



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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
NORTHAMPTON ROAD, BRIXWORTH**

**ON BEHALF OF
EKENEY CONSULTING**

**JANUARY 2024
PF/10177**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement ('SCI') has been prepared by Framptons on behalf of Ekeney Consulting, in support of an outline planning application at 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 public consultation process sought to make local residents and stakeholders aware of the development proposals for the site and to provide local residents with an opportunity to comment.

1.3 Government planning guidance recognises the importance of community engagement. Paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (September 2023) places emphasis on the need for early engagement in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. It states that good quality pre application discussions enable better co-ordination between public and private resources and improve outcomes for the community.

1.4 This SCI describes the process by which arrangements have been made to engage with the local community to establish views about the development proposals. This report explains the consultation process undertaken, in terms of engagement with local residents and stakeholders; the method used to publicise the public exhibition; the information presented at the exhibition; the method used to gather feedback on the proposals; and, a summary of the responses received during and after the public exhibition, and how we have sought to address any constraints as part of the planning application submission.

2.0 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Publication of the Exhibition

- 2.1 A public exhibition was held at Brixworth Village Hall, Holcot Road, Brixworth, Northampton, NN6 9BS on 12th December 2023 from 15.30 – 19.30.
- 2.2 In an attempt to generate the maximum possible attendance by members of the local community, at a time most convenient to them, the applicant carried out an afternoon and early evening consultation session. Publicity was arranged in various forms, in an endeavour to ensure that all interested parties were fully aware of the consultation process and the date of the public exhibition event.
- 2.3 The exhibition was advertised locally by a letter to residents sent out to the area shown on the plan included at **Appendix 1** to notify those residents most closely located to the site.
- 2.4 The invitation letter included details for the proposed public exhibition; and, displayed the date, time and venue. A copy of the invitation letter sent to local residents is attached at **Appendix 2**
- 2.5 A public notice was also placed in the Northampton Chronicle and Echo on 30th November 2023. A copy of the notice is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.6 Letters of invitation were also sent to the local MP and members of the District Council and Parish Councils. The letter was sent to:
- Chris Heaton-Harris MP (Daventry)
 - Clerk at Brixworth Parish Council
 - Councillor Jonathan Harris (Brixworth Ward)
 - Councillor Kevin Parker (Brixworth Ward)
 - Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift (Brixworth Ward)
 - Councillor Daniel Lister (Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth)
 - Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Leader of the WNC)
- 2.7 A copy of this letter has been attached at **Appendix 4**.

The Exhibition

- 2.8 Intended to stimulate discussion with the local community, a series of exhibition boards were displayed. Copies of the exhibition material are appended to this SCI at **Appendix 5**.
- 2.9 Following the Public Exhibition, the presentation boards were (and remain) available on the Framptons Town Planning website, for attendees to have a second look and to allow residents and stakeholders unable to attend to provide their comments. Residents and stakeholders did attend the Public Exhibition but preferred to review the consultation material at home following the event.
- 2.10 The board can be found online in the following location under 'Victors Barns, Northampton Road, Brixworth':

<http://www.framptons-planning.com/projectsandconsultations/>

3.0 ATTENDANCE AND FEEDBACK

3.1 The exhibition event was attended by approximately 75 visitors in total.

3.2 Comment forms were provided at the exhibition, attendees were given the opportunity to submit comments during the event or to take comment forms away, enabling them to reflect on the proposals and submit comments afterwards (the comment form is attached at **Appendix 6**).

3.3 A total of 20 written representations (completed forms) have been received following the consultation event. A summary of the comments received is provided below (copies of the original comments are available on request).

4.0 RESPONSES TO THE COMMENTS RAISED

4.1 The public exhibition raised positive comments, concerns and general views. The comments can be summarised as follows:

Positive

Would bring much needed services

Affordable Housing is needed

Long term security of the Cricket and Tennis Club

Concerns

Development conflicts with Neighbourhood Plan

Development in the Open Countryside

Traffic Generation from the development

Provision of Affordable Housing

General Views

Affordable housing should include Bungalows

4.2 The Applicant has carefully considered the feedback received, including as part of the full suite of supporting technical work in support of the planning application, to ensure all the issues raised are addressed as part of the application submission to an appropriate degree.

4.3 This section therefore seeks to respond to each of the concerns and general comments raised by residents and Members.

Concern 1: Development conflicts with Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 We acknowledge a tension with Policy 5, however this is not determinative. There are other material considerations need to be taken account of, such as the performance of the land against the criteria of NPPF 102.

1.2 It is considered that the site does not fulfil any of the criteria for the justification of Local Green Space set out at NPPF 102.

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife;
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

1.3 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.

1.4 In consequence, the ‘conflict’ with the Neighbourhood Plan is considered not to be significant. Policies in a development plan are 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. It is considered that this development proposal will provide substantial community benefits, namely:

- 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.

Concern 2: Development in the Open Countryside

1.5 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 a letter from Underwoods, which accompanies the planning application).

- 1.6 Policy E2 considers that the scale of office development in settlements such as Brixworth will be proportionate with their function.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 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*"
- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 Strong interest is also expected from retailers who can see the existing demand from local residents for a range of services to include hot and cold food take-aways, cafes, hairdressers, and other uses typically found in such a location.
- 1.11 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).
- 1.12 As above, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal outweigh a small conflict with the Development Plan.

Concern 3: Traffic Generation from the development

- 1.13 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.

1.14 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”*.

Concern 4: Provision of Affordable Housing

1.15 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.

1.16 It is considered that the proposals will contribute towards the districts affordable housing requirement.

General View 1: Affordable housing should include Bungalows

1.17 The proposals are for ‘up to 16 affordable homes’, this has been reduced following the public consultation. Affordable Housing covers a range of approaches in delivery affordable homes.

1.18 These approaches are defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (Annex 2).

1.19 The 16 affordable homes will be provided in line with the above definitions. The housing mix of these homes will also be provided consistent with affordable housing policy.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In accordance with Government planning policy guidance, the Applicant has sought to ensure that the Community Consultation undertaken has been appropriate to the scale and nature of the development proposed. The specific purpose of the involvement has been; to engage with the local community and stakeholders to ensure that their views and concerns are heard, considered and addressed wherever possible; providing the opportunity to comment; and inform the application proposals.
- 5.2 It is considered that the involvement undertaken has been appropriate and also useful in serving the above purpose.
- 5.3 Following the Public Exhibition, the project team has considered the comments received and addressed them as far as possible in the resultant proposed development that is the subject of the full planning application.
- 5.4 The application is supported by a full suite of technical reports and documents, which conclude that there are no technical constraints that cannot be appropriately addressed during the determination of the planning application and that would warrant the refusal of planning permission.
- 5.5 This has been a positive and engaging process, which has informed the proposals of this application.