
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BERINSFIELD 2024-2035



An aerial view over Berinsfield looking to the south taken in June 2014

**NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
Submission Version**

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
List of Policies	4
Foreword	5
Introduction to the Plan and Berinsfield	6
Berinsfield’s Vision for the Future	9
Housing Policies	12
Environmental Policies	15
Transport Policies	20
Lifestyle & Wellbeing Policies	22
Employment Policies	28
Policy Delivery	30
Policy Map & Inset	31

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 Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan has been developed on behalf of the Berinsfield Parish Council after extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders, to establish a future vision for our village and to help deliver the local community's aspirations and needs for the plan period 2024-2035.

A Steering Group comprising a wide range of members from the community was set up by the Parish Council to assist in this task and has considered the primary elements of housing, the environment, transport, lifestyle & wellbeing, recreation, employment and community, from which it has developed a number of policies relevant to each element.

Berinsfield is a strategic location for development within the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and 1,700 new homes plus associated infrastructure are planned for the village which is to expand eastwards onto the Mount Farm fields over the next decade or so.

Berinsfield was awarded Garden Village status to support the local planning authority, South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and its development partners to bring forward a sustainable scheme blending the new with the existing village. Our Plan is intended to support the planned growth of Berinsfield as it transitions into a new vibrant garden village.

The planning policies set out in this Plan seek to identify how and where our village will evolve over the next few years and what sort of infrastructure improvements we should expect as a result. It is consistent with national planning policy and guidance and is intended to complement and add value to the policies in the adopted Local Plan 2035. We think it shows the community's commitment to growth and sustainable development.

Given our villagers' strong opposition to building on our existing green spaces within the developed area, we are in general support of the strategic allocation directing future growth to the land outside the current settlement area. With the Local Plan 2035 insetting the village from the Green Belt we also support its designation and protection of the land in the centre of Berinsfield as a Local Green Space with the longer term needs of future generations in mind.

LIST OF POLICIES

BERIN1	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	13
BERIN2	HOUSING MIX & DESIGN	13
BERIN3	SELF BUILD & CUSTOMER BUILD HOMES	14
BERIN4	BIODIVERSITY	15
BERIN5	RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION	16
BERIN6	BROWNFIELD LAND	17
BERIN7	WATER	17
BERIN8	LIGHT POLLUTION	19
BERIN9	CRIME PREVENTION & REDUCTION	19
BERIN10	TRAFFIC	20
BERIN11	ROMAN ROAD	20
BERIN12	PARKING	21
BERIN13	HEALTH FACILITIES	22
BERIN14	LOCAL SHOPS & SERVICES	22
BERIN15	COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE	23
BERIN16	ALLOTMENTS	23
BERIN17	CEMETERY	23
BERIN18	SPORTS & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	23
BERIN19	COMMUNITY & EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES	26
BERIN20	EMPLOYMENT USES	28

1 FOREWORD

1.1 The Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan has been developed to support the vision for the new Berinsfield Garden Village and to help deliver the local community's aspirations and needs for the plan period to 2035.

1.2 The Plan has been produced by a Steering Group on behalf of the Berinsfield Parish Council after extensive consultation with residents, land owners and other interested parties to reflect the vision for this vibrant rural community. The Steering Group consisted of members of the Parish Council, a representative from SOHA (the main local housing association), a number of land owners and other key stakeholders. All meetings were well publicised and held in open forum with many local residents attending and contributing.

1.3 In the preparation of all stages of the Plan, the Parish Council has consulted and listened to the comments and feedback on a wide range of issues that will influence the well-being, sustainability and long-term prosperity of our community and the environment we live and work in. Every effort has been made to ensure that the vision and policies contained in this document reflect those of the majority of Berinsfield residents.

1.4 There is much demand for new housing and employment in the area and the adopted Local Plan 2035 identifies Berinsfield as a 'service centre' within the District. Berinsfield is also identified as one of seven strategic locations within the Local Plan where new development is planned. The Local Plan insets the built up area of the village together with an area of greenfield land to the east of the village from the Oxford Green Belt to accommodate the strategic allocation.

1.5 Policy STRAT10: Berinsfield Garden Village in the Local Plan sets out how all development within the Berinsfield Garden Village, which is defined as the existing village and any future development that is contiguous to the existing village including land within the strategic allocation in Policy STRAT10i, will meet the Garden Village principles. That policy allocates land for around 1,700 new homes within the plan period, and at least 5 hectares of additional employment land and supporting services and facilities. The policy sets out a series of comprehensive requirements for the development, including the delivery of a scheme in accordance with an agreed masterplan. Policy STRAT10ii: Berinsfield Local Green Space is also related to Berinsfield and allocates land at the centre of Berinsfield (identified in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan) as a Local Green Space.

1.6 Our Plan has been developed by volunteers from Berinsfield to:

- Set out policies covering the design, type, range and mix of housing, shops, and other such development.
- Support the business community and encourage creation of local employment opportunities
- Ensure that all development is sympathetic to, and generally improves the overall look and feel of the village and ensures the promotion, protection and creation of accessible open-space and green infrastructure.
- Enable the village to use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding or other infrastructure/grant funding to improve village facilities.

1.7 The Parish Council would like to thank the many members of the community and local groups who took part in this process and pay tribute to their continuing help and support.

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2 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN AND TO BERINSFIELD

2.1 The Plan has been prepared by a Steering Group under delegated powers by Berinsfield Parish Council, which is a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011. The plan relates to land within the parish of Berinsfield designated as the 'neighbourhood area' by SODC on 23 October 2013, and it covers the eleven year period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2035.

2.2 This Act provides that Neighbourhood Plans developed by communities shall, once passed by an independent examination and then approved at a local referendum, be 'made' by the Local Planning Authority. Neighbourhood Plans then become part of the statutory Development Plan and have the same legal status as the Local Plan 2035 or other Development Plan Documents.

A PROFILE OF BERINSFIELD

2.3 Modern Berinsfield is a comparatively large village of 2771 inhabitants (according to the 2021 census) situated about eight miles south of Oxford City within the District Council of South Oxfordshire (SODC). It has existed in its present form only since about 1960. Hitherto the site had been used as a WWII airfield (RAF Mount Farm) and this was sold to Bullingdon Rural District Council in 1957 for development as the first English village to be built on virgin land for 200 years. The location and development of the village are clearly shown in the photos below.



Aerial view of RAF Mount Farm, ca 1943-45 with Burcot Lane, Wally Corner and the Roman Road are clearly visible



Berinsfield today

2.4 Berinsfield is therefore quite unlike other, older, villages in South Oxfordshire and the South of England. As the general foundation and compact layout of the new village was constructed at the same time, in the 1960s, the density of population is very high at more than 7 people per hectare whilst neighbouring Benson and Dorchester are under less than half of that.

2.5 On closer analysis of the population density data it became clear that Berinsfield in fact has approx. 2,800 inhabitants living within just 58 hectares of the built settlement which gives a truer population density figure of around 50 people per hectare – much more than any other neighbourhood in the district. Thus any policy which relies on the construction of additional properties within the existing outline of the village is likely only to increase the sense of overcrowding.

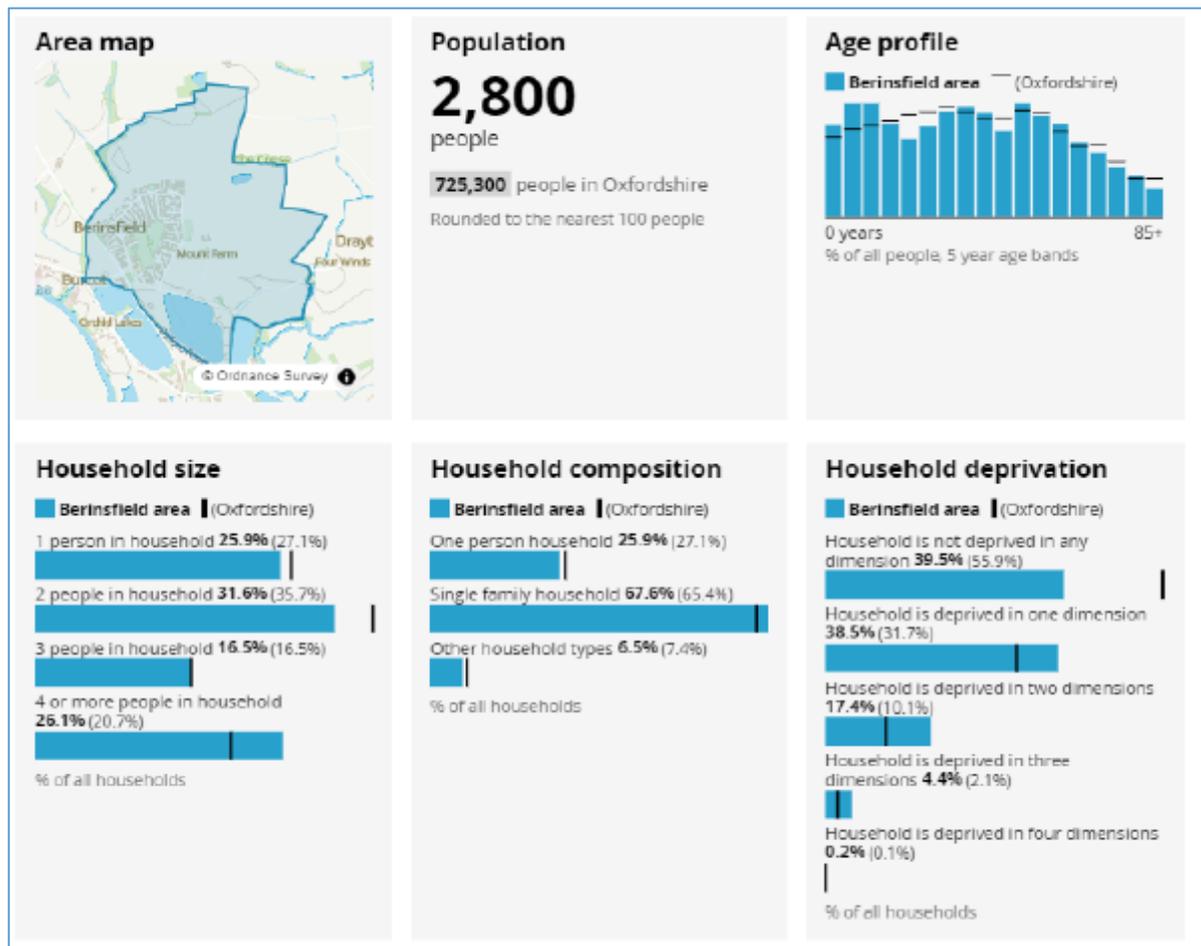
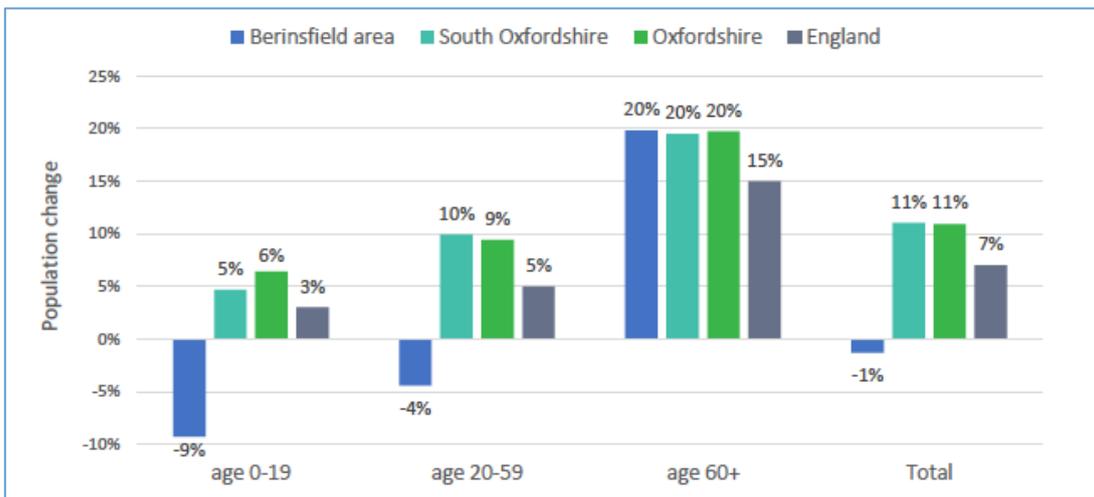
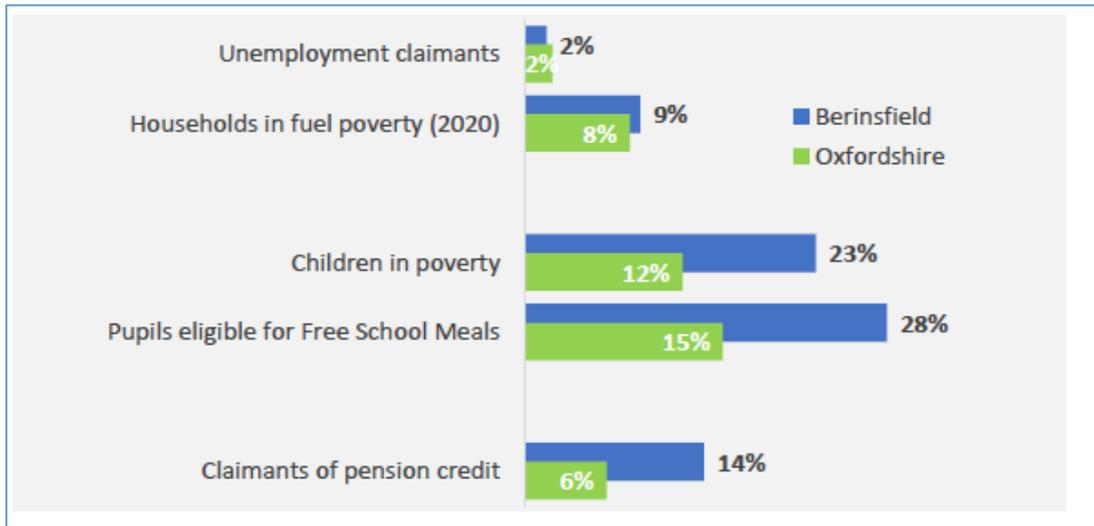


Fig 1: Census 2021 area profile data (ONS)

2.6 The Berinsfield Local Data Report (June 2023) observed that people liked living in Berinsfield and that the village has a strong sense of community. However, the community is concerned that Berinsfield has a number of problems associated with the physical nature of the village including:

- The unstructured nature of the central green
- A lack of mature trees
- Housing areas with inadequate parking provision
- The lack of a village focal point and many unlit, enclosed alleyways
- Social challenges stemming from the bias in the village towards affordable housing including high unemployment and vandalism
- A lack of facilities for key groups – e.g. children & young people
- A poor image resulting from both its external appearance, a lack of a good entrance and portrayal in the media as a 'problem village'
- A fragmentation of responsibilities and initiatives in the village – a lack of joined-up thinking

2.7 Nevertheless, as a service hub to the area, there is a strong sense of community, which is supported by a wide range of clubs and societies (including football, boxing, gymnastics, water sports, WI & Scouts) and the social facilities offered by the Berinsfield Community Association, the library and Abbey Sports Centre. A bi-monthly village magazine, 'Village Voice', and numerous community events all contribute to an informed and cohesive community.



Figs 2 and 3: Census 2021 Area Data on Incomes and Population Change 2011 – 2021

2.8 Due to the compact nature of the original village, all residents live within easy walking distance of the primary school, the health centre, church, post office, and local retail outlets. Despite these advantages, no community is perfect and Berinsfield still faces challenges. These challenges became evident during the early consultations undertaken as part of the Plan and are explored in succeeding sections.

3 BERINSFIELD'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

'A rural neighbourhood on the move – from WWII airfield to dynamic garden village community planning for sustained economic growth with new homes and more jobs'.

3.1 The Plan sets out to achieve the vision for Berinsfield that has evolved following extensive public consultations. We will deliver the vision by:

- Supporting development that provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home
- Maintaining the character and supporting the vitality of the village
- Supporting development that enhances the prospects for local employment
- Supporting high quality design and protect our landscape from harmful development
- Supporting and encouraging landscape, recreational and ecological improvements
- Supporting active travel and reducing the need to travel by car

3.2 Residents were most recently surveyed by Opinion Research Services (ORS) in December 2019 and 446 responses were received and analysed. Just under two in three (63%) local residents were in favour of new housing being built at Berinsfield.

3.3 The Parish Council's aim has been to collate the views over the years of village residents, employers, landowners and other key community stakeholders and to distil these into a strategy that will encourage sustainable development to take place over the plan lifetime with benefits to all and, as stewards, to leave the village in a better position than we inherited it.

3.4 Some of the key issues facing the community are:

- Improvement to the Abbey Woods Academy or the construction of a completely new school better suited to the requirements of the community it serves topped the wish list in the recent community survey with the strong proviso that this did not involve losing any of the existing central green or school fields.
- With the planned increase in the size of the village, there is a greater need for a range of shops and services.
- Local businesses and the employment they provide are vital to the economic well-being of the village and will be encouraged. Greater skills training is needed to help make people more employable locally. Additional employment opportunities for local people need to be encouraged near to where people live in order to facilitate people walking or cycling to work.
- The village faces an ageing population some of which may need more specialised forms of accommodation to meet their care needs in the future.
- There is a need to provide more and better parking spaces in and around the village both for residential as well as in connection with facilities & open spaces.
- There is a need for better cycle ways and buggy-friendly routes around and through the village and onward to Oxford, Abingdon and Wallingford. Footpaths should be lit, especially across the central Green.
- There is a need for more amenity space, leisure facilities and formal play areas for children.

3.5 The Plan recognises the need for new homes, local employment opportunities and sustainable growth. However, there was strong community feedback that we should be mindful of the legacy we leave the next generations when setting out policies for future growth.

3.6 The Plan sets out policies which support the transformation of Berinsfield into a thriving Garden Village by supporting development that meets the current needs of our community in terms of housing, local employment, infrastructure, technology, and ecology. its policies have been grouped under seven themes aligned to its goals and objectives. These were developed by the Steering Group, based on residents' aspirations, issues/problems. The objectives and aims are shown at Table 1 below.

Plan Objective	Plan Aims
<p>Housing:</p> <p>Supporting development that provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a quality home that mneets the needs of local people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the provision of enough new housing to meet local needs. • To support the provision of a better mix of housing types including smaller single-storey homes, affordable homes and self-build. • To ensure that new development is of high-quality design and is built to a high sustainability standard.
<p>Community and lifestyle: Maintaining the character and supporting the vitality of the village</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the provision of homes for younger people and young families and to counter the growing demographic imbalance. • To try to ensure that the village as a whole benefits from new sustainable housing and other local development. • To improve services (shopping, community, health, educational, leisure etc.) in the village • To increase the quality of, and opportunity for, indoor/outdoor sport and recreation and to support cycling and walking instead of motor vehicle use
<p>Employment:</p> <p>Supporting development that enhances the prospects for employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage and support local commercial enterprises. • To encourage and support home working. • To support the provision of affordable housing for local families. • To support the provision of employment opportunities locally.
<p>Design and landscape:</p> <p>Supporting high quality design and protecting our landscape from harmful development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To integrate new housing into Berinsfield in a sympathetic manner, preserving, and where possible, enhancing the rural look and feel of the parish. • To prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land • To protect, enhance and conserve the landscape and views. • To protect and enhance the village's green open spaces. • To preserve and where possible enhance important village assets.
<p>Environment: Supporting and encouraging landscape, recreational and ecological improvements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support renewable energy generation and recycling • To conserve and enhance biodiversity and where possible create new areas for nature conservation. • To minimise pollution from new and existing development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and flooding.
<p>Transport: Supporting active travel and reducing the need to travel by car</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support development within easy walking distance of employment, bus stops, the school, the health centre, shops and other village facilities. • To link all new developments to the village centre and nearby employment areas with footpaths or cycle-ways, wherever possible. • To support the progressive upgrade of existing footpaths for use by cycles and other types of wheelers. • To support improvements to public transport to and around Berinsfield • To support improvements to access to the bus stops on the A.4074. • To support development designed to avoid current problems with congestion, parking and road safety ensuring these are not unacceptably exacerbated and, if appropriate, reduced.

3.7 It is important that the community continues to monitor, review and update the Plan to ensure that its policies remain current, deliverable and in general conformity with the strategic policies of South Oxfordshire District Council and national policy. The Parish Council therefore commits to monitoring the Plan and to carrying out a timely review to ensure effective implementation of the vision and policies and to incorporate any changes prompted by new policies from Government or SODC.

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4 HOUSING POLICIES

4.1 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 released land at Berinsfield from the Green Belt, with the exceptional circumstances being stated as:

- The tenure mix of housing in Berinsfield is more unbalanced than in other parts of the district, with higher levels of social rent. Releasing land for development will help rebalance the mix as well as provide further opportunities for employment and service provision; and
- For Oxfordshire, the village scores highly on the Indices of Deprivation (2019), particularly in the following domains:
 - Income;
 - Employment;
 - Education, skills and training, including adult skills, children and young people; and
 - Access to housing, including affordability.

4.2 The Local Plan sets out that development at this location in Berinsfield will help to address these matters. The expansion of Berinsfield is only considered acceptable if it will lead directly to the implementation of a masterplan for the regeneration of the village and to the funding of the necessary regeneration package identified in the Local Plan 2035.

4.3 Aside from the Berinsfield Data Report of October 2023, the Plan has been informed by the Berinsfield Housing Needs Study conducted by Opinion Research Services in December 2019. An excellent study was also carried out for The Berin Centre by students from the University of Oxford to provide the more analysis of the make-up of the village.

4.4 The housing styles reflect the rapid development of Berinsfield in the 1960's when 278 homes were initially constructed (200 as council houses and 78 as privately owned). Today Berinsfield has 1,094 homes with only 81 detached properties, the great majority were of either terrace or of semi-detached design. 11% of Berinsfield homes have just one bedroom and only 7% have 4 or more bedrooms - this is about one third of the national average.

4.5 Consultation with local people has revealed understandable concerns about the affordability of housing in Berinsfield, particularly for young people and families. People expressed concerns about there not being a wider range of housing types available in the village. According to the Zoopla property website in the 12 months (May 2022 – May 2023), the average house selling price in Berinsfield was £277,900. This compared with that of nearby Dorchester-on-Thames at £1,068,921 (for the same period).

4.6 The community supports the development of certain types of affordable housing in Berinsfield for sale, for rent or for shared-ownership and even self-build alongside the provision a wide range of open market homes to be delivered through the strategic scheme at Mount Farm. Residents have consistently expressed a desire for a better mix of housing to meet the specific needs of local people.

Policy BERIN1: Affordable Housing

Development proposals with a net gain of ten or more dwellings (Use Class C3) or where the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more should deliver 40% affordable housing.

Taking into account the requirements for affordable housing set out in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (Policy H9) as well as the requirement that at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered should be First Homes, the affordable housing tenure sought should be in accordance with the table below:

- **Social Rent : 35%**
- **Affordable Rent : 25%**
- **First Homes : 25%**
- **Other routes to affordable home ownership: 15%**

4.7 This policy sets a housing mix agreed with SODC that reflects the discussion and outcome of the examination of the Local Plan. Most notably, the Inspectors Report stated in relation to affordable housing provision at Berinsfield that the policy (H9), “instead allows for evidence-based variations in the tenure mix within the definition of affordable housing. This would allow for lower levels of social rented housing than sought on all other sites by Policy H9, and is consistent with MM27 which exempts Berinsfield from the tenure mix requirements of Policy H9. This is a sound approach.”

Policy BERIN2: Housing Mix & Design

A. Proposals for new residential development should incorporate a mix of dwelling types and sizes which:

- **meet the needs of current and future households,**
- **address the district wide shortage of smaller houses, and**
- **are appropriate to the site in terms of style and design.**

B. Proposals that recognise the need for smaller dwellings and comprise single house, terraced cottages or groups of small detached or semi-detached houses with a maximum of 3 bedrooms will be particularly supported.

C. The growing need for housing which caters to the needs of an ageing population should be met by smaller dwellings, as well as extra-care housing. In locations development that are very accessible for local services, proposals will be encouraged to deliver homes with ground-floor shower/bathroom facilities and specific provisions for an ageing and less mobile population.

D. The design of new homes should include the following sustainability features, where appropriate:

- **orientated to face south where possible to give passive solar heating and to maximise solar roof panels**
- **on site energy generation using solar panels, ground source and air source heat pumps**
- **the use of high levels of insulation**
- **the use of sustainable water systems including drainage (driveways) and storage**

4.8 This policy establishes some key principles of the mix and design of new homes in the village. The village is unusual in being a new, relatively large, post-war settlement built in the Oxford Green Belt on open countryside. It has a heavy concentration of ex-Council housing and all the hallmarks of a planned entity of its time – shops, services and community facilities positioned around a large central green, a series of cul-de-sacs served off a circular distributor road and separate industrial sites on the village edges.

4.9 When the Berinsfield Parish Plan was being prepared in 2009, the view was that the village required a different housing mix, especially more 4 & 5-bedroom detached houses with ample off-road parking provision. With the passage of time, we now see that we also need more 2-bed bungalows for the older members of the community who would like to remain in Berinsfield, but find the upkeep of a house too much. There is also a need for accommodation for single people, both young and old, who would like to stay in the village, but remain independent.

4.10 The adopted Local Plan 2035 does not expect Berinsfield to deliver additional growth over and above what is already planned for in the strategic allocation. Therefore, the indicative housing requirement for the Plan (per the NPPF) is effectively zero, with no additional new homes beyond the 1,700 already planned for.

Policy BERIN3: Self Build & Custom Build Homes

Proposals for self-build and custom-build homes within Berinsfield Garden Village will be supported where they are in accordance with policies in the development plan.

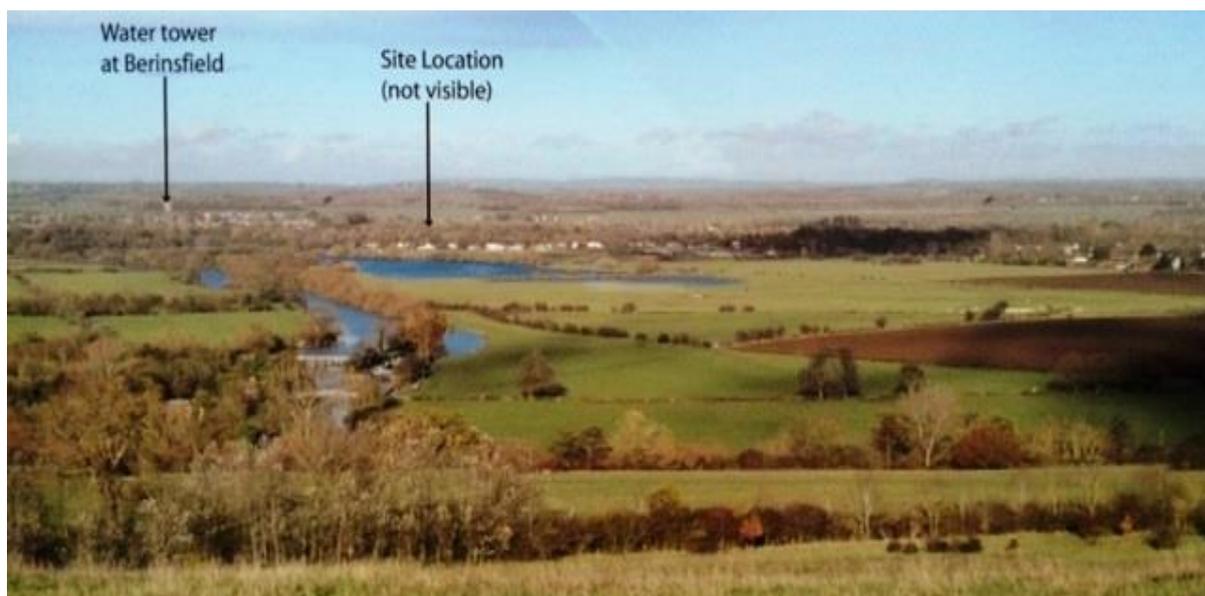
4.11 The adopted Local Plan recognises the important advantages that can arise from self-build and custom-build housing. Its Policy H12 sets out SODC's support for proposals that deliver self-build and custom-build projects that are delivered in accordance with policies in the Development Plan. It also is clear in setting out that on strategic allocations the Council will seek 3% of the proportion of the developable plots to be set aside for self-build and custom-build.

4.12 The generally accepted estimate for self-build is that it accounts for between 7-10% of new housing (around 12,000 homes per year) across the UK. Evidence suggests that there may be significant unmet demand for self-build housing in the UK and government would like to see this proportion increase. The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Bill 2015 receive Royal Assent in spring 2015. The 'Right to Build' requires Local Planning Authorities to maintain a register of individuals and community groups who have expressed an interest in acquiring land to bring forward self-build and custom-build projects and to take account of and make provision for the interests of those on such registers in developing their housing initiatives and their local plans.

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5 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

5.1 Within the Berinsfield area there are no statutory designations relating to Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas or Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The nearest statutory designated site is a Natura 2000 site which lies some 2km to the south of the plan area within the Wessex Downs AONB and is known as the Little Wittenham Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). None of Berinsfield's proposed development sites is visible from the AONB - even from the top of Wittenham Clumps. Similarly, there are no areas of Deciduous Woodland BAP Priority Habitat or Wood Pasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat in the plan area. (Sources: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-23> & Natural England consultation)



View towards Berinsfield from the top of Wittenham Clumps. The lake in the middle distance is the Allen Pit in Dorchester-on-Thames. The high ground at Wally Corner is not visible

5.2 Despite there being no statutory conservation policies affecting sites within the parish area, the community wishes to promote nature conservation, increase biodiversity and create more accessible open space.

Policy BERIN4: Biodiversity

All development should result in a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, measured by a recognised biodiversity accounting metric against a baseline ecological survey detailing wildlife habitats, including trees and hedgerows, and their conditions.

5.3 It is an objective of the Plan to both protect and enhance biodiversity within the Plan area. Whilst some of this can be achieved through efforts divorced from new development, new housing and employment represent opportunities to pursue these goals on development sites and, with proper justification, on other land. Development proposals should consider the inclusion of bird/bat boxes, ponds or extensive planting etc. but should aim to be appropriate for the location and surroundings.

5.4 The policy puts into place the provisions of the Environment Act 2021 in setting out how the requirements for biodiversity net gain will be delivered.

Policy BERIN5: Renewable Energy Generation

Renewable energy projects will be supported provided they have regard to good quality design and are appropriately located. Renewable energy projects which have an element of local ownership, which deliver significant local benefit, or which have educational facilities will be particularly encouraged.

5.5 The International Panel on Climate Change (2007) is now unequivocal that the world is warming, and leaves little room for doubt that this is caused by burning fossil fuels. Reducing the rate of climate change depends on reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂) from electricity generation.

5.6 In March 2023 the Government said “we will move towards energy independence by aiming for a doubling of Britain's electricity generation capacity by the late 2030s, in line with our aim to fully decarbonise the power sector by 2035, subject to security of supply, whilst recognising the role that UK's oil and gas sector will play in that transition.” The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050. This includes reducing emissions from the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), which currently account for about 20% of the UK's emissions. To implement the target, Government foresees renewable energy providing more than 30% of UK electricity, 12% of UK heat and 10% of transport energy. Higher levels of renewable energy will be needed beyond this timescale. Berinsfield seeks to lead rather than follow policy. *(Source: (DECC 2009 The Renewable Energy strategy)*



5.7 In planning terms renewable energy options include building integrated and freestanding designs. In technology terms, in Berinsfield Garden Village, options include solar photovoltaics (to generate electricity) solar thermal (to generate heat), water source heat pumps, wind turbines (to generate electricity) and sustainable biomass and heat pumps to generate renewable heat. Heating schemes could be individual to a building or linked together in a local heat network. The Garden Village Team have highlighted that there is an opportunity to take forward the findings from the Berinsfield Community Energy Feasibility Study over the lifetime of the Plan, including ground source heat pumps (retrofitted in the existing village and for all new buildings) and a heat exchanger at Queenford Lakes, all of which, if feasible, are encouraged and supported by this policy.

5.8 The Study also explored this scale of network infrastructure could be funded, delivered and managed. One option is the creation of a special purpose vehicle to fund, own and maintain the infrastructure, collect standing charges and repay investors. The Parish Council is especially interested in the potential for the community to coinvest in the network and own a stake in the project. This would generate a return on investment in the form of Local Climate Bonds which could be protected for reinvestment in the local area through a Community Interest Company or similar. It is hoped the support of this policy for these ideas will encourage specific proposals to be made as part of the Masterplan.

Policy BERIN6: Brownfield Land

Development of previously developed land within the parish will be supported in locations inside and adjacent to the built-up area, and where the proposal is in accordance with other development plan policies and the garden village principles.

5.9 Whilst the strategic allocation plans for significant growth on farmland to the east of the settlement, there are a number of sites in and around the built up area of Berinsfield which are defined as previously developed land by virtue of existing or historic development. There are no specific development policies covering these sites but the Plan seeks to prioritise redevelopment of brownfield sites over removing more greenfield land from the greenbelt.

5.10 The policy therefore supports proposals within the neighbourhood plan area which seek to redevelop or improve previously developed land formerly known as “brownfield sites” especially where the proposals make a positive contribution towards the masterplan to transform Berinsfield into a vibrant, diverse and thriving garden village.

Policy BERIN7: Water

A. All new housing development proposals must demonstrate that there are or will be adequate water supply and water treatment facilities in place to serve the whole development. For phased development proposals, each phase must demonstrate sufficient water supply and water treatment capacity.

B. Any development proposal must demonstrate that it meets or exceeds appropriate standards of sewerage, drainage provision and flood alleviation to minimise adverse impacts on immediate neighbours, the environment and the wider community of Berinsfield.

5.11 Much of Berinsfield’s older housing and commercial property stock was built at a time when rain water from guttering was allowed to discharge into the sewers together with foul waste water called a “combined sewerage system”. According to the latest building control regulations it is no longer considered practical or acceptable to drain larger and larger areas with just one combined sewer. The amount of water, both clean rain water and foul sewage, cannot be accommodated in a combined system especially during heavy downpours resulting in flooding as frequently seen in Berinsfield.



5.12 The water and drainage systems under Berinsfield used to be private but were taken over by Thames Water under new laws passed in 2011. It is unlikely however that Thames Water will hold accurate records of the location, size or type of all the infrastructure pipework at Berinsfield as some of it dates back to the 1940's when Mount Farm was used as a US Air Force Base. Future major development in Berinsfield requires appropriate engagement and coordination with Thames Water to establish how best to deal with the existing infrastructure which is believed to be at capacity before adding further connections to an outdated combined sewerage and water system.



5.13 Developers need to proactively consider the net increase in water and waste water demand to serve their developments and also any impact the development may have off site further down the network. There are known capacity problems with the existing drainage system that will need to be taken into account and addressed.

5.14 Prospective developers are recommended to engage with Thames Water at the earliest opportunity to establish the following.

- The development's demand for water supply and network infrastructure both on and off site and that it can be met
- The development's demand for sewage treatment and sewerage network infrastructure both on and off site and that it can be met
- The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the area and downstream and that it can be met

5.15 Thames Water should also be consulted regarding proposals involving building over or close to a public sewer. If building over, or close to a public sewer is agreed by Thames Water, it will need to be regulated by an Agreement in order to protect the public sewer and/or apparatus in question. It may be possible for public sewers or water mains to be moved at a developer's request so as to accommodate development in accordance with Section 185 of the Water Act 1989.

5.16 The use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) is supported and may include features such as ponds, swales, and permeable paving. The SuDS must be designed as an integral part of the green infrastructure and street network, so that SuDS features are positive features of the development. The system should effectively mitigate any adverse effects from surface water run-off and flooding on people, property and the ecological value of the local environment.

Policy BERIN8: Light Pollution

Proposals for new lighting systems, including neon and industrial lighting, on new and existing developments (residential, recreational, retail, car parks or employment sites) should avoid upward light spill and should, in particular, mitigate the impacts of light pollution affecting residential areas.

Developments should be designed to minimise the detrimental impact of glare and light spill on sensitive locations including housing, local amenity, biodiversity and highway users.

5.17 Light pollution, the inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light, can become a public health issue because bright lights disrupt people's natural sleeping rhythms causing irritability and insomnia. Light pollution can also damage the character of the area, adversely affects nocturnal wildlife especially bats, and reduces the opportunity for people to enjoy looking at the night sky.

Policy BERIN9: Crime Prevention & Reduction

Wherever possible, new developments and improvements to existing buildings and spaces should incorporate the principles of 'Secured by Design' and, wherever possible, achieve Secured by Design accreditation to ensure that a safe and sustainable community is maintained.

5.18 The community expects that all new development will be designed in such a way that creates places that are safe for all to use and enjoy. This policy fully endorses the approach taken by the adopted Local Plan 2035, which promotes the 'secured by design' principles to ensure that the development is designed to reduce the opportunity for crime, as well as the fear of crime itself.

6.3 There are currently no devoted cycle paths marked as such in the village. This planning oversight is partially mollified by the existence of wider footpaths around the central green perimeter and from the football pavilion to the Library/Sports Centre. These allow a tolerable mix of cycles and pedestrians, provided cycling is only performed at a speed to ensure the safety of walkers.

6.4 The existing road layout allows people to cross the village on foot without the need to use the roads. This feature is one that should be retained in the new vision for Berinsfield. No new fast roads should be built within any new residential development. There are proposals to limit the speed of vehicles in any built-up area to not exceed 20 mph and adequate signage is needed for this. A pedestrian-priority road crossing linking the Fane Drive shops/Health Centre to the car park by the church should also be constructed and clearly marked. Any traffic calming and control measures should be sympathetic to the residential village environment.

Policy BERIN12: Parking

A. Proposals for new residential development that gives rise to the need for additional parking will only be supported where adequate parking provision is made in line with the Oxfordshire County Council parking standards and includes provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

B. Schemes which propose to create additional off-road parking for existing dwellings within the village will be supported.

C. Proposals for commercial buildings/sites should also make adequate parking provision for ample off-road parking in line with the Oxfordshire County Council parking standards.

6.5 Due to the high-density design of Berinsfield, there are parking problems throughout the village, which will only get worse with any new housing development. Parking has overflowed from garages into front gardens and onto roads and pavements, creating further traffic problems. Parking opposite road junctions means more danger on the roads, due to poorer visibility such as at the corner of Ock Drive with Fane Drive, to name but one. Parking lorries and trucks in the lesser-used and larger-sized laybys along Fane Drive would go some way to mitigate hazardous conditions and is to be encouraged.

6.6 Berinsfield has in places a very 'green' character and the green intersections at road junctions and verges alongside roads are a key part of this character. These will be protected where possible and appropriate, and enhanced through the Parish Council's ongoing strategy to prevent unauthorised and uncontrolled car parking on these spaces. But, the inadequate provision for car parking in the past has led to high levels of on-street parking on narrow estate roads. Future development in Berinsfield, whether residential or commercial, must provide adequate off-street parking for both residents and employees and their visitors.

6.7 It is hoped that the future provision and replacement of street furniture including bollards, signs, posts and street lights will make a more positive contribution to and maintain the character and appearance of the village. Berinsfield's vision for the future includes replacement of all village signage to a clearer modern and standardised – consistent - design which creates a better image and properly marks "no-through roads", speed limits, cycle routes and other key information.

6.8 The use of public transport should be encouraged, in keeping with environmental and health concerns on air pollution from some vehicle emissions. New developments and improvements to existing spaces around Berinsfield should make provision for the safe and accessible use of public transport. Route and road design should consider the best way of making commercial bus routes more viable in, around and out of the village.

7 LIFESTYLE & WELLBEING POLICIES

Policy BERIN13: Health Facilities

Retention of, improvements to and expansion of existing healthcare facilities, alongside provision of new facilities will be supported. Loss, removal or degradation of existing healthcare facilities will not be supported.

7.1 Residents of South Oxfordshire as a whole enjoy better health than the average across the country. The only area where residents of the district are at significantly greater risk than others in England is that of being killed or seriously injured on the road which may in part be due to the rural nature of roads in South Oxfordshire. However, with almost 23% of Berinsfield residents already aged over 60 (2021 census) and some 496 people reported as having long-term health or disability issues, health care is an important local issue.

7.2 The Health Centre and dispensary in Berinsfield provide a valued service to patients from Berinsfield as well as the surrounding rural area. There is also an NHS dental practice. However, residents currently have to visit one of the nearby towns to visit an optician. The retention, improvement and expansion of existing healthcare facilities, and provision of new healthcare facilities within the parish garden village will be supported. Proposals to set up an optician service in the garden village on either a permanent or part-time basis will also be encouraged.

7.3 The village is concerned that a separate chemist with a dispensary could prejudice the viability of the village surgery with existing dispensary and would, therefore, have the undesirable consequence of the loss of this essential service.

Policy BERIN14: Local Shops & Services

Proposals for additional retail and leisure services and facilities within the parish will be supported where they are in accordance with Local Plan policy, and subject to the following criteria being met:

- **The individual proposal will not generate unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance to neighbouring residential properties;**
- **The particular proposal will not lead to traffic congestion or adversely affect the free-flow of traffic on the adjoining highway; and**
- **Access arrangements and off-street parking can be satisfactorily provided without impinging on adjoining residential and non-residential uses.**

7.4 Berinsfield currently has a range of shops, including a Co-operative store, a smaller general store, hairdressers, and a Post Office which provides a variety of general supplies and stationery. Many residents also shop in Abingdon, Wallingford, Didcot, Oxford & Reading and, increasingly, on the internet. There is also a café, motorcycle accessories shop and a hardware store on the Deacon's Estate to the west of the A4074 which all sit within the Berinsfield parish boundary.

7.5 The planned strategic allocation will place pressure on the above-mentioned services & facilities. In the 2023 Community Survey, villagers highlighted the need for an urgent improvement to the existing shops plus some new ones and a new supermarket. Other facilities suggested included a hotel, petrol station, cafés and/or restaurant.

Policy BERIN15: Communications Infrastructure

Proposals which seek the expansion of electronics communication networks and high speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity will be supported.

7.6 The provision of good telecommunications is particularly important in rural areas and for the support of rural enterprise and home-working. Currently fibre-optic connections are the most robust and future-proof method of delivering high performance connectivity and this should be the aim for all new developments. A connectivity statement should demonstrate how the proposal takes communications connectivity into account.

Policy BERIN16: Allotments

Proposals to provide extra space for allotments will be supported. To ensure that allotment provision is made as accessible as possible, the inclusion of raised beds is encouraged in new proposals.

7.7 The village currently has a small allotment site (leased from SODC) providing some 24 plots for rent by residents. Any substantial increase in size of the village will bring with it an increased demand for plots and it is important that some provision for expansion of this site is made.

Policy BERIN17: Cemetery

Proposals for the development of a burial ground, including any necessary, permanent ancillary structures for the management of the burial arrangements, will be supported, provided they are located and designed to respect the character of the local landscape.

7.8 It took the village over 25 years to get a cemetery within the parish and there is concern that this may now fill more rapidly as the village grows. Villagers are concerned that action needs to be taken now to ensure that there is adequate space for at least the next 50 years.

Policy BERIN18: Sports & Recreational Facilities

A. Proposals which seek to improve the buildings, facilities and associated infrastructure of existing sport and recreational sites within the parish of Berinsfield will be supported, especially where they would provide greater employment or tourism benefits and/or they would improve access to sport, recreation and or exercise for all ages. Proposals to change the use of part of an sports or recreational facility will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that the facility is surplus to requirements and that the change of use will not undermine the overall viability and importance of the facility.

B. Proposals to replace or redevelop the Abbey Sports Centre, as shown on the Policies Map, to serve the new Garden Village will be supported, provided they include an improved swimming pool and deliver better access to a wider range of sports and leisure services.

C. Proposals to redevelop or expand existing recreational facilities at the boxing club, gymnasium or water sports centre, as shown on the Policies Map, for new or improved sports and/or recreational uses will be supported.

7.9 Berinsfield is better placed than some villages in the area with a broad range of indoor and outdoor sporting activities available to residents including football, boxing, gymnastics, swimming and water sports and seeks to both support and encourage their further development. As the village transitions into a garden village with 1700 additional homes there will be an increased need to offer space and facilities, both indoor and outdoor for additional sport and recreation. This may include but is not limited to rugby, cricket, tennis, basketball, bowls, plus walking and cycling routes. Provision should also be made for access to adaptive sport wherever possible.

7.10 This aim is supported by Objectives OBJ 6.2 and OBJ 6.3 of the SODC Local Plan 2035 which states that the Council aims to, "Provide access to high quality leisure, recreation, cultural, community and health facilities" and to "Ensure all communities have access to the services and facilities they value, supporting access to sport and recreation and the health and wellbeing of everyone".

7.11 The Parish Council will work positively with partners to actively promote and support the village's sports and community facilities. The recreation policies proposed by BNDP are in general conformity with those set out in the Local Plan 2035, namely Policy CF3: New Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities, Policy CF4: Existing Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities, and Policy CF5: Open Space and Recreation in New Residential Development.

7.12 Proposals which help establish Berinsfield's growing reputation as a sporting centre of excellence will be welcomed and supported. Sports facilities often suffer from a lack of investment due to inadequate funding from central and local government. The success of the London Olympics 2012 showed the important role sport can play in health and wellbeing as well as the encouragement of tourism into an area.

7.13 Berinsfield Boxing Club is the chosen training ground for some of the UK's top young athletes with its own club premises in Fane Drive. The club has a number of young boxers who have achieved distinction at regional and even national level. Abingdon Gymnastics Club was formed in 1976. Through its 35 years of operation the club has trained at many venues until finding a permanent home in Berinsfield in 2008. The club now boasts some of the best facilities in Oxfordshire with two purpose-built gyms where it holds a wide variety of gymnastics classes. The village's football teams, Berinsfield and Reserves play in the North Berks Football League with home games played on the central green at Berinsfield.

7.14 In 1985 and 1987, the Queenford Lakes to the south of the village held the British record for the largest bream ever caught in the UK. The water sports lakes are now designated a National Centre of Excellence for water skiing and wakeboarding by the sport's governing body and Queenford Lakes has hosted the British National Water Ski Championships on numerous occasions boosting local tourism and helping to raise the profile of Berinsfield as a pioneering garden village community.

7.15 There is a growing need for exercise which is accessible to all including the ageing population. This need not be in the form of a formal sport but could be as simple as a safe walking track with opportunities for exercise along the route. The village will benefit from Community Infrastructure Levy funding which is paid by developers in part to the Parish Council for investment in community infrastructure.

7.16 The current centre, which sits in the heart of Berinsfield and is very much a part of the community, is not fit for purpose according to the SODC's Leisure Strategy of 2018. The centre serves not only Berinsfield but a much wider community. It is one of only three tier 1 indoor pools within South Oxfordshire (the other 2 being at Gillotts School in Henley and at Didcot Waves). The centre was built in the 1960s and provides a 35-station gym, swimming pool, a range of classes, a 4-court badminton hall, children's swimming lessons, archery and 5-a-side football. The Berry Youth Club facility adjoins the centre. The Sports Centre currently has parking spaces for 45 cars and up to 4 coaches.

7.17 This policy supports the proposal to improve or relocate the current sports centre onto a more suitable facility within the neighbourhood area as part of a new community-led masterplan for the garden village.



The existing Abbey Sports Centre pool area

Policy BERIN19: Community & Education Facilities

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following facilities on the Policies Map as those buildings and spaces that have value as important community and education facilities serving Berinsfield:

- 1. The central open space within the existing village core**
- 2. Green Furlong**
- 3. School playing fields**
- 4. The football pitch and pavilion**
- 5. Premises currently used by the Scouts, gymnastics, and the boxing clubs unless alternative facilities are provided**
- 6. Allotments**
- 7. Community library**
- 8. Abbey Sports Centre**
- 9. The Health Centre**
- 10. St Mary & St Berin's church and church hall**
- 11. Youth club facility**
- 12. The church Green area with mature trees**
- 13. The skateboard park, shelter and children's play areas on the central Green and at Lay Avenue**
- 14. The Berinsfield Community Association premises**
- 15. The Burial Ground**
- 16. The Berin Centre**

Proposals to change the use of all or part of an identified facility will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that either the facility is surplus to requirements or that the change of use will not undermine the overall viability and importance of the facility.

B. Proposals for new community facilities, including primary school provision, to be delivered as part of the comprehensive masterplan for the strategic allocation STRAT10i Land at Berinsfield Garden Village should demonstrate that they:

- i. Will meet the needs of the village population as a whole;**
- ii. Can be accessed by all village residents in a safe and convenient way that does not rely solely on making car journeys; and**
- iii. Will not result in two distinct parts of the village each served by its own facilities.**

7.18 This policy supplements and refines the Local Plan 2035 policies on community, open space, sport or recreation facilities by seeking to ensure that the long-term potential value of land in community use is not lost without good reason. Given that planned growth will add to the demand for services and facilities, the loss of important community facilities would be significantly detrimental and harm the ambition to achieve a balanced and well-integrated Garden Village, so even though if a specific type of community use may no longer be viable, the opportunity to retain the premises or land in this use cannot be lost alternative viable uses will need to be explored in the same locations and those with a community benefit supported.

7.19 The Local Plan 2035 sets out the requirements for a new community hub as part of the masterplan for Berinsfield Garden Village. There are several charities and organisations currently providing valuable services within Berinsfield which have expressed interest in potentially relocating to new community hub subject to location, size and cost etc. With the planned expansion of the village, there is likely to be greater demand on existing services and possibly the formation of new service providers.

7.20 The decision by Oxfordshire County Council to cease funding for the Children’s Centre resulted in the community coming together to set up a new charitable service for families in the local area. The Berin Centre operates from leased pre-fab buildings adjacent to the Abbey Sports Centre. Policies in the Local Plan 2035 provide for a new community hub and this could result in alternative better accommodation options for new and existing charitable organisations.

7.21 In respect of educational provision for the village, the Abbey Woods Academy is a co-educational school for children aged 4+ to 11 years mostly from the Parish. It is currently housed in a series of ageing buildings on a cramped site, with limited provision for staff to park their cars. The Playgroup is currently located with road frontage alongside the Academy. A lack of parking spaces on the school site means that staff working at the playgroup have to park on the Wimblestraw Road or in the Sports Centre and thus adding to existing congestion.

7.22 The adopted Local Plan 2035 provides for an additional primary school as part of the garden village masterplan. The phasing and timing of a new school is clearly important and Berinsfield Parish Council would like prefer to see a new primary school built on the Mount Farm site to serve the whole community. This approach would not only reduce the risk of an ‘us and them’ perception being created but would also enable the current school site to be redeveloped as a new sports centre. This in turn could allow for the Abbey Sports Centre to be relocated once complete, thereby freeing up the old sports centre site (including library, youth club and Berin Centre at least for beneficial redevelopment and uses.

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8 EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Policy BERIN20: Employment Uses

A. Proposals for the development or regeneration of the industrial units on the Deacon's Estate, as shown on the Policies Map, will be supported where they provide improved local facilities or contribute positively towards the garden village principles.

B. Proposals which support the area's tourism industry and recreation-based rural diversification will be encouraged and initiatives which generate local employment opportunities will be supported provided they are in accordance with policies in the development plan.

C. Proposals that include employment land for use by local businesses, charitable organisations and employers will be supported where they demonstrate that they will result in additional jobs for local people. Proposals that incorporate a mix of employment and educational uses including provision for apprenticeships and skills training will be supported.

8.1 Berinsfield sits within the Oxfordshire Science Vale Enterprise Zone, an area identified for economic growth which is well on the way to becoming a global hotspot for enterprise and innovation. The community will look at ways to increase or enhance employment opportunities within the parish by supporting existing businesses to grow and creating opportunities for new businesses, tourism and 'work from home' schemes to emerge.

8.2 Together with Didcot, Berinsfield is currently one of the least affluent communities in the South Oxfordshire area. As of March 2021, the percentage of people who were economically active in the Berinsfield Community Insight area was 66%, a similar to the rate for South Oxfordshire (65%) and Oxfordshire (64%). A further breakdown of economic activity shows that, compared with South Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire averages, Berinsfield had a slightly higher proportion of full-time employees; a lower proportion of residents self-employed compared to South Oxfordshire (9% vs 12%); a similar proportion unemployed; and a lower proportion of students compared to Oxfordshire (3% vs 8%). According to the 2021 Census, 39% of people in employment in the Berinsfield area were in the (generally lower paid) caring, leisure, process, and elementary occupations. This was well above averages for South Oxfordshire (19%) and Oxfordshire (22%).

8.3 Williams Jet Tenders Limited is Berinsfield's biggest employer. It is based in the Vogue Business Park and also leases a lake to the south of the village as well as storage units at Queenford Farm and in Abingdon. The company continues to grow, has taken on a number of apprentices and works closely with the local community. The growth of local businesses and employers will be supported where they provide clear benefit to the residents of Berinsfield, such as local employment, apprenticeships and skills development.

8.4 The former transport café and industrial units forming the Deacon's Estate to the west of the A4074 sit within the Berinsfield parish boundary. The site is prominent in the approach to Berinsfield and the buildings are dated and would benefit from redevelopment.

8.5 However, the current owner has indicated that due to commercial considerations, they are not minded during the life of this Plan to make any changes to the use or to carry out any regeneration of the site. The policy has however been included in case the ownership or intentions change during the life of the Plan.



Williams won the Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2010.



Apprentice training

8.6 According to SODC, the service sector is overwhelmingly the main employer in South Oxfordshire. Tourism is also one of South Oxfordshire's strongest industries. Visitors are attracted to Berinsfield for a number of reasons including the sporting interest such as boxing, football, gymnastics and water sports as well as huge numbers of motorcyclists that visit the H café or the 50,000+ annual visitors to the Queenford Lakes for open water swimming, triathlons or the seasonal aqua park. This interest will only grow as the village transforms and it is important we recognise and support the valuable role tourism plays in providing amenity value, economic growth and employment opportunities.



The H Café is a big attraction for motorcyclists



Queenford Lakes attract 50,000+ visitors per year

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9 POLICY DELIVERY

9.1 Some policies are project-related rather than spatial land-use policies and it is important to differentiate between land-use planning policies and community aspirations. Whilst the latter can be included in a neighbourhood development plan, they cannot be presented as a land use policy. They do however, provide examples of joined up thinking and demonstrate the community infrastructure and service benefits of growth and development.

9.2 CIL is a levy that local authorities can choose to charge in their area. The money raised can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure to support growth set out in the adopted Core Strategy, including schools, transport, flood defences and community leisure, health & social-care facilities. Communities with a made Neighbourhood Development Plan will receive 25% of the CIL paid to the SODC.

9.3 Although the strategic allocations of the adopted Local Plan 2035 have been exempted from the SODC CIL scheme (instead using S106 agreements), there may still be development elsewhere within the Parish which will generate a CIL fund for Berinsfield. The Parish Council proposes that its proportion of CIL will be spent on a range of local community improvement initiatives and it will commence work on prioritising CIL-funded projects with the engagement of the community once the Plan has passed referendum and further progress is made on delivering the Garden Village. A priority list needs to be properly costed and scheduled, as phasing will be intrinsically linked to timing of planning consents for development.

9.4 In the meantime, it is noted that possibilities for improvement that have emerged during the production of the Plan have included:

- Investment in cycle ways to include the old Roman Road
- Lighting to footpaths especially across the central Green
- Creation of a nature reserve/conservation areas
- Additional tree planting
- A central recycling area
- More green amenity spaces
- Walking or jogging tracks
- Better bus stops
- Green energy initiatives (electric car-charging, solar panels, water harvesting)
- Increased allotment space
- Create enlarged cemetery and/or garden of remembrance
- A village pond

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POLICY MAP & INSET

The map will need to show policies:

- BERIN11 (Roman Road)
- BERIN18B (Abbey Centre)
- BERIN18C (other sports facilities)
- BERIN19A (community and education facilities)
- BERIN 20 (Deacons Estate)