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PLANNING STATEMENT

TO ACCOMPANY AN OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR

UP TO 23 DWELLINGS AND ASSOCIATED OPEN SPACE AND DRAINAGE WITH ALL MATTERS RESERVED OTHER THAN ACCESS

THE LAND NORTH OF OLD QUARRY HOUSE, FENWAY, STEEPLE ASTON

ON BEHALF OF

MATTHEW WATSON

OF OLD QUARRY HOUSE, STEEPLE ASTON, OXFORDSHIRE, OX25 4SS

AUGUST 2026

REF: 11262

Chartered Town
Planning Consultants

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of Matthew Watson in support of an outline planning application for the erection of up to 23 dwellings on land to the north of Old Quarry House, Steeple Aston. The description of development is set out below:

> *"Outline Planning Permission for up to 23 dwellings and associated open space and drainage with all matters reserved other than access"*

1.2. This application is made to the Planning Inspectorate, in accordance with S62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This follows Cherwell District Council's designation under S62A on 15th June 2026, due to over 11% of its major planning application decisions being overturned at appeal between 2023 and 2025, exceeding the government's 10% threshold. The formal designation is available at **Appendix 1**.

1.3. This planning application is accompanied by the following plans and documents for determination:

Plans

- PL001 Site Location Plan
- PL002 Existing Block Plan
- PL003 C Indicative Site Layout
- LAS 995-01 Landscape Strategy
- 42857078_TPP01-01 Tree Protection Plan

Reports

- Arboricultural Method Statement
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric
- Design and Access Statement
- Drainage Strategy
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment

- Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal
- Planning Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Road Safety Audit
- Road Safety Audit (Stage 1) Brief
- Transport Statement
- Tree Survey

2. SITE CONTEXT AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Site And Surroundings

2.1. The site is located to the north of Old Quarry House, Steeple Aston. The full extent of land ownership (shown within the red line) extends to approximately 2.03 ha (as can be seen at **Appendix 2**). The Site comprises the curtilage of Old Quarry House and a large field to the north.

2.2. The Site is located to the north-west of Steeple Aston, with access taken directly from Fenway, via an existing access.

2.3. The site is bound to the north, west and east by significant existing trees and hedgerow. To the south is existing residential development off Fenway, whilst to the east is residential properties on Grange Park. To the south, beyond Fenway is residential curtilage associated with a dwelling to the south of Fenway. To the west of the site is residential development off Coneygar Fields and an agricultural field.

2.4. To the north of the site is woodland, an existing Public Right of Way and an existing agricultural field and Lakeside Farm Business Park. Lakeside Business Park has multiple commercial units occupied by local business. Beyond Lakeside Business Park is Hatch End Industrial Estate which comprises the Grain Store Café, a gym and other small business units.

2.5. For approximately the last 10 years, the land has been used for private general amenity purposes in connection with the domestic use of Old Quarry House and is maintained (with frequent mowing to a grassland sward length of under 10cm) as such.

2.6. The site is a former open sand quarry, behind Old Quarry House which was itself constructed after the quarrying operations were established.

2.7. Historic site images from the 1960's and 1990's are available at **Appendix 3**. These clearly show the site being used for the purposes of commercial quarrying, and being devoid of any landscaping.

2.8. The site immediately adjoins the identified settlement area and is well related to the adjacent built form of the settlement.

2.9. The site does not contain any Public Rights of Way (PRoW). A PRoW-runs along the northern boundary of the site (Footpath 364/5/10).

2.10. No listed buildings are located on or near the Site, nor is the site located within the Steeple Aston Conservation Area. The Conservation Area runs along the southern boundary of the site (including Fenway). The Site is not considered to fall within the setting of any registered parks and gardens or scheduled monuments.

2.11. The Site is located entirely in Flood Zone 1. The Site is subject to a small amount of surface water flooding, however the proposed development area avoids these areas.

2.12. The Site is within cycle/pedestrian routes of everyday facilities and services, as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distances to Services (distances taken from site access. Time and distances calculated by Google Maps data)

Facility	Distance (km)	Walking (mins)	Cycling (mins)
The Chequers Pub	0.5	7	2
St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church	0.6	8	2
Bus Stop (South Side)	0.6	8	2
Allotments	0.6	8	2
Steeple Aston Village Hall	0.75	10	2
Steeple Aston Pre-School	0.75	10	2
Dr Radcliffe's CofE Primary School	0.8	10	2
Recreation Ground	0.8	10	2
Playground	0.8	10	2
Convenience Store / Post Office	1.0	13	4
The Grain Store Café	1.1	15	3
Beat Fitness Gym	1.1	15	3
The Hatchery (Various Stores and Studios)	1.1	15	3
Lakeside Business Park	1.4	18	4

2.13. The nearest bus stop to the site is located on South Side, a 600m walk from the site. Table 2 below sets out the frequency and service routes for this stop.

Table 2: Bus Routes accessible to the Site (data from Stagecoach and Our Bus Bartons Community Bus)

Service	Route	Frequency
S4 Gold	Banbury – Oxford	• Hourly between 06.00 – 23.00 • 30 mins to Banbury • 40 mins to Oxford • 20 minutes to Kidlington
2	Middle Barton – Lower Heyford (Heyford Train Station)	• 2 services in morning (7.14 and 8.34) • 2 services in evening (17.09 and 18.18) • No weekend service
5	Chipping Norton – Middle Barton	• Wednesday only service • 1 service in morning towards Chipping Norton (09.06) • 1 service at lunch towards Middle Barton (12.00)
8	Middle Barton – Bicester	• Friday only service • 1 service in morning towards Bicester (10.23) • 1 service in afternoon towards Middle Barton (13.30)

2.14. Heyford Station is approximately 2.6km from the site and provides a two-hourly service between Banbury and Didcot. Didcot and Banbury are both larger stations, enabling access onto the mainline with wider services to London and Birmingham.

TPOs

2.15. The site also contains trees, some of the trees on site are subject to TPOs (the current order is TPO 5/2018) which have been carefully considered by the scheme and informed by a tree survey. An erroneous TPO is shown on the Cherwell TPO map (reference 33/2017). The Tree Officer, in correspondence dated 19th December 2025 (see **Appendix 4**), confirmed that "*TPO 5/2018 is the current Confirmed TPO providing statutory protection*".

Planning History

2.16. The relevant recent planning history is set out below:

- 22/02464/F – Erection of a forestry building – permitted 06 March 2023

- 24/02108/F – Erection of a forestry building – permitted 03 October 2025

2.17. These applications relate to land within the applicant's ownership, located to the north of the red line boundary.

2.18. The applicant has actively promoted the site for development, engaging throughout the plan making process for the emerging Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan and emerging Cherwell Local Plan, via the promotion of this site for residential development.

Proposed Development

2.19. This proposal is for an outline planning application to provide up to 23 dwellings on the site. The indicative site layout is available at **Appendix 5**.

2.20. Access will be taken via Fenway, through the existing access, which will be upgraded to accommodate the development to an adoptable standard access arrangement, including appropriate pedestrian provision and visibility splays.

3. PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

3.1. The starting point for the determination of planning applications is, as always, the provisions of the development plan. Section 38(6) states:

> *'If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'*

3.2. The Development Plan currently comprises:

- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (adopted 2016)

3.3. The site also falls within the Made Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (2019).

3.4. The following policies are relevant to the proposed development:

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1

- Policy PSD 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections
- Policy BSC 1: District Wide Housing Distribution
- Policy BSC 2: The Effective and Efficient Use of Land - Brownfield Land and Housing Density
- Policy BSC 3: Affordable Housing
- Policy BSC 4: Housing Mix
- Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision
- Policy BSC 11: Local Standards of Provision - Outdoor Recreation
- Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- Policy ESD 2: Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions
- Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction
- Policy ESD 4: Decentralised Energy Systems
- Policy ESD 5: Renewable Energy
- Policy ESD 6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management
- Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Policy ESD 8: Water Resources

- Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment
- Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure
- Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation
- Policy Villages 2: Distributing Growth Across the Rural Areas.
- Policy INF1 – Infrastructure

Made Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

- Policy PD1: Development at Category A Villages
- Policy PD4: Protection of Important Views and Vistas
- Policy PD5: Building and Site Design
- Policy PH1: Open Market Housing Schemes

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1

3.5. The Development Plan comprises the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (LPP1), adopted in July 2015 and the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need ("the Part 1 Review"), adopted in September 2020.

3.6. Policy PSD 1 sets out that "*When considering development proposals the Council will take a proactive approach to reflect the presumption **in favour of sustainable development** (our emphasis) contained in the National Planning Policy Framework*."

3.7. Additionally, it states:

> *Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (or other part of the statutory Development Plan) will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*
>
> *Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:*

- *any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.8. The relevant policies to the determination of residential development are considered to be out of date, owing to the fact that Cherwell cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

3.9. There is a significant housing land supply shortfall. The latest housing land supply figure for Cherwell District is calculated at significantly less than 5 years, being 3.1 years supply, as set out in the current Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) (December 2025) (**Appendix 6**). There has been no update to the land supply position since the publication of the AMR.

3.10. Policy BSC1 sets out that Cherwell will deliver 22,840 dwellings between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2031. The housing requirement is split between Bicester, Banbury and the rest of the district (covering 'the villages' and Heyford Park). As set out, there is a significant shortfall in the supply of homes to meet the requirement.

3.11. Policy BSC1 allows for windfalls outside Bicester and Banbury.

3.12. Policy Villages 1 (Village Categorisation) categorises villages within the rural area into categories A, B and C. Category A villages are considered the most sustainable, based upon population size, the range and number of services and facilities within a village.

3.13. Policy Villages 1 identifies Steeple Aston as a 'Category A' village. The identification of Steeple Aston as a larger village reflects that there are a range of services and facilities available in the village, and that it is well-connected to higher order settlements via sustainable modes of transport. Importantly, it is therefore one of the more sustainable villages within Category A.

3.14. Additionally, Steeple Aston is identified as a Category A village which performs as a 'service centre' for the 'satellite villages' along with Adderbury, Ambrosden, Bloxham, Cropredy and Deddington.

3.15. Category A villages allow for minor development, infilling, and conversions. There is some tension between the proposals and Policy Villages 1 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Policy PD1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, as the proposals would constitute major development rather than the minor development supported by these policies.

3.16. However, the site, and particularly the proposed development, sits within a gap between existing development on Fenway, Coneygar Fields and Grange Park, and represents a logical rounding off development well-related to the existing settlement pattern and contained by existing built form and vegetation/natural hard boundaries.

3.17. Steeple Aston benefits from numerous facilities and services, such as convenience stores, a post office, the Village Hall, a pre-school, a primary school and various employment opportunities at Lakeside Business Park and The Hatchery. There is also a place of worship, a recreation ground, The Chequers pub, The Grain Store cafe, a gym and a good range of stores and facilities at the Hatchery.

3.18. Steeple Aston is well-connected to Banbury and Oxford via the S4 bus service. Heyford Train Station is also 2.6 km away, with services running between Banbury and Didcot, stopping at Oxford.

3.19. The village's connections to Banbury and Oxford (via bus and train) also add to its suitability for new growth. The proposal would also comply with ESD 1 which seeks that new housing has sustainable access to facilities.

3.20. Policy Villages 2 foresees that 750 dwellings will be delivered at Category A villages, but it is widely accepted that this is not a cap or ceiling to development.

3.21. Policy Villages 2 does not require any particular distribution of development around the Category A villages. Much will depend upon the level of services and facilities within a

particular village as well as its surrounding landscape and heritage constraints (as explained in Policy Villages 1).

3.22. Policy Villages 2 allows for growth in Category A villages, which includes Steeple Aston. The village itself contains a suitable level of services and facilities to meet the day-to-day needs of residents (hence its categorisation as a Category A Village and 'service centre' for the 'satellite villages').

3.23. Policy Villages 2 also states that, when considering sites, particular regard will be given to the following criteria. A response to each criterion is set out below:

- **Whether the land has been previously developed land or is of lesser environmental value**

  The site is not previously developed land. However, it is also not considered to be of significant environmental value. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal confirms that the majority of the site comprises modified grassland in poor ecological condition. The site occupies a former sand quarry located behind Old Quarry House, with the dwelling itself having been constructed after the quarrying operations ceased. As such, the land has been subject to significant historic disturbance and modification, and its current ecological value is limited.

- **Whether significant adverse impact on heritage or wildlife assets could be avoided**

  The proposed development would not give rise to significant adverse impacts on heritage or wildlife assets. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment accompany the application. They conclude that no significant adverse effects are anticipated.

  The proposals can be successfully integrated into their surroundings, subject to the implementation of the recommendations set out in the PEA. As the application is submitted in outline, these recommendations can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions and addressed in detail as part of the Reserved Matters submissions.

- **Whether development would contribute in enhancing the built environment**

A range of house types have been proposed and, in some cases, combined to form short terraces or courtyards to enable the development of a layout that creates a range of interesting public and private amenity spaces.

The footprints of the buildings follow the traditional built forms found in the village. Referencing the historic properties in the village, respecting the vernacular, rather than the more recent developments.

All of the TPO trees have been retained within the scheme and are located in shared amenity space so they have space to grow healthily whilst at the same time providing attractive focal points within the development.

There is a hierarchy of access ways through the development. Starting with the primary access road which then has a number of secondary access ways leading from it in the form of shared drives and courtyards.

Properties are limited to two storeys in height with the inclusion of some single storey elements to help create an articulated roofscape.

Whilst this application is for outline planning permission, it is anticipated that the buildings would predominantly be constructed utilising natural stone with some elements of red brickwork and render incorporated to help break down the visual mass of the proposal. These materials reflect the pallet of materials that can be found in use on the historic buildings around the village.

With development located three sides (with the exception of the north), it is considered that this is an appropriate 'rounding off' of the village.

Based on the above, it is considered that the proposals would contribute to enhancing the built environment.

- **Whether best and most versatile agricultural land could be avoided**

The site is not best and most versatile agricultural land. It represents materially disturbed land and modified landform arising from the previous open cast quarrying operations.

As above, the site is a former open sand quarry, behind Old Quarry House which was itself constructed after the quarrying operations were established. Historic site images from the 1960's and 1990's confirm its operation as a quarry (see **Appendix 3)**, and as a result, the agricultural value of the land is low.

- **Whether significant adverse landscape and impacts could be avoided**

The proposed development will not have a significant adverse impact on the landscape. A Landscape and visual impact assessment has been undertaken and has assessed the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development including its associated landscaping. The proposals have been carefully sited and designed and include sufficient mitigation measures to ensure that there would be no major adverse effects arising from the proposed development in the medium to long term.

New landscaping is regarded as a betterment of the site and would accord with the aspirations for mitigation and enhancement given in the local character assessment guidelines.

The site is contained by established trees and hedges which form the boundaries of the site and the larger landscape parcel of which it is a part. Other than the established trees and hedges there are no identified landscape features or elements of noted rarity or value relating to the site. Boundary treatments will be confirmed as part of the detailed design stage.

The visual envelope associated with the proposed development would be localised. The surrounding landscape would be completely unaffected visually, should the proposals for the site take place.

The surrounding built form and intervening vegetation and rolling topography would limit the outward effect the proposed development would have on the surrounding landscape. Where initial adverse visual effects occur the existing landscape structure together with new tree and hedge planting would soften and integrate the proposed development and reduce any medium/long term residual effects.

The LVIA concludes that, provided that the proposed landscape enhancements are implemented, the development has the capacity to deliver a high-quality scheme that is well integrated with its surroundings and responsive to its context, without giving rise to any significant adverse landscape or visual effects.

- **Whether satisfactory vehicular and pedestrian access/egress could be provided**

Vehicle access is proposed to be taken from Fenway, as per the existing arrangement. An adoptable-standard access of 5 metres wide, together with a 2m pedestrian footpath, has been designed and can be accommodated to the east of the existing dwelling. This arrangement is considered satisfactory for the development, as per the Transport Statement.

Visibility splays have been prepared to demonstrate that the visibility requirements, calculated in accordance with Manual for Streets guidance, of 2.4m by 36m to the northwest and 2.4m by 37m to the southeast, are achieved.

Tactile Paving, at the access with Fenway, has been incorporated to allow safe crossing of the highway.

Safe and secure access is provided for throughout the development with well laid out footpaths to the main access road and segregated paths within private courts and drives.

The access has been designed to meet the relevant visibility requirements and is therefore considered to provide a safe and suitable means of access.

A Road Safety Audit (Stage 1) has been prepared and accompanies this application. The purpose of a road safety audit is to find and fix safety risks in new or altered roads. The recommendations of the RSA have been incorporated into the access proposals from Fenway. The proposed access is considered to be safe and suitable, as per the RSA.

- **Whether the site is well located to services and facilities**

Steeple Aston is identified as a Category A village, reflecting its status as one of the most sustainable settlements in the rural area in the District. This categorisation is based on its population size, range of services and facilities, and accessibility to higher-order settlements by sustainable modes of transport. Accordingly, Steeple Aston is well placed to accommodate growth and represents one of the more sustainable locations within Category A.

As per Table 1, the site is well served by services and facilities. There are a range of services within a 10-minute walk of the site, with the full range of services within Steeple Aston within 1.4km (18-minute walk) from the site. The site access benefits from an existing footpath leading into the village, where the majority of services and facilities are located.

- **Whether necessary infrastructure could be provided**

Yes – the necessary infrastructure can be provided. No abnormal infrastructure dependency is identified. The access is considered to be suitable and safe (as per the RSA). Highway improvements can be secured by a suitably worded condition or legal agreement.

Further details can be provided at Reserved Matters stage.

- **Whether land considered for allocation is deliverable now or whether there is a reasonable prospect that it could be developed within the plan period**

There is a lack of five-year housing land supply, represented by the current 3.1 years and a shortfall of c. 3,773 dwellings, and therefore a pressing need for housing in the district. Given the size of the development scheme proposed, it is considered the development

could easily deliver within five years and make a positive contribution towards the district's shortfall.

All homes should be delivered within one year of commencement of development. The Site is owned by one landowner and no land assembly is required. Furthermore, no demolition or substantial site preliminaries are required. As such it provides a high degree of certainty regarding deliverability and implementation and thus its contribution towards the housing land supply position.

- **Whether land the subject of an application for planning permission could be delivered within the next five years**

The site can be delivered within the next five years.

As per the above, the Site is owned by one landowner and no land assembly is required. Furthermore, no demolition or substantial site preliminaries are required. All homes should be delivered within one year of commencement of development.

- **Whether the development would have an adverse impact on flood risk.**

The proposed development would not give rise to an adverse impact on flood risk, as per the accompanying FRA. The site lies wholly within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of fluvial flooding. Although a small part of the site is identified as being susceptible to surface water flooding, the proposed development area has been designed to avoid these areas.

The submitted drainage strategy demonstrates that surface water can be managed appropriately through the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). As the application is submitted in outline, a detailed drainage strategy can be secured by a pre-commencement planning condition requiring its submission to and approval by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.

3.24. It is considered that the proposals accord with the criteria set out within Policy Village 2.

3.25. Policy BSC2 requires new housing to be provided on net developable areas at a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare unless there are justifiable planning reasons for lower density development.

3.26. The proposed development will provide the development at a density of approximately 12 dwellings per hectare. This is considered appropriate, given the sites rural nature and taking account of site's constraints.

3.27. The proposed development would provide a density of approximately 12 dwellings per hectare. Whilst lower than densities typically associated with more urban or suburban locations, this reflects a conscious design response to the site's rural edge-of-settlement context and its landscape and arboricultural constraints.

3.28. The layout has been informed by the retention of existing vegetation and the need to respond sensitively to Tree Preservation Order constraints, with development arranged to work with the site's established landscape structure rather than against it. This approach has enabled the incorporation of meaningful landscape buffers, retained planting and a softer transition between the settlement edge and surrounding countryside.

3.29. The resulting character-led layout avoids a standardised estate-style form of development and instead delivers a more spacious and informal pattern of built development that responds positively to and respects local character, landscape setting and visual amenity considerations and the conservation area. The proposed density is therefore considered both appropriate and justified in the context of the site-specific opportunities and constraints.

3.30. Policy BSC3 states:

> *At Kidlington and elsewhere, all proposed developments that include 11 or more dwellings (gross), or which would be provided on sites suitable for 11 or more dwellings (gross), will be expected to provide at least 35% of new housing as affordable homes on site.*
>
> *…*

All qualifying developments will be expected to provide 70% of the affordable housing as affordable/social rented dwellings and 30% as other forms of intermediate affordable homes."

3.31. The proposals would provide **9 affordable homes** as part of a maximum scheme of 23 dwellings. This equates to **39.1% affordable housing**, which exceeds the 35% requirement of Policy BSC3. The delivery of above-policy affordable housing is a clear social benefit of the scheme and should attract positive weight in the planning balance, particularly in the context of the district's acknowledged housing supply shortfall and ongoing need for affordable homes.

3.32. Policy BSC4 requires new developments to provide a mix of homes to meet current and expected future requirements.

3.33. The indicative mix of the proposal is set out below (subject to prevailing information/policy at Reserved Matters stage):

- 8x – 2-bedroom
- 8x – 3-bedroom
- 7x – 4-bedroom

3.34. The proposals are in outline, and therefore any subsequent Reserved Matters would provide a housing mix in accordance with the most up to date information, which is currently, set out at tables 10.8, 10.9 and 10.10, contained within the 2022 Oxford and Cherwell SHMA, or any subsequent document which supersedes this.

3.35. Policy ESD1 requires developments to mitigate the impact of development within the district on climate change. This includes distributing growth to the most sustainable locations, and encouraging sustainable travel options.

3.36. The proposals are located in a sustainable location (as per the settlement hierarchy). Additionally, there is a regular bus link to Banbury and Oxford. There is also access to a nearby train station at Heyford, which also provides links to Banbury and Oxford.

3.37. Policy ESD2 seeks to ensure the use of sustainable design and construction measures, and implement energy efficiency. The proposals will be able to incorporate these measures. Further information and detail can be made available at the detailed design stage.

3.38. Policy ESD3 requires new residential development to incorporate sustainable design and construction technology to achieve zero carbon development. These details will be available at detailed design stage.

3.39. Policy ESD7 sets out that all development will be required to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off. The proposals submitted with this application are accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy. The drainage strategy proposes infiltration trenches, infiltration basins, permeable surfaces and water harvesting.

3.40. The proposed drainage strategy presents one possible solution to demonstrate that the development can be sustainably drained, to comply with the requirements of the NPPF. Other solutions may be feasible and may prove to be better suited to the site. These will become apparent during the detailed design stage.

3.41. Policy ESD10 seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which concludes that, subject to the implementation of its recommendations, the proposed development would not result in significant adverse ecological effects. In addition, the Landscape Strategy identifies a range of ecological enhancement measures that can be incorporated into the scheme.

3.42. A number of trees within the site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been undertaken to identify the root protection areas of the retained trees and assess the impact of the proposals.

3.43. All trees within the site will be retained as part of the development and appropriately protected throughout the construction period in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement, which sets out the measures to be implemented to

safeguard the trees during construction. Boundary treatments, and their relationship to existing trees, will be confirmed as part of the detailed design stage.

3.44. The proposals have sought to maximise biodiversity enhancements on site, as per the submitted Landscape Strategy. The proposed development would deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain (BNG), with the required enhancement secured through the provision of off-site biodiversity units/credits. Although the biodiversity enhancements would not be delivered within the application site itself, the proposal would nonetheless secure a measurable increase in biodiversity and contribute positively towards the objectives of Policy ESD10.

3.45. Policy ESD13 sets out that "*Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided*."

3.46. It continues to state that proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- *Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside*
- *Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography*
- *Be inconsistent with local character*
- *Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity*
- *Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or*
- *Harm the historic value of the landscape.*

3.47. It is considered that the proposals will not cause any of the above. This is supported by the submission of a Landscape and Visual Assessment and Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment. The LVIA concludes that the proposals have the capacity to deliver a high-quality development that is anchored to its setting and sensitive to its context, without giving rise to any notable or important landscape and visual or effects.

3.48. The Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment confirms: "*the effect of the proposed development on the setting of heritage assets, due to distance and scale, will* ***not be harmful*** (our emphasis) *as defined by the NPPF*." The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy ESD13.

3.49. Policy ESD15 of the above provides wide ranging urban design criteria, including the importance of landscape setting, skylines and the incorporation of green infrastructure.

3.50. It is considered that the proposals are not contrary to any of the criteria set out at Policy ESD 15. Supporting documents accompany the submission, which address matters raised in the criteria of ESD 15, such as a Landscape and Visual Assessment, Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment and Design and Access Statement. Detailed design, layout and boundary treatment considerations will be considered at Reserved Matters Stage.

Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

3.51. The Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Policy PD1 sets out that development proposals at Steeple Aston (amongst other Category A villages) will be supported where they are for infilling, minor development and conversion.

3.52. It is acknowledged that there is conflict between the proposal and the restrictive policies of PD1 and Policy Villages 1, given that the proposal comprises major development and is not currently allocated for development within the MCNP.

3.53. However, we contend that the degree of conflict is limited. The site, and particularly the proposed development, sits flanked by existing development on Coneygar Fields (west), Grange Park (east) and Fenway (south), and represents a logical rounding off development well-related to the existing settlement pattern and contained by existing built form and vegetation/natural hard boundaries. There are no constraints to development.

3.54. This conflict needs to be considered in the context of an acute housing land supply shortfall, as described earlier, and the sustainable location of the proposed scheme, well related to existing service provision.

3.55. Policy S6 of the Framework states: “For development proposals involving the provision of housing, the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects where a proposal would conflict with a neighbourhood plan, provided the

following apply: (a) The neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and (b) The neighbourhood plan contains allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see policy HO2)."

3.56. The Made Neighbourhood Plan is dated 2019 and therefore over five years old. Therefore, any conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan does not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

3.57. Policy PD1 also requires developments at these three locations to have particular regard to all the following criteria:

a) The site should be immediately adjacent to the settlement area

The site is immediately adjacent to the settlement area, as per the adopted policies map. It is a matter of fact that the site adjoins existing residential development, is flanked by the immediately adjacent Grange Park, Coneygar Fields and Fenway and is within walking distance of village facilities.

b) The site should not be the best and most versatile agricultural land and the use of previously developed land is particularly likely to be acceptable.

The site is not 'best and most versatile agricultural land'. As above, the site is a former open sand quarry, behind Old Quarry House which was itself constructed after the quarrying operations were established. Historic site images from the 1960's and 1990's confirm its operation as a quarry (see **Appendix 3**). This clearly shows the site being used for the purposes of commercial quarrying, and devoid of any landscaping. The site is grassland, owned by the applicant and used for their enjoyment. The land has no agricultural purpose.

c) The development should conserve and, where possible, enhance the landscape.

A Landscape and visual impact assessment has been undertaken and confirms that the proposals have the capacity to deliver a high-quality development that is anchored to its

setting and sensitive to its context, without giving rise to any notable or important landscape and visual or effects. The contained nature of the site reduces wider landscape visibility rather than creating harmful severance or making an incursion into open countryside.

d) The development should conserve and, where possible, enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the conservation areas and the significance of other heritage assets (see Appendix K: Heritage and Character Assessment).

The site is not located within the Conservation Area, nor does it contain any listed buildings. However, the access is opposite the Conservation Area boundary. A Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment has been prepared and concludes that "*that the effect of the proposed development on the setting of heritage assets, due to distance and scale, will not be harmful as defined by the NPPF*." In summary, the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Steeple Aston Conservation Area and would not result in harm to the significance of any designated heritage asset, including through development within its setting.

e) The development should not give rise to coalescence with any other nearby settlement. This particularly applies to Steeple Aston and Middle Aston.

The development will not give rise to any coalescence with any other settlement. It is a particular feature of the subject site that it is naturally contained within its own boundary features and represents a logical rounding off of development at this part of the village without making an incursion into open countryside. It reduces cumulative village edge erosion and therefore will not give rise to coalescence.

3.58. It is considered that the proposals accord with the criteria set out at Policy PD1.

3.59. The site is not located within or subject to any important views or vistas identified under Policy PD4. This is confirmed by Appendix C (Local Views Plan) to Appendix K (Heritage and Character Assessment) of the Neighbourhood Plan. The site is also relatively well contained within the

surrounding landscape and has limited visual prominence from publicly accessible locations, reducing its potential to give rise to visual effects within and around the village.

3.60. Policy PD5 requires new development to be designed to a high standard which responds to the distinctive character of the settlement. The development proposed, albeit submitted in outline, has had regard to the Cherwell Design Guide and Appendix K (Heritage and Character Assessment) of the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.61. Policy PH1 requires that any new market housing should favour homes with a smaller number of bedrooms. The mix of housing will be determined at Reserved Matters having regard at that time to the evidence of housing need in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment, or more up to date published evidence.

3.62. The proposed indicative housing mix accords with the most up to date information set out at tables 10.8, 10.9 and 10.10, contained within the 2022 Oxford and Cherwell SHMA.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

3.63. Policy DM3(f) (Determining Development Proposals) is clear that LPA's should "*not refuse applications for development which should clearly be approved, having regard to their accordance with the development plan, the policies in this Framework and any other material considerations*."

3.64. Policy S3 reinforces the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means (S3b) that "*Outside settlements, policy S5 should be applied*".

3.65. Policy S5 (Principle of development outside settlements) determines that only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements These forms of development **should be approved**, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework.

3.66. Criterion J states:

> *J. Development which would address an evidenced unmet need (including, but not limited to, development proposals involving the provision of housing where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites or scores below 75% in the most recent Housing Delivery Test), and where the development would:*
>
> *i. Be physically well-related to an existing settlement (unless the nature of the development would make this inappropriate) and be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure; or*
>
> *ii. Comprise major development for freight and logistics purposes which accords with policy E3.*

3.67. As already determined, Cherwell cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The current position is 3.1 years – this shortfall is significant.

3.68. The proposals are immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary. It is surrounded by residential development on the west, south and east. The proposals would be physically well-related to Steeple Aston and of a use which is appropriate to its surroundings.

3.69. Steeple Aston has a population of 978 (as per the 2021 Census). The development of 23 homes (based on 2.4 residents per house) would increase the population by 55 (a 5.6% increase). This is not considered to be of a scale which is inappropriate. The proposals can also come forward without any significant infrastructure.

3.70. Therefore, it is considered the proposals would accord with Policy S5(j) of the NPPF.

3.71. Chapter 6 of the Framework seeks to support the delivery of a substantial increase in the supply of homes, by ensuring that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where needed.

3.72. Policy HO7 (Meeting the need for homes) states "*In applying the policies in this Framework, substantial weight should be given to the benefits of providing homes which will contribute towards meeting the evidenced accommodation needs of the community, as identified through needs assessments prepared for the area of the local planning authority and other relevant evidence. This includes, but is not limited to, homes needed for different groups assessed under policy HO1*".

3.73. The development proposals will contribute towards meeting an established, and significant, housing land supply shortfall.

3.74. Policy HO8 (Providing Affordable Homes) requires development proposals to meet or exceed up-to-date development plan requirements for the proportion and mix of affordable housing tenures relevant to the location, including the minimum proportion of Social Rent.

3.75. The development proposals will deliver more than the required 35% affordable housing, 9 dwellings will equate to a total of 39.1%, exceeding the identified need. The proposals therefore accord with Policy HO8.

3.76. Policy HO13 (Build out of residential and strategic sites) is clear that "*To significantly boost the supply of homes, it is important that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. Proposals for major development involving the provision of housing should be capable of bringing the housing forward within a reasonable period, taking into account the proposed tenure mix for the development, local market conditions (including absorption rates) and the development history of the site*."

3.77. As mentioned earlier, this site can come forward without significant infrastructure.

3.78. All homes should be delivered within one year of commencement of development. The Site is owned by one landowner and no land assembly is required. Furthermore, no demolition or substantial site preliminaries are required. As such it provides a high degree of certainty regarding deliverability and implementation and thus its contribution towards the housing land supply position.

3.79. Policy TR3 (Locating development in sustainable locations) makes clear that that "*In rural areas, opportunities to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and enhance the connectivity of an area should be taken where they exist and can be supported by the development proposed*." There are a variety of local services and facilities within 'reasonable walking distance' of the site (within 800m or within a 10 minute walk – see table 1).

3.80. Policy HE9 (Conservation Areas) requires developments within or affecting the significance of conservation areas to (a) retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and (b) consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

3.81. A Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment has been submitted with this application. The HEDBA confirms "*the effect of the proposed development on the setting of heritage assets, due to distance and scale, will not be harmful".*

3.82. Based on the above, the proposal is considered to accord with policy HE9 of the Framework.

Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

3.83. The applicant has sought to engage positively and constructively throughout the preparation of the emerging Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (MCNP), including in relation to the assessment of the application site and its potential allocation.

3.84. The emerging MCNP's assessment of the application site **does not** identify unacceptable landscape, highways, ecological or heritage impacts, nor does it conclude that the site occupies an unsustainable location. Accordingly, the evidence underpinning the emerging Plan does not demonstrate that the site is unsuitable for residential development on planning grounds.

3.85. The principal reason the site was not taken forward through the emerging MCNP allocation process relates to perceived legal uncertainties concerning access rights and historic covenants. These are not planning considerations and are therefore not determinative of

whether planning permission should be granted. The applicant has engaged constructively with the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum to address these matters and provided legal evidence from Counsel that their perceived legal constraints do not prevent the site from being delivered. However, this legal evidence has seemingly not been considered, by virtue of the site not being allocated in the emerging MCNP.

3.86. The emerging MCNP proposes to allocate land for approximately 60 dwellings, notwithstanding that the emerging Cherwell Local Plan identifies a requirement for around 100 dwellings within the neighbourhood plan area. The emerging MCNP itself acknowledges that it has been unable to identify sufficient deliverable sites to meet this requirement.

3.87. By contrast, this application is supported by comprehensive technical evidence demonstrating that the site is suitable, available and capable of being delivered. This development proposal therefore represents an opportunity to contribute towards meeting the identified housing requirement within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

3.88. The Framework (Policy S6) states:

"For development proposals involving the provision of housing, the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects where a proposal would conflict with a neighbourhood plan, provided the following apply:

a. The neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and

b. The neighbourhood plan contains allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see policy HO2)."

3.89. If the current draft Neighbourhood Plan was to be Made during the determination of this application, it is considered that it would not be meeting its full identified housing need (the need is 100 dwellings, not 60 dwellings), and it would therefore not accord with Policy S6(b).

3.90. Notwithstanding this, the current housing land supply is 3.1 years, and therefore it is extremely unlikely that this shortfall will be dealt with by Cherwell in the near future. As such, in line with Policy S5(j), developments which would address an evidenced unmet need

(including, a lack of 5YHLS), and where the development would be physically well-related to an existing settlement and are of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure, should be approved.

3.91. In summary, the emerging Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan is currently at examination and may be made during the determination of this application. However, the emerging Plan proposes allocations for approximately 60 dwellings, despite the emerging Cherwell Local Plan identifying a requirement for around 100 dwellings within the neighbourhood plan area. The emerging MCNP also acknowledges that it has been unable to identify sufficient deliverable sites to meet that requirement.

3.92. Accordingly, if the MCNP were to be made before the determination of this application, it is considered that these development proposals would still be consistent with the policies within the Framework.

4. PLANNING BALANCE

4.1. Cherwell cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land (currently at 3.1 years). Policy S5 of the Framework considers that, where the LPA cannot demonstrate a land supply, sites which are physically well-related to an existing settlement and are of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure, should be approved.

4.2. The proposed scheme would provide up to 23 dwellings in an authority with a land supply of 3.1 years, which equates to a significant shortfall of 3,773 dwellings. Delivery of housing at this sustainable location in a Category A village, would make a very important contribution towards meeting market housing (as per Policy Villages 1). **Significant weight** should be attributed to the provision of market housing.

4.3. The proposals will deliver more than the required 35% affordable housing (39.1%), meeting identified local need and contributing to social sustainability (see Policy BSC3). **Significant weight** should be attributed to the provision of affordable homes.

4.4. Temporary jobs for construction workers and supply chain benefits during the build phase will be created as a result of the proposed development. The economic benefits from construction jobs should be attributed **moderate weight**.

4.5. New residents will increase spending in Steeple Aston shops, services, and community facilities, supporting the vitality of the Category A village. This should be attributed **moderate weight**.

4.6. The development would deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain, with the required enhancement secured through the provision of off-site biodiversity credits. Whilst the biodiversity benefits would not arise directly within the application site itself, the proposal would nonetheless contribute positively towards ecological enhancement objectives and should therefore attract **limited weight** in the planning balance.

4.7. Policy conflict arising from the proposal relates to Policy Villages 1 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 and Policy PD1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, by virtue of the site falling beyond the defined settlement boundary and constituting major development.

4.8. However, the site is physically and visually well-related to the existing built form of the settlement, occupying a logical, contained edge-of-settlement location that would integrate appropriately with the established pattern of development. Consequently, whilst the proposal would result in some encroachment into the countryside and conflict with the relevant settlement boundary policies, the extent of harm arising from this conflict is limited by the site's strong relationship with the existing settlement and the contained nature of the development. In this context, **moderate weight** should be attributed to the policy conflict and the associated encroachment into the countryside.

Summary

4.9. A summary of benefits and harm is set out below.

Table 3: Summary of Benefits

Benefits	Weight
Provision of market housing in 3.1-year supply context	Substantial
Affordable housing provision exceeding 35% requirement	Substantial
Temporary Construction Jobs	Moderate
Economic benefits arising from increased spending in the village to support village facilities	Moderate
BNG	Limited

Table 4: Summary of Harm

Harm	Weight
Conflict with Policy Villages 1 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 and Policy PD1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan	Moderate

4.10. There are substantial material and demonstrable benefits arising from the development, and they would not be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by any harm as a result of any

perceived conflict with the Development Plan when taken as a whole, nor are there any other adverse impacts (taken individually or cumulatively) that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. It is considered that the land north of Old Quarry House, Steeple Aston is in a suitable and sustainable location for residential development of the scale proposed.

5.2. The Annual Monitoring Report (December 2025) confirms that the LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land, as required by the Framework. The supply is currently at 3.1 years. This equates to a significant shortfall of 3,773 homes in the five-year period.

5.3. The site is located immediately adjacent to the identified development boundary of Steeple Aston, and can therefore be reasonably considered to be a natural extension and rounding off to the settlement of Steeple Aston.

5.4. Steeple Aston is identified as a Category A village – a category which identifies the most sustainable villages.

5.5. The proposed development would deliver the following benefits:

- Provision of up to 23 homes towards the district's acute shortfall;
- Provision of 39.1% Affordable Housing, above requirement of 35%;
- Delivery within 5 years;
- Public open space and landscape planting;
- Efficient use of naturally contained land;
- Local employment during construction;
- Increased local expenditure within the local economy to support and enhance facilities;
- Biodiversity net gain and landscape enhancements.

5.6. The delivery of market and affordable housing in the context of a significant supply shortfall carries **substantial weight**. Temporary construction employment, supply chain benefits and increased local expenditure would support the vitality of Steeple Aston as a Category A village, and these economic and social benefits carry **moderate weight**. Biodiversity net gain will be secured via off-site credits, and therefore carries **limited** positive weight.

5.7. Any harm is largely limited to the conflict with Policy Villages 1 and Policy PD1 of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, given that the development is located outside of the development boundary. As such, this tension and modest encroachment into countryside carries **moderate** weight.

5.8. There are substantial material and demonstrable benefits arising from the development, and those would not be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by any harm as a result of any perceived conflict with the Development Plan when taken as a whole. Nor are there any other adverse impacts (taken individually or cumulatively) that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission. As such, it is considered that planning permission should be granted for the proposed development.