town. They perform an important role in providing a range of services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of their own residents and businesses and those from surrounding smaller villages and settlements, providing access to shops, schools, GP surgery and employment including at strategic employment areas. They also have relatively good public transport provision to the surrounding towns. Therefore, it is

important to ensure that these villages' roles are protected moving forward.'

[emphasis added]

3.17 Policy RA6 'Open Countryside' allows for certain forms of development in the open countryside, such as (ix) Economic development that otherwise accords with policy EC4 or policy R2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. As set out earlier, it is considered that there is a demand for the proposed uses in this location (as supported by **APPENDIX 1**).

Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan

3.18 Policy 5 of the Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan identifies the site within a large area of Local Green Space, which is referred to as Haywards and Victors Barns Recreation Area (**APPENDIX 4**). The boundary of the Local Green Space identifies the cricket pitch, tennis courts, clubhouse and parking facilities – together with land on the north side of the access road (including the application site).

3.19 It is acknowledged that there is a tension with Policy 5, however this is not determinative. There are other material considerations that need to be taken account of, such as the performance of the land against the criteria of NPPF 106.

3.20 It is considered that the application site fulfils only criteria (a) of the justification of Local Green Space set out at NPPF 106.

3.21 There is no evidential basis that the application site has been used for recreational purposes. No rights of access have been available to the public or to others by way of a licence. The site simply comprises an area of grassland of no special local qualities.

3.22 In consequence, the 'conflict' with the Neighbourhood Plan is considered not to be significant – particularly in the context of this development proposal which will provide substantial community benefits.

3.23 The benefits of the proposal are considered to be:

1. Provision of local services
2. Provision of affordable housing
3. Creation of jobs (construction and operational)
4. Provision of EV Charging, over and above the requirement of the Local Plan
5. Long term security of the Cricket and Tennis Club.

3.24 In any event, the planning system operates on a plan-led basis, not a plan determined system. Conflict with policies in a development plan is not determinative of the merits of any application. The decision-taker is required to have regard to any other material consideration in order to reach a planning judgement.

3.25 Paragraph 107 states that *“Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.”*

3.26 It is therefore for the applicant to demonstrate 'Very special circumstances', which *“will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”* (para 153 of the Framework).

3.27 It is acknowledged that there is some harm as a result of the proposals, however, it is considered that the level of harm is considered to be small. The justification in the Neighbourhood Plan for the designation of the site as Local Green Space is stated as *“Popular and successful recreation area used for junior and senior cricket and junior and senior tennis”*. Land to the north of the access road is not public accessible and therefore cannot be used for recreational enjoyment. The proposals to the north of the Cricket pitch also do not offer any recreational enjoyment.

3.28 The designation of Local Green Space is in relation to the Cricket and Tennis Club, which as stated in section 1, the Applicant is proposing that the Freehold of the land edged blue on drawing no. 10177-02 (**APPENDIX 2**) is transferred to a Community Interest Company or to another form of responsible body which takes on full management and ownership, with a covenant that the land shall be retained for recreational use to the benefit of the local community.

3.29 In actuality, the residents of Brixworth will benefit from the provision of additional facilities. The benefits of the scheme are listed above. It is not considered that any other harm arises from the proposals.

3.30 In weighing the harm to the Local Green Space, against the benefits of the scheme (see para 3.23), it is considered that very special circumstances exist to justify the proposals.

3.31 The Neighbourhood Plan includes a plan – (**APPENDIX 5**) – of the architectural areas of Brixworth which show the substantial area/growth of Brixworth since the 1980s, some 40 years ago. This growth has been overwhelmingly residential development, with a consequent substantial increase in resident population.

3.32 The Neighbourhood Plan states that (para 3.3) “According to the 2011 census the population of Brixworth was 5,228 persons occupying 2025 dwellings”. The 2021 census confirms that Brixworth has a population of 5,766.

3.33 During this period, other than the relocation of the Co-Op, no new meaningful provision has been planned for enlarging the facilities to meet the needs of the expanded residential population.

3.34 The services and facilities available in Brixworth have largely remained unchanged for a considerable period – albeit it is accepted that the health centre has been able to relocate to new and expanded facilities on the southern edge of Brixworth, opposite the application site, and the Co-Op has relocated from Spratton Road to the corner of Harborough Road and Northampton Road.

3.35 The Neighbourhood Plan states (para 3.2) that “This extensive and rapid expansion has placed heavy demands on village services and facilities.”

3.36 Moreover, the Neighbourhood Plan states that (para 3.11):

*‘The accepted centre of the village on Spratton Road where shops, the Library and Community Centre are located, **has inadequate car parking provision** which gives rise to many negative comments by Brixworth residents.’*

[emphasis added]

3.37 The Neighbourhood Plan does acknowledge that the former primary medical care surgery was inadequate to meet ‘approximately 3,500 patients from Brixworth, and up to 1,500

from surrounding villages'. The Saxon Spires medical centre was handling around 7,500 patients, which may be a reasonable measure of the 'hinterland' for Brixworth as a primary service centre.

3.38 The Saxon Spires medical centre has successfully responded to the growing demands and relocated to new enlarged premises east of Northampton Road, on land opposite the application site. The Saxon Spires surgery has a dispensary for patients in outlying villages who live more than a mile 'as the crow flies' from the pharmacy which is sited in Spratton Road next to the Co-op. Patients in the village itself must go only to a pharmacy, rather than the dispensary, and it is logical to site a new pharmacy adjacent to this new surgery.

3.39 The relocation of the Saxon Spires medical centre to the most recent area of new housing development (east of Northampton Road) is a clear illustration that new and enlarged community facilities have to relocate to the edge of the village to secure appropriate areas of land.

3.40 The inability of the existing urban area to meet the demands for improved services and facilities is demonstrated by the relocation of Co-op to Northampton Road, through demolition of the Red Lion Public House. Brixworth also has a role to play in supporting smaller villages, such as Spratton, Holcot, Scaldwell, Walgrave and Hanging Houghton.

3.41 Policy 7 to the Neighbourhood Plan properly seeks to maintain Brixworth Village Centre which is located on Spratton Road. The Neighbourhood Plan (paragraph 6.76) recognises that a '*number of issues have emerged which affect its function, most notably the lack of adequate car parking provision*'.

- 3.42 Policies in development plans should be realistic. It is considered that there is no realistic proposal to enable sufficient provision of off-street car parking provided, and to enhance the quality of services available on Spratton Road.
- 3.43 As such, it is submitted that there is a clear need to make available a new site for leisure and gymnasium, professional offices and a high speed internet hub along with convenience goods which can provide for the bulk of day to day purchasing, and enable the existing parade of shops to function for other day to day needs.
- 3.44 It is considered that the existing parade of shops on Spratton Road would continue to be attractive to a range of occupiers. The proposals for the convenience store may well be attractive to another convenience goods retailer who would trade successfully with the Co-op store operating from Northampton Road.
- 3.45 In conclusion, it is submitted that there is no realistic prospect that the local services offer for Brixworth and the hinterland population can reasonably be provided without the release of land for commercial activity on the edge of Brixworth. The demands for car parking and servicing seriously limit the opportunity for such development to be located within the confines of the urban area, and may incur the loss of existing buildings which are valuable to the local community.
- 3.46 The proposed development achieves economies of scale in the provision of joint services and car parking. Further, by creating a 'local services centre', with a mixture of uses, including employment and leisure, combined trip making can occur – as well as individual uses interacting so as to enhance activity and custom.

3.47 It is concluded that the proposal is complementary to the existing form of services on Spratton Road, and will enhance the level of services which are available for the ever-growing population.

Local Service Centre and Spa and Wellness Centre

3.48 In September 2023, the Director General of the British Chamber of Commerce said *“The planning system has a major role to play in helping to unleash the potential of British business. But all too often firms are left frustrated by a slow and complex process... Successful businesses are at the heart of local communities. The planning system must focus more on economic growth and achieving the right balance of land for jobs and homes.”*

3.49 It is indisputable that very substantial weight now needs to be given to the ‘*economic objective*’ of sustainable development. The failure of the planning system to plan for economic growth will lead to substantial social disadvantages. The ‘*social objective*’ to ‘*support strong, vibrant and healthy communities*’ will be undermined unless dramatic steps are taken to boost economic activity.

3.50 The ‘*economic objective*’ of sustainable development states (Framework 8(a)):

‘to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure’

3.51 When drawing up development plans, a local planning authority can never anticipate each and every circumstance where development may or may not be acceptable. New

development opportunities arise in circumstances that were not envisaged at the date of the preparation of the development plan.

- 3.52 Furthermore, the Government expects LPAs to keep development plans up to date. The Framework (33) states:

'Policies in local plans and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy.'

- 3.53 The lockdown during the Covid-19 health crisis has demonstrated that, for many, 'home working' can be effective – and has other benefits including avoiding daily commuting trips, and the expenditure on travel. For many full-time home-working will not be a long-term proposition, because the lack of interaction with business colleagues is not as effective when compared to 'face to face' contact. The opportunity for team working is less effective. However, there is a general acceptance that a balance, 'hybrid' working is more appropriate for a healthy work-life balance.

- 3.54 Therefore, there has been an increase in smaller, more flexible commercial units, which allow businesses to operate a hybrid approach, where employed people meet others in a 'work hub', whether work colleagues, or just to be within a working environment.

- 3.55 It is intended that one of the proposed buildings should be an '**internet work hub**' where quiet working can take place within a conducive environment with high quality access to the internet.

3.56 The planning system should ensure that *'sufficient land of the right type is available... at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity'* (Framework 8a). Now is the right time for Daventry District Council to support growth and enable, through its planning powers, the provision of small high-quality business space. Such space is otherwise not available at Brixworth. With a similar theme, residents in Brixworth and its hinterland have no choice but to undertake travel to other locations where similar small work spaces may be available. Such unnecessary travel could be avoided with a grant of planning permission for the proposed development and positively contribute to a lower local carbon footprint.

3.57 This proposal provides an efficient development in terms of infrastructure, parking and servicing to fulfil the needs of the enlarged community at Brixworth and within the resident hinterland.

3.58 High quality facilities should be provided with the support of local communities to obviate the need for unnecessary travel. This scheme presents an unrivalled opportunity to plan pragmatically and positively to meet the 21st Century needs of Brixworth.

Affordable Housing

3.59 The Part 2 Local Plan acknowledges that *"Affordability is an important issue in the rural parts of the District"*. The WNJCS identifies a need for 1,500 affordable dwellings in Daventry.

3.60 Policy RA1 states that development outside the defined confines will be acceptable only in the following circumstances:

- ii. Where the development provided would clearly meet an identified local need, for housing this would be need identified through an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey or Housing Needs Assessment where it is demonstrated that this could not otherwise be met within the defined village confines; or*

3.61 Policy RA1 B ii and iv. is considered wholly pertinent to the proposals providing policy support for residential development which supports an identified housing need.

3.62 The WNJCS sets out a requirement for 1,500 affordable dwellings in the plan period in the Daventry Area. The Housing Land Availability Report (Daventry Area) published in October 2023 (**APPENDIX 6**) sets out at Table D5 that there has been a cumulative delivery of 1,051 affordable dwellings (see below extract from table):

Year	Need	Delivery	Annual Oversupply/ Undersupply	Cumulative Delivery
2011/12	31	25	-6	25
2012/13	21	27	6	52
2013/14	57	59	2	111
2014/15	75	82	7	193
2015/16	99	90	-9	283
2016/17	100	186	86	469
2017/18	120	97	-23	566
2018/19	127	196	69	762
2019/20	125	82	-43	844
2020/21	101	93	-8	937
2021/22	97	57	-40	944
2022/23	97	57	-40	1051

3.63 Based on the requirement and supply demonstrated above, there remains a need to deliver a minimum of 449 affordable dwellings to 2029. There has been an under delivery of affordable dwellings in the past 4 years. It is considered that the proposals will contribute towards the District's affordable housing requirement, located at a Primary Service Village.

3.64 Housing needs surveys are completed to help identify current and future housing need at a local level. The Housing Officer has confirmed that the last Brixworth Housing Needs Survey was carried out in 2013 and needs to be updated as it is now 10 years old.

3.65 West Northamptonshire Council, along with support from Brixworth Parish Council have decided to conduct a new survey, which was undertaken between 11th December 2023 and 14th January 2024.

Transport Considerations

3.66 The site is connected to the remainder of the village by the existing footpath and is well within a reasonable cycling distance. Provision is to be made for a pedestrian crossing on Northampton Road, so as to provide convenient access between residents of the development east of Northampton Road and the new local services centre.

3.67 The Transport Statement states that *"the site access junction is forecast to operate without measurable impact on Northampton Road"* in both AM and PM peak.

3.68 The Transport Statement therefore concludes *"predicted trip generation will be negligible during peak periods and there will be no discernible impact on the local road network as a result of the development"*.

3.69 Policy ST1 (Sustainable Transport Infrastructure) states that *“Where practical, proposals should incorporate appropriate infrastructure to support electric vehicle charging.”* The proposals have made provision for a total of 40 standard (7kw) EV Charging Spaces and 20 Super (15kw) EV Charging Spaces. This provision is over and above the requirement set out by the parking standards.

3.70 EV Charging Spaces are key to speeding up the transition to electric vehicles. Currently, the provision of charging facilities is not good enough to enable widespread transition. However, the Government announced in October 2023 that they will be providing £70 million investment to speed up the rollout of electric vehicle charging.

3.71 Data published by the Government in October 2023 sets out that the East Midlands has an average of 46 public charging devices per 100,000. This is compared to the England average of 75, London average of 193, West Midlands average of 65, South East average of 63 and East of England average of 52.

3.72 The EV market is rapidly expanding, and the EV charge point infrastructure has to expand with it. The Applicant considers the ‘Twin’ Payment system to be an appropriate option for managing the EV Charging Spaces

3.73 Twin has been designed to standardise the Parking and EV Charge Point Payment Infrastructure. It is the only payment solutions provider that can take payment for all makes of EV Charge points as well as offering the convenience of taking payment for parking at the same time.

3.74 The Motorist benefits from having one familiar point of payment for both EV charging and parking and only requires one user friendly, phone app, to control all parking and charging activity.

3.75 Additional information is available at **APPENDIX 7**.

3.76 The proposals are considered to accord with Policy ST1.

Biodiversity

3.77 The accompanying Ecological Appraisal concludes that the development will have no direct impact to any statutory or non-statutory designation of biodiversity interest.

3.78 A small residual loss of biodiversity units is identified, which can be satisfactorily mitigated to achieve a biodiversity net gain (BNG). A suitable planning condition may be imposed on a grant of planning permission to secure a BNG within land in the control of the Applicant.

Flood Risk and Drainage

3.79 The application site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 as defined by the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning.

3.80 Flood Zone 1 is defined as being a low risk zone and will not increase the risk of flooding at or in vicinity of the application site.

3.81 On site testing has confirmed that the natural underlying Northampton Sand Formation consists of good infiltration characteristics, and thus will permit the use of an infiltration sustainable drainage system (SuDS) for the disposal of surface water run-off from the development proposals.

3.82 The development layout makes allowance for the inclusion of an infiltration SuDS basin, which will collect, and discharge surface water run-off generated by the development to the natural formation.

Landscape and Visual Assessment

3.83 The LVA concludes that the visual envelope associated with the proposals would be localised. The majority of the surrounding landscape would be completely unaffected visually should the proposals for the site take place. The area's sloping topography would limit the outward effect the proposals would have on the surrounding landscape.

3.84 It is considered that the proposed development, where visible at all, would generally only been seen as discrete elements in a landscape and typically in the context of other existing development along the eastern and southern edge of Brixworth.

3.85 The LVA *"did not find any significant concerns regarding the anticipated landscape and visual effects arising from the proposals"*.

3.86 It is concluded that the proposals are supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

Planning Balance

- 3.87 It is acknowledged that the site is designated as Local Green Space in the Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan and therefore there is a conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.88 This conflict with the development plan is not determinative of the merits of the proposal. This proposal will provide substantial benefits to the community of Brixworth and to 'outlying communities' who may similarly take advantage of the enhanced community facilities.
- 3.89 It is acknowledged that there is a conflict with Policy 5 (Local Green Space). Given the reasons set out between paragraphs 3.19 and 3.30, the 'conflict' with the Neighbourhood Plan is considered to be small.

Provision of Local Services

- 3.90 The proposals will assist with economic growth in Brixworth and the surrounding villages, through the increased provision of local services.
- 3.91 The applicant is aware of strong interest locally for community and leisure facilities to include a gymnasium, dance school and small office suites which are becoming increasingly popular to satisfy modern day hybrid working practices.
- 3.92 The Applicant is in active discussions with one of the country's largest retailers to provide a modern convenience store which can provide enlarged and enhanced local convenience retail floorspace (so avoiding longer journeys by local residents to similarly sized stores).

3.93 The economic benefits from the provision of additional local services should be afforded substantial weight.

Affordable Housing

3.94 There has been an under delivery of affordable dwellings in the past 4 years. The proposed development will deliver up to 16 affordable dwellings that will assist in addressing the Borough's need to deliver a minimum of 449 affordable dwellings to 2029.

3.95 The provision of up to 16 affordable dwellings should be afforded substantial weight.

Job Creation

3.96 During the construction phase of the development there will be increased job opportunities and investment to the local economy. Jobs will also be created when the development is operational, through the provision of new community facilities.

3.97 The provision of new jobs, both construction and operational, should be afforded moderate benefit.

Provision of EV Charging

3.98 The proposals will include the provision of EV Charging Spaces (standard – 7kw; and, super – 15kw). This provision is over and above the requirement set out by the parking standards. This will therefore assist the Council in achieving their goal of reducing carbon emissions.

3.99 The provision of EV Charging Spaces, above and beyond the requirement in the Local Plan, should be afforded moderate benefit.

3.100 In the balance of planning considerations, the benefits, namely increased provision of local services; provision of affordable housing; the creation of new jobs (construction and operations); and, provision of EV Charging, to the overall public interest lies firmly in favour of allowing this new investment, which will provide a significant boost to the local economy.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that the site is designated as Local Green Space in the Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan. There is no evidential basis for the application land being notated as Local Green Space as it fulfils none of the purposes identified in the Framework (106). The ‘conflict’ with the Neighbourhood Plan is considered not to be significant – particularly in the context of this development proposal which will provide substantial community benefits.
- 4.2 This conflict with the development plan is not determinative of the merits of the proposal.
- 4.3 This proposal will provide substantial benefits to the community of Brixworth and to ‘outlying communities’ who may similarly take advantage of the enhanced community facilities. The proposals will also provide much needed affordable housing in a Primary Service Village.
- 4.4 The Neighbourhood Plan itself concludes that the *“extensive and rapid expansion [of Brixworth] has placed heavy demands on village services and facilities”* and there is *“inadequate car parking provision.”* It’s considered that there is an opportunity to provide an appropriate level of local services and facilities to support and enhance Brixworth.
- 4.5 In the context of paragraph 107 of the Framework, and in weighing the harm to the Local Green Space, against the benefits of the scheme, it is considered that very special circumstances exist to justify the proposals.

- 4.6 In the balance of planning considerations, the benefits, namely increased provision of local services; provision of affordable housing; the creation of new jobs (construction and operations); and, provision of EV Charging, to the overall public interest lies firmly in favour of allowing this new investment, which will provide a significant boost to the local economy.
- 4.7 It is considered that it has been demonstrated that there are not adverse impacts as a result of the proposals.
- 4.8 The LPA is hence invited to adopt a pragmatic and practical approach to the merits of this application and grant planning permission.