

**Sonning Common Parish Council**  
**Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the**  
**Village Hall on Thursday 10 March 2016 at 1915 hours.**

**Present:** Mr Rawlins (chairman), Mr Kedge, Mr Rust, Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk).

**P16/118** Apologies for absence: Mrs Lewis, Mr Reynolds, Mr Richens.

**P16/119** Declarations of interest: none.

**P16/120** Public consultation time: approximately 30 residents attended the meeting. All who spoke opposed the application.

**P16/121** New application:

P15/S4257/FUL. A residential development of 65 dwellings with associated public open space, landscape planting and new access onto the Peppard Road at Lea Meadow, Sonning Common RG4 9NJ. After consideration the committee voted unanimously to recommend refusal of the application (see letter attached).

**P16/122** Suggestions for future agenda items: none.

The meeting closed at 1945.

Date of next meeting: Monday 4 April 2016 at 1915.

Chairman: ..... Dated: .....

# SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

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Ms Carolyn Organ  
Major Projects Planning Officer  
SODC

Thursday 24 March 2016

Dear Ms Organ

## **Re: Planning application P15/S4257/FUL (Lea Meadow, Sonning Common RG4 9NJ)**

The Planning Committee of Sonning Common Parish Council considered the above application at its meeting on Thursday 10 March 2016. The committee noted that the new application runs concurrently with an appeal on Bewley Homes' previous application P14/S2391/FUL for the site. Given the applicant's assertion that this new application is exactly the same as the previous one, it is unclear why a second application is being made, especially before the outcome of the appeal on the previous one.

Members of the Planning Committee voted unanimously to recommend to SODC rejection of the new proposal on the grounds that:

1. SODC already has a Core Strategy and adequate housing supply in place for the area, as the DCLG has made very clear.
2. The site is outside the built area of the village – as always noted by SODC – and, therefore, can be developed only via the sites and allocations process of the Core Strategy/Local Plan or the authorised NDP. (Policies CSS1, CSR1, CSH1 and CSI1 of the Core Strategy and G2, G4 and H4 of LP2011 apply).

If the site is developed, it must be in line with a Local Plan which allocates it. It does not.

Neither has the applicant complied with the policies and design brief for the site as set out in the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP), now undergoing its formal examination.

3. The application is premature and seeks to pre-empt the SCNDP. The SCNDP, its policies and design briefs are fully endorsed by the Planning Committee and parish council.
4. While this application has made progress over that originally submitted under P14-2391, it would fail to meet the village's housing needs and be detrimental to the character of the area.
5. The true gross size of the SON 9 site is only 3.2 hectares in size and the 'leg', extending to Kennylands Road for a footpath, should not be included in the net developable area. The surrounding character of this site is sensitive and existing development is of low density with a green and leafy character.
6. The proposed number of homes – 65 - is too high and is at odds with the SCNDP's recommendation, backed by widespread public consultation, of a maximum of 60 dwellings on the site. A 60-dwelling maximum would be more in keeping with the density of surrounding housing stock and the character of the area.

Since the last application the SODC Landscape Capacity Assessment across all Larger Villages, undertaken by Kirkham Planning and Terra Firma, has assessed this site. It has strongly set out required screening from the exceptional AONB area outside this site, which is cherished by residents.

The SODC assessment illustrates the net developable area of this site in figure SON 9.2 of that report and assesses the true site for no more than 60 average homes, and in its final illustration indicates the extent of buffer and strategic landscape planting at the foot of this site near the Peppard Road – adjacent to the AONB dry valley. (Policies CSEN1 of the CS and G1 + G4 of SOLP11 apply).

7. The proposed housing mix is grossly inappropriate for the village's needs. Sonning Common has a fiercely unbalanced housing stock which needs to be addressed. The SCNDP Working Party has collected ample evidence to prove that a greater proportion of smaller properties are required in Sonning Common to meet the demand from existing residents wishing to down-size and from young families starting out. The housing mix proposed by Bewley Homes is:

<b>8. Market</b>	<b>Affordable</b>
6 x 5-bedroom	3 x 4-bedroom
10 x 4-bedroom	6 x 3-bedroom
9 x 3-bedroom	13 x 2-bedroom
14 x 2-bedroom	4 x 1-bedroom
<b>Total: 39</b>	<b>Total: 26</b>

In contrast, the SCNDP's general policy on housing mix proposes fewer large and more small properties to meet the village's housing needs and to correct its unbalanced housing stock. The housing mix proposed by the SCNDP for allocated sites is:

<b>Housing mix</b>	<b>Market</b>	<b>Affordable</b>
4-bedroom	10%	5%
3-bedroom	45%	35%
2-bedroom	40%	35%
1-bedroom	5%	25%

The effects of this contrast are clearly shown in Appendix 1 below. Sonning Common already has a high stock of larger, market homes but a pattern of extensions over decades has left a limited stock of starter and down-sizer market homes. Bewley focuses on 4 and 5-bedroom market homes and yet minimises family provision within affordable homes.

The latter is contrary to the stated needs from SODC housing and SOHA concerning the nature of affordable housing stock required to meet priority social needs and to provide appropriately flexible investments for housing associations.

The SHMA is subject to numerous methodological flaws and concerns the whole of Oxfordshire in which Sonning Common is at the far south-eastern extremity.

9. This site sits between two important AONB areas and areas of habitat exist in the adjacent areas including in Hagpits Wood. This site, together with SON 7, represents an important wildlife corridor. (Policies CSB1 of CS and C6 of SOLP11 apply). Indeed the ecology assessment done for the SCNDP indicated a probable old green lane running along the southern edge of SON 7 and Lea Meadow.
10. The proposed visual screening along the southern boundary of the site, adjacent to Bird Wood Court, is inadequate. It does not provide a suitable wildlife corridor (CSB1 CSG1), and although there are developed trees along this boundary, there is a lack of understorey planting. Residents seek a 5m buffer zone of native scrub and tree planting – similar to that proposed for the northern boundary of the site adjacent to the Peppard Road – to be planted along the southern boundary for security, wildlife corridor, privacy and visual amenity reasons. A full root protection zone and extra, dense understorey planting should be required.
11. It is strongly considered that the proposed layout does not satisfactorily address the serious concerns that residents feel about security and that were highlighted by Thames Valley Police in response to application P14-2391 in its later revision.

It is strongly advised that all of the Secured by Design recommendations, set out in Crime Prevention Design Adviser Amanda Oak's excellent report, are adopted.

The applicant was, unfortunately, somewhat dismissive of the crime prevention officer's report and offered improbable palliatives that fell far short of a proper solution. (The applicant's suggestion that good design would be compromised by measures to improve security and minimise crime and fear of crime was mocked by coverage in the local Henley Standard at the time).

Chiefly the Secured by Design recommendations include ensuring that windows and doors in the new dwellings are positioned so as to encourage natural surveillance of the surrounding streets, footpaths and parking areas; the removal of rear access alleyways, which have been proven to increase the risk of burglaries; and that footpaths/cycleways are sufficiently wide,

straight and well-lit so as to discourage crime and anti-social behaviour. Locks with multiple key-holders are hardly likely to resolve these concerns!

Furthermore, the crime prevention officer recommends that the footpath/cycleway linking the site with Kennylands Road be positioned as far as possible away from Essex Way properties and that a wider planting zone be introduced to protect vulnerable residents and prevent unwanted access.

The current layout unnecessarily exposes security concerns for residents of Bird Wood Court (BWC). There is no practical need for a footpath coming from the Peppard Road at the southern edge and past the rear of BWC properties; there is little call for pedestrian access to the south along the Peppard Road.

The current proposal not only opens up this whole BWC area but appears to provide for a motorbike-friendly trail from the Peppard Road to Kennylands Road, past the exposed rear of BWC and Essex Way properties.

Crime and the fear of crime are particular concerns of existing residents in Essex Way, who are, in many cases, elderly and vulnerable, and of residents in Bird Wood Court. (Policies D6 from SOLP11 apply).

12. Due to the anticipated increase in traffic movements if this site is developed, it is essential that a 30mph speed restriction be imposed along the Peppard Road from the Bird in Hand pub to the northern side of the village, removing the current short stretch of 40mph limit.

Overall, the proposed layout and design of this proposal are seriously flawed and not in keeping with the context. (Reference CSQ3+4 of the CS and D1 and D4 of SOLP11). The voluminous documentation provided by the applicant appears to be inconsistent and unreliable. There are many discrepancies and omissions.

The Planning Committee, SCNDP Working Party and residents feel very strongly that this site should be developed within the SCNDP. The SCNDP Working Party has worked closely with residents over the past four years, prior to the Plan's submission, to come up with a policy and design brief for this site which is in keeping with the village's character, will protect existing residents' amenities and meet the village's housing needs.

This new application for Lea Meadow – the fourth from Bewley Homes during the preparation of the SCNDP - is at odds with all of the above. The disdain which Bewley Homes has shown towards the SCNDP is of grave concern to the SCNDP Working Party, the parish council and our residents.

We urge SODC to ensure that this site is developed within the SCNDP and that the determination of the application is postponed until our SCNDP has been examined. We would be grateful if the parish council could be kept informed, at all stages, of the progress of this application.

Yours sincerely



Ros Varnes Deputy Clerk  
Sonning Common Parish Council

(Appendix 1 follows)

	BEWLEY MARKET Homes		NDP MARKET Homes		BEWLEY Affordable Homes		NDP Affordable Homes			BEWLEY Total Homes		NDP Total Homes	
		%		%		%		%			%		%
5-Bedroom	6	15%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%		6	9%	0	0%
4-Bedroom	10	26%	4	10%	3	12%	1	5%		13	20%	5	8%
3-Bedroom	9	23%	18	45%	6	23%	9	35%		15	23%	27	41%
2-Bedroom	14	36%	15	40%	13	50%	9	35%		27	42%	24	38%
1-Bedroom	0	0%	2	5%	4	15%	7	25%		4	6%	9	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>
3-5 Bedroom	25	64%	22	55%	9	35%	10	40%		34	52%	32	49%
1-2 Bedroom	14	36%	17	45%	17	65%	16	60%		31	48%	33	51%
		HIGH	More starter/ down-size			LOW	Consider family + social need			IGNORES NEEDS	HIGH	Re-balance housing stock	