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21979/A3/CP/GC/dw

BY EMAIL: clerk@radleyvillage.org.uk

9th February, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RADLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION DRAFT DECEMBER 2016
REGULATION 14 CONSULTATION (DECEMBER 2016 - FEBRUARY 2017)
RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF RADLEY COLLEGE**

On behalf of Radley College, Barton Willmore is pleased to submit representations in response to the Radley Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14) December 2016 Consultation - herein referred to as the 'RNP'.

Radley College, herein referred to as 'our client', seeks to provide constructive and helpful comments in relation to the draft policies contained within the RNP, whilst specifically focussing on any which relate to their allocated site at North West Radley.

Representations are submitted via this letter only and an on-line form has not been completed in this instance. However, the prompts used within the online form are replicated below for consistency and ease of analysis. There follows a brief introduction concerning the site and our client's contact with the Parish Council to date, including commentary on general sections within the draft Neighbourhood Plan, before individual comments on specific draft policies are also provided.

Introduction

Our client is the freehold owner of the allocated site at North West Radley, which is identified as a strategic allocation within the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 under Core Policy 8: 'Spatial Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area'. Our client is naturally keen to engage with local residents and the Parish Council to ensure transparency and collaboration at each stage of the development process.

Radley College is a major employer within the area and is therefore committed to delivering a development which not only benefits local residents and adheres to identified need, but is also sympathetic to the character and fabric of the surrounding area. Consequently, our client is disappointed with the limited engagement that has been undertaken in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan to date. Moving forwards, our client trusts that there will be an improved dialogue and that key stakeholders will be given the opportunity to provide suitable input at the relevant stages of the Plan's formation.

Radley College expressed interest in joining the steering committee as part of formal engagement, yet this offer was not accepted and as above only limited engagement has taken place. It is noted within the Planning Practice Guidance that as part of stage 2 'Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan or Order', qualifying bodies should (inter alia):



- *engage and consult those living and working in the neighbourhood area and those with an interest in or affected by the proposals (eg service providers); and*
- *talk to land owners and the development industry.*

Our client considers this engagement imperative to the creation of an informed and credible Neighbourhood Plan, which has been the subject of a transparent consultation process. Unfortunately, through the lack of positive engagement, we consider this to not be the case.

The comments that follow reflect the fact that engagement to date has been limited. This becomes particularly pertinent where the Neighbourhood Plan makes certain expectations and assumptions of our client, few of which have been discussed or agreed prior to the publication of the draft RNP. We trust therefore that the comments set out in this submission are given appropriate consideration as matters progress.

REPRESENTATIONS ON THE GENERAL CONTENTS OF THE DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND ASSOCIATED DRAFT POLICIES

(a) Context and Approach to Strategic Sites

As an overall observation our client would note that the references within the RNP to the Local Plan proposals is unduly negative. At section 1.4 of the RNP it states:

"Whilst expressing opposition to the Local Plan proposals through the various stages of its preparation, the Parish Council recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan would need to support the Local Plan outcome..." (Our emphasis).

Moreover, section 3.2 of the RNP states:

"RPC took the view that these proposals were not in the best interests of the community and opposed them through the various stages of the Local Plan process".

Finally, section 4.2.1 of the RNP states:

"This is an exceptional rate of increase, which will challenge Radley's coherence as a community, its rural character and the capacity of its infrastructure".

Our client considers that setting the scene so negatively at the outset is unnecessary and unhelpful and does not pave the way for successful collaborative working in the future. Nor does it instil a sense of positive and proactive approach to planning, which is encouraged by national policy; paragraph 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that neighbourhoods should:

- *develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; and*
- *plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.*

The current introductory text has the potential to promote or reinforce ill feeling/resentment towards the delivery of allocated sites, and is not considered to represent an appropriately objective approach to Neighbourhood Planning. In order to constitute a positive and constructive document our client considers that this context should be removed. At the very least it is suggested that the Parish Council consider the use of text such as: *"the Parish Council recognise the need to support...and consider that benefits can arise from..."* This is particularly relevant given that the RNP assumes certain contributions from the strategic sites, as discussed later in this submission.

Finally, whilst it is acknowledged that the Parish Council opposed the Local Plan Proposals, it is also considered that this information has no use or particular relevance within a new Neighbourhood Plan that ought to look toward the future and seek to deliver new development in a progressive and confident fashion. Indeed, it is somewhat contradictory when section 2.2 of the RNP is considered, which states:

"RPC believes that the proposed new housing could make Radley an even better place to live..."

We would suggest that the text is comprehensively reviewed, and that the approach taken to this section of the document reconsidered.

(b) Housing Needs/General Conformity

Our client notes reference to meeting the housing needs of local residents and mention of the questionnaire which the Parish Council has conducted, as part of the evidence gathering exercise for the RNP. It should be noted that the allocated sites within Radley are strategic, and therefore aim to meet the identified needs of the Vale of White Horse District as a whole, not simply local needs. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (April 2014) supports the Local Plan in this regard and paragraph 1.4 of the SHMA states:

"It is intended to inform the future development of planning and housing policies and includes an objective assessment of the need for market and affordable housing over the period to 2031. It considers both need for housing overall, for different types of homes and in different parts of the County".

While our client supports the aspiration to recognise the needs of local people, this cannot be the emphasis when considering the appropriate housing mix on allocated strategic sites within the Local Plan. In order to pass the statutory Basic Conditions it is imperative that the RNP is consistent with the adopted Local Plan, i.e. the RNP must be in 'general conformity' with the strategic policies contained within the development plan for the area of the authority.

For context, Core Policy 8 of the Local Plan, under which the sites are allocated, states:

"This target addresses needs arising in the Vale of White Horse".

Moreover, paragraph 004 (ID: 41-004-20140306) of the Planning Practice Guidance states:

"A neighbourhood plan should support the strategic development needs set out in the Local Plan and plan positively to support local development (as outlined in paragraph 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework)". (Our emphasis)

On page 17 of the RNP it states that new housing *"needs to reflect the needs of those living in Radley and their families"* (our emphasis). As discussed above, this is not appropriate given the strategic nature of the sites. Furthermore, we would question the robustness of the evidence produced to date: a questionnaire is not considered to represent vigorous and objective analysis. While our client recognises the importance of local knowledge, and understands that this can have a role to play in certain instances, it is respectfully suggested that local housing needs data obtained as a result of a questionnaire cannot be compared with the results of the Oxfordshire SHMA, which are obtained via trend and market signals analysis and which have been the subject of concentrated independent examination.

Section 4.3.2 of the RNP states that the Radley Parish Council Survey will be used as evidence *"before decisions are taken on planning permissions for the strategic housing sites"*. The survey work is not considered robust enough to contend with the objective, technical findings of the Oxfordshire SHMA and the housing need work that underpins the Local Plan; and certainly not to the

degree that it should influence decisions on this issue to a significant degree. The weight that can be afforded to the survey is entirely questionable. Moreover, our client would query the apparent demographic bias within the evidence base and query whether this is a true reflection of the composition of Radley.

Our client would also make reference to the survey described on page 21 of the RNP, where it is noted that 37% of residents expressed a view to have the village hall and playing fields relocated and 32% voted for them to remain in their current location. Crucially however, the RNP notes that 31% of residents 'did not express a strong view either way'. It is considered that these findings are too vague and more definitive results need to be obtained. Our client would also like to know what is meant by 'did not express a strong view either way'?

In addition to the above we note that on page 15 of the RNP it is stated that development within the existing built up area of the parish should be "*limited to infill...and the development of the strategic sites*". Careful consideration should be given as to whether this statement conforms with the overarching policies and strategic framework set out within the adopted Local Plan.

We would also note that throughout the RNP there is also mention of 'Appendix A'. It is understood that this refers to Appendix A of the Local Plan and does not refer to an Appendix to the Neighbourhood Plan; this needs to be clarified within the text.

(c) Responses to Questions posed by the Parish Council in relation to their Draft Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The following paragraphs set out our comments on all of the draft policies contained within the draft RNP. The wording associated with each policy number has been re-worded by the Parish Council for use on their response form and is therefore replicated below.

PP1. Housing development on the Old Coal Yard site to the west of Thrupp Lane will be supported provided certain conditions are met, especially in relation to traffic and limiting intrusion into Green Belt. The site is currently an eyesore.

Our client makes no specific comments in relation to this policy. However, for future consultation we would suggest that the use of language such as 'eyesore' is subjective and superfluous to the policy intention. It is suggested that terminology such as 'derelict' or 'dilapidated' would be more appropriate.

In the same context, on page 12 of the RNP section 3 refers to policies being the 'business end of the NP'. Again, we would respectfully suggest that the wording is revisited.

PP2 and CA1. Development of the current allotment site by the railway bridge will be supported if it is found to be practicable and if an acceptable alternative allotment site can be found. The Parish Council will develop the site only if there is community benefit. This is a possible site for a bigger community shop (see policies CA2 & CA3).

Our client is concerned about the reference to Community Actions being labelled 'policies' - in this instance CA1, CA2 and CA3. We suggest that the 'Community Actions' should be described as 'objectives' in aiding the delivery of the policies, to differentiate from the specific Planning Policies of the RNP. Moreover, the Community Actions appear largely aspirational and thus we question whether their inclusion as policies is appropriate.

PP3. Inappropriate development outside the built-up area of the village will not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Our client appreciates that the Green Belt essentially forms the development boundary for Radley, as Radley is inset from the Green Belt. However, it is advised that the distinction is made between development *outside the built-up area of the village* and development *within the Green Belt*. This is particularly imperative when the term 'very special circumstances' is used, as this is typically

reserved for development within the Green Belt only. Consequently, it is advised that if this wording is to remain, in order to be consistent (and in general conformity) with the Local Plan, reference to the development boundary should be removed and the policy should simply relate to proposed development within the Green Belt.

PP4. The mix of tenure and size on the new housing sites should take appropriate account of RPC's evidence of demand from Radley residents and their families.

As set out within our comments relating to housing needs, the allocated sites will cater for a regional housing need. Our client therefore suggests that the policy is either reworded, e.g. '*The mix of tenure and size on the new strategic housing sites should, in addition to the regional demand, take appropriate account of RPC's evidence of demand from Radley residents and their families,*' or an additional policy is included which makes reference to non-strategic sites and the preference for catering for identified local needs. We remain of the view, however, that the survey work undertaken to date is insufficient in terms of the weight that can be afforded to it and that consideration should be given to a more robust form of analysis if the RNP is to substantiate this position in due course.

Our client notes the need, in line with the Local Plan, to account for new residents and an increase in population and household growth. Such scenarios are addressed within the Oxfordshire SHMA but do not appear present in the Parish Survey. Consequently, the Parish survey may appear inward-looking and, we suggest, open for further criticism.

PP5. Provision of plots of land for self-build on the new sites will be supported.

No comment.

CA2. RPC will oppose any proposals for the four mobile home sites to be converted to other uses.

No comment.

CA3. The village hall, playground and a playing field should continue to be located on Gooseacre, but need re-imagining, possibly with replacement buildings, so they better meet the aspirations of a flourishing and expanding village. RPC, together with the village hall committee and the freeholders, should prepare and implement a plan for achieving this.

This land is within our client's ownership. The Neighbourhood Planning Group will be fully aware of our previous attempts to prepare and implement a plan for a reconfigured and expanded Radley village that included the delivery of improved and enhanced community facilities. In the event that Gooseacre is not allocated for potential development in Part 2 of the Local Plan, and the Village does not support the relocation of the Village Hall and playing field to a larger site, it must be noted that our client strongly advocates the retention of the playing fields at Gooseacre, and any plans to rebuild the Village Hall are not to the detriment of or result in the loss of open amenity space.

CA4. The community shop should remain near its current location, but if achievable on a larger site. RPC and the shop management committee should explore the practicability of developing the allotment site for this purpose.

Our client wishes to query the basis of CA4 and whether there is any evidence base to support the retention within the current location. It is considered that this is also relevant to CA3 above and our client would advise that further work needs to be undertaken in respect of both CA3 and CA4 to substantiate this position and fully understand community views.

CA5. RPC should approach local landowners to identify a suitable site for additional allotments, and for a replacement site for the existing allotments, if needed.

No comment.

CA6. RPC should work with Radley College to provide a site for an additional cemetery.

Our client confirms that this has been broadly agreed, however we would make the point again that this is another example of consultation from the Parish Council being brief at best. This is not a policy, and an evidence base should be provided, demonstrating why an additional cemetery is needed along with associated timeframes for delivery.

PP6. The land around the Bowyer Arms is an asset of community value and should be considered as a location for community facilities if it is proposed for development.

This statement is incorrect on two counts. Firstly, it is the Bowyer Arms which is listed as an Asset of Community Value (ref: 13V07/1) and not the associated car park. Secondly, National Policy is explicit in noting that a listed Asset of Community Value (ACV) simply places a moratorium on sale by the landowner, to give the community a fair chance to make a bid to buy the asset on the open market. The provision does not restrict what the owner can do with the asset in land use terms, as this is dealt with via the planning process. The ACV is nonetheless a consideration. The Parish should make clear that the asset is not limited to a community use in perpetuity but that there is 'potential' to consider the introduction of new community facilities if the site becomes available for development in the future.

PP7 & 8 The North-West Radley housing site should include a playground towards its north end. The South Kennington housing site should also include a playground and should reserve a space for a shop.

Our client objects to the stipulation that a playground should include a playground towards its north end. While appropriate provision will be made for open space, including children's play areas, the location and quantum of such features will be explored as part of the ongoing masterplanning process with the District Council and stakeholders, coupled with an understanding of feedback from the recent public consultation events. The policy is unsubstantiated and inappropriate in its current form.

We make no comment on the requirements for the South Kennington site.

PP9. Where replacement sites or buildings are needed for community facilities they should, if practicable, be ready before the old facilities are removed.

No comment.

CA7. RPC will press for and support the expansion of Radley's primary school on or near its present site to be achieved either through a high quality replacement building or extension.

Our client notes that according to the District Council's CIL Regulation 123 list, contributions towards primary education, secondary education and SEN education are being collected as part of the Levy, except for some specifically identified strategic sites (North West Radley is not listed as an exclusion and thus CIL will be payable). The College fully supports the principle of expanding the Primary School on or near its present site and looks forward to working with the relevant parties to take this forward constructively.

Further discussion with the District and County Council will be required in relation to this important local issue.

CA8. RPC will press for and support the expansion of nursery facilities at St Swithun's primary school.

Please refer to comments above in relation to Community Action CA7.

PP10. Developers of the NW Radley and South Kennington strategic housing sites should either provide a site for a new surgery or should contribute to new or expanded facilities elsewhere in Abingdon or Kennington.

Development of the site at North West Radley will make appropriate contributions in accordance with the Vale's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and Planning Obligations SPD. No evidence has been provided as part of the RNP process that would justify the requirement for a new surgery. Moreover, our client would welcome any information which has been sought from previous engagement with CCG by the Parish Council.

In the absence of such evidence the RNP is flawed.

CA9, PP11 and PP12 promote RPC's strategy for the Radley Lakes area. Please provide your comments below, if any.

No comment.

White's Lane should be redesigned to become the effective Radley through route. There should be a realigned and redesigned junction with Foxborough Road, a diversion to bypass the houses at the south end of the road, and possibly a smoothing of the bends.

Our client's transport consultants are developing a scheme of improvements at the White's Lane / Foxborough Road / Thrupp Lane / Radley Road junction, early design iterations of which were presented at the recent public consultation event. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Highways have been receptive to the reconfiguration of the junction, with Foxborough Road forming the minor arm of a new priority-controlled junction arrangement. This will reinforce the role of White's Lane as the through-route and will contribute to improved safety at this intersection. The improvements utilise additional land owned by Radley College to realign White's Lane and deliver a 'service road' that bypasses existing properties, as referred to by RNP. Significant improvements for pedestrians and cyclists are also incorporated into the scheme.

Our client resists proposals to smooth the bends on White's Lane because this would contribute to increased vehicle speeds. The bends perform a speed-limiting role. OCC Highways have communicated a similar view in their discussions with our client's transport consultants.

A new access road should be created for industrial and commercial traffic currently using Thrupp Lane, connecting to Audlett Drive. Thrupp Lane should then be closed to vehicular traffic at a point south of Home Farm, rendering it safe for cyclists and walkers.

No comment.

On the Kennington Road, there should be a new pedestrian crossing between the South Kennington housing site and the Pebble Hill mobile home site and a new four-way junction with exits to Sugworth Lane and the housing site entrance, designed to slow the pace of through traffic.

No comment.

Traffic calming measures on Sugworth Lane should be introduced to deter dangerous rat-running likely to be generated by the proposed diamond junction and Park & Ride site at Lodge Hill.

This remark acknowledges the important role that Sugworth Lane will play in accommodating some local traffic movements towards the proposed diamond junction and Park & Ride site. Future residents of the North West Radley allocation and, indeed, existing residents of Radley are likely to make increased use of this route. It is understood that OCC Highways are looking at such 'rat-running' and it may be that contributions are payable from the North West Radley and South Kennington allocations towards traffic management measures. We point out, however, that the perception of Sugworth Lane as experiencing 'dangerous rat running' is not necessarily evidenced by accident records, and respectfully suggest that the terminology is amended. Only two accidents have been recorded along Sugworth Lane over the five-year period to November 2016.

RPC should work with Sustrans and landowners to improve Sustrans Route 5 across the parish.

No comment.

Path 8 from White's Lane to Twelve Acre Drive should be improved.

This facility provides an important connection between Radley and Abingdon and our client agrees that this route should be upgraded and formalised so that cyclists may 'legitimately' use it. This proposal will form part of the transport mitigation package for the NW Radley development.

A new cycle track should be established through from the North Abingdon strategic site to Radley centre to facilitate access to the station and the new sports facilities proposed west of Peachcroft Farm.

The alignment of such a cycle track would entail use of our client's land. The land currently has other demands upon it. Whilst such a connection may be of some benefit to future residents of the North Abingdon strategic allocation and adjacent suburbs, the greatest draw for future residents of the North West Radley allocation and, we contend, for the majority of existing Radley residents is south-westwards towards Abingdon town centre. Travel in this direction will be satisfied by the proposed upgrade of Path 8, as discussed above. The benefit of a connection towards the North Abingdon strategic allocation would, anyway, be somewhat limited by the absence of a direct connection into the centre of Radley by virtue of the private properties forming the western edge of the village's existing built form.

There should be general improvements to cycleways and pavements and provision for secure cycle storage.

The proposed White's Lane realignment forming part of the transport mitigation package for the North West Radley allocation, described earlier, includes new lengths of adjacent cycleway provision. The opportunity has also been taken to continue this provision via a segregated footway/cycleway around the north-western perimeter of the NW Radley site allocation, as illustrated at the recent public consultation event. Increased cycle parking will also be proposed at the railway station, subject to Network Rail approval and a suitable delivery mechanism being available, and cycle parking will need to be provided for each new dwelling in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's prevailing standards.

In order to bind the old and new communities together, the NP emphasises the importance of foot and cycle access from the new housing that faces inward towards village facilities and amenities. PP15 requires such provision at the strategic sites.

Our client supports this statement.

CA.12 commits RPC to support measures to restrict on-road parking outside Radley station, to extend off-street parking especially secure bike storage, to provide step free access to the up-line and to provide a ticket machine.

No comment.

PP.16 requires developers of the strategic housing sites to contribute to the costs of these measures.

Again, contributions will be made via CIL and S106 as appropriate and in accordance with the Local Plan. Should the proposed measures prove desirable and necessary, consideration should be given funding their implementation via the increased CIL payments the Parish will receive if the RNP is adopted.

PP.17 requires that the development sites should incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs), or similar measures so that run-off is no greater than from greenfield sites.

No comment.

PP.18 requires that there should be a Drainage Survey and Report covering the whole area served by the outfall sewer from each of the new housing sites demonstrating that there is adequate capacity to serve the development without leading to problems for existing users. Developers should pay for the survey and of consequential implementation measures.

Our client has commissioned (and paid for) a foul water capacity study by Thames Water to consider the infrastructure improvements that will be required to accommodate the NW Radley allocation. Any improvements required to transfer foul water to the sewage treatment plant will be funded by the developer, and not Thames Water.

CA.13 commits RPC to working with Thames Water to ensure that appropriate priority is given to maintaining and upgrading the existing sewerage network.

No comment.

Radley is not at the cutting edge of broadband provision, and has a poor level of mobile phone reception. CA.14 commits RPC to working with service providers to deliver reliable superfast broadband and indoor and outdoor mobile reception across the whole parish area and to help with identification of potential sites for new mobile phone masts.

No comment.

RPC's consultation in May 2016 revealed great local concern to retain open countryside, to protect natural habitats and the natural screening provided by existing hedgerows and tree belts. CA 15 & 16 support these policies.

No comment.

Are there any other points you would like to make about the draft Radley Neighbourhood Plan, not covered in the sections above? If so, please note them below.

No comment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We trust these representations are useful to Radley Parish Council in formulating the next draft of the RNP, and that the contents of this submission will be given appropriate consideration. They are made in the spirit of helpfulness with the objective of facilitating productive discussion as matters progress.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on 0118 943 000 or by emailing gemma.care@bartonwillmore.co.uk or craig.pettit@bartonwillmore.com should you require any additional information or to discuss these representations further.

Yours faithfully,



GEMMA CARE
Associate