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Date: 18/02/2019

Planning Policy
South Oxfordshire District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton
Oxon, OX14 4SB

By email: planningpolicy@southoxon.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

REPRESENTATIONS TO THE REGULATION 19 CONSULTATION ON THE SUBMISSION VERSION OF THE SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2011 - 2034

ON BEHALF OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE OXFORD

We write on behalf of our client, Corpus Christi College Oxford (“the College”), to submit representations on the Submission version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2033 (“the Local Plan”). This letter should be read in conjunction with the comments made on the enclosed ‘Comment Form’, supplied by the Council.

The College own approximately 146 hectares (ha) of land immediately to the north of Berinsfield as shown on the enclosed Site Location Plan (**Appendix 1**). The land is in the Oxford Green Belt and is proposed to remain as Green Belt in the new Local Plan.

The College is supportive of the significant investment and regeneration strategy for Berinsfield and the Council’s recent application for ‘Garden Village’ status. It is agreed that exceptional circumstances exist for the release of Berinsfield and adjoining greenfield land from the Green Belt to achieve these aspirations, and thus, the principle of a strategic allocation in Berinsfield is supported by the College.

However, the College wish to raise concern with the overall soundness of the Plan, specifically with reference to the Council’s assessment of the College’s land within its evidence base; along with the effectiveness of the Green Belt review of Berinsfield; the overall development strategy set out in STRAT1 and strategic allocation Policy STRAT10. These issues are each covered in responses made on the enclosed comments forms.

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Development Potential of the College's land/land north of Berinsfield

The College's land has the potential to make a significant contribution towards the growth aspirations for Berinsfield. The College has commissioned a range of technical and design studies to demonstrate the development potential of the land. These are referred to as appropriate in the accompanying comments.

In particular, it is important to note that a Landscape and Green Belt Appraisal, prepared by CSA (see **Appendix 2**) demonstrates that the site makes a limited contribution to the role of the Oxford Green Belt. The site is of limited landscape value and is capable of being developed as a sensitive urban extension to Berinsfield, alongside the existing proposed allocation.

As is demonstrated in the Transport Note, prepared by Paul Basham Associates (see **Appendix 3**), an access is achievable from the A4074 where there is sufficient space within the site frontage to provide a significant new access capable of serving both the proposed allocation and the College's land. The principle of accessing the College's land from the A4074 has already been established via the inclusion of an access road through the land to serve the proposed allocation. The allocation of the College's land would therefore provide an opportunity for a comprehensive highway scheme for the area to be developed, based on existing access plans.

The inclusion of the College's land would also increase the potential for investment in key infrastructure improvements in the area, including a bus service for Abingdon/Culham/Berinsfield and Berinsfield/Cowley, Berinsfield roundabout capacity improvements, cycle improvements between Berinsfield and Culham, Golden Balls roundabout capacity improvements, Thames Road Crossing, Clifton Hampden bypass, cycle route between Berinsfield and Oxford and local bus stop improvements.

There are three options for the development of the College's land which have not been given sufficient consideration in developing the Local Plan:

Option 1

The land immediately to the north of Berinsfield offers the opportunity to provide additional land to complement the proposed strategic allocation. The Indicative Concept Masterplan Option 1, prepared by CSA, shows how this could be achieved (see **Appendix 4**).

Option 2

Due to the scale of the College's land, there is also potential to consider a more ambitious, higher-level of growth as shown by the Indicative Concept Masterplan Option 2 (see **Appendix 5**). This option would provide significantly more land for development than is considered necessary in the plan period. However, it would secure a long-term release of Green Belt land around Berinsfield, provide flexibility and allow a comprehensive, long term plan to be put in place for the settlement.

Option 3

There is a third option (see **Appendix 6**) which would encompass additional land, outside of the College's control, which would provide for the comprehensive development to the north/north west of Berinsfield, maximising the utilisation of highway improvement investment in the area. The additional land included within this option is included with the landowner's express agreement.

As with option 2, this option would release a greater level of land than may be needed during the plan period, but would provide flexibility and allow for a comprehensive, long term plan to be developed for the area.

The inclusion of the College's land would not prejudice the delivery of the strategic allocation as drafted, but instead provide flexibility in the deliverability of the overall aspirations for Berinsfield, as well as the overall housing number.

The Overall Spatial Strategy – Policy STRAT1

The College support the overall spatial strategy which seeks to focus development on sustainable locations across the District, including at Berinsfield where there is a significant amount of suitable land for development and opportunities to support the regeneration of the town.

However, as is set out in relation to policies STRAT2, STRAT10 and H1, the College have concerns regarding amount of land allocated in the Plan, the distribution of growth within the Strategy, and the ability of the Plan to effectively support delivery of the housing requirement.

South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements - Policy STRAT2

Policy STRAT2 sets out a housing requirement of 22,775 homes across the District, meeting local housing need and the need identified in the Oxford Growth deal.

The housing requirement, including the increased contribution to meeting Oxford's unmet need, is supported by the College. However, to be consistent with national policy and support the aspiration of the Government to significantly boost the supply of homes (NPPF, paragraph 59) the housing requirement should be expressed as a minimum figure.

An amendment is needed to bullets 1 and 2 of policy STRAT2 to include the word 'minimum'.

The Plan makes specific provision for 4,950 homes to meet the unmet needs of Oxford City. This provision is based on the agreement between the Oxfordshire Authorities as to the apportionment of the unmet need, calculated on the basis of the 2014 SHMA.

Whilst the apportionment was sound at the time it was agreed, progress with the Oxford Plan suggests the agreement over estimated the number of homes that could be built in Oxford over the Plan period.

Based on current arrangements for meeting unmet need, it is suggested the County as a whole will underdeliver against the target set out in the Growth Deal by around 4,000 homes.

Whilst this figure may change depending on the outcome of the Local Plan examination, it is likely that there will be a need for neighbouring Authorities to accommodate the additional unmet need.

Therefore, it is suggested that to make the Plan effective, a review clause is required in policy STRAT2 to ensure that any additional unmet need from Oxford city is delivered in a timely manner.

The need for such a policy could be mitigated against through the inclusion of additional land in the Plan, such as the College's land at Berinsfield.

Residential densities - STRAT5

Policy STRAT5 sets out the minimum densities residential development must achieve depending on the location in the District.

The densities required range for 70 dwellings per hectare to 35 dwellings Per Hectare (dph) in 'other locations', the lowest level of the settlement hierarchy.

As drafted, STRAT5 does not provide an explanation as to how to calculate net density of dwellings per hectare. Until an explanation of the calculation of a net area is provided it is not possible to comment in detail on the suitability of the proposed minimum net density dwellings per hectare.

Notwithstanding this point of detail, irrespective of how the density is calculated, the College would question whether such densities are justified and deliverable, particularly the blanket density of 70 dph across the major centres and 50 dph in the market towns, which seems excessive.

Whilst there may be circumstances where higher density will be appropriate, in town centres and near to railways stations for example, and whilst the NPPF (paragraph 122) encourages the efficient use of land, consideration of character is also important – policy should not simple be about delivering high density development.

Bullets d) and e) of NPPF paragraph 112 require consideration of an areas character and the importance of securing well designed and healthy places.

Whilst some evidence is provided in the Housing Topic Paper as to how the density could be achieved, this does not appear to give any consideration to the character of existing area, the creation of attractive place and importantly the differentiation on product – which is identified elsewhere in the Housing Topic Paper (para 3.18) as being important in ensuring the high delivery rates are maintained.

The policy also does not appear to give consideration to the density of development recently delivered in the District, which is recorded in the 2017/2018 Annual Monitoring Report (paragraph 7.12) as 29 dph.

In the upcoming years, whilst there will be scope to increase densities through different design principles, the scale of growth required will be driven by the large national house builders who largely rely on standard house types and established building models. Whilst they will be able to adapt, it is our view that realistically they may not be able to deliver at the densities required by the policy whilst also delivering quality places.

In addition, given that there is considerable additional land available for development, including land north of Berinsfield owned by the College and others, there is no pressure to push densities inappropriately high on allocated sites.

It is therefore considered that as currently drafted the policy is not justified by the evidence and will not be effective in delivering the level of growth required over the plan period.

The implication of the densities proposed not being achieved is that the major sites will under deliver against expected targets. To mitigate against this, as noted in relation to policies STRAT1 and H1, more housing land, should be allocated to diversify supply and provide contingency.

Green Belt - STRAT6

Policy STRAT6 sets out how the Green Belt boundary has been amended to accommodate seven strategic allocations with revisions set out on the Green Belt boundaries maps in Appendix 4 of the Plan.

The revisions to the to the Green Belt boundary include the release of a significant area of land to the east of Berinsfield, south/south east of land owner by the College.

As set out in Policy STRAT10, this land is proposed to accommodate the development of around 1700 homes, 1,600 of which will be delivered within the plan period. The development will be expected to support the regeneration of the existing village, provide a number of services and contribute to offsite infrastructure.

As is set out further in our comments in relation to policies STRAT10 and H1, the College have concerns as to whether a sufficient amount of land is being released around Berinsfield to support the aspirations for the village within the plan period, and to support the delivery of the minimum housing requirement for South Oxfordshire. It is therefore contended that there is a case to release further land from the Green Belt around Berinsfield through the Local Plan.

Paragraph 136 of the NPPF requires strategic policies, which establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, to have regard to the intended permanence of the Green Belt in the long term. This is reiterated at limb e) of NPPF 139 which states that when defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should be able to demonstrate that the boundary will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period. It is contended that the Spatial Strategy in its current form does not achieve this.

The exceptional circumstances to justify a review of the Green Belt in Berinsfield was set out in the Core Strategy and was supported by the Inspector at its examination. Additionally, the Inspector noted that the Green Belt boundary at Berinsfield should not be confined to redrawing a tight boundary around the built-up area. As is set out in the accompanying Landscape and Visual Overview and Green Belt Assessment prepared by CSA, (Paragraph 5.29) there are limited permanent features around Berinsfield, such as watercourses or roads, which could provide a robust, defensible edge to the Green Belt, accordingly new defensible boundaries will need to be defined through the review.

In 2015, the full extent of the College's land was assessed under the Council's Green Belt Study (2015) as part of wider Parcel 07 C "Land north of Berinsfield's northern settlement edge". The study concluded that *"the land directly adjacent to the northern and north western edges of Berinsfield is not greatly important to the Green Belt functions, however there are no recognisable and permanent boundary features, which could form an inset boundary without extending almost 700m north of the village edge. On balance, the area was discounted."*

The Green Belt assessment looks at a significantly larger area than the College's land, extending north of the existing farmers track which runs east/west north of the settlement. The assessment concludes that the site makes little contribution to the purpose of the Green Belt in this location. Specifically, the assessment concludes:

- There are no issues of potential coalesce.
- The southern part of the site (the College's land) is less vulnerable to countryside encroachment, given the influence of the modern settlement edge.
- There is no relationship with the historic character of Oxford.

The only identified issue is the need for substantial woodland planting to the north to define the edge of the Green Belt to provide a new long-term boundary.

However, we would comment that such a constraint also applies to Parcel 07 B which is the selected allocation. The Assessment does not discount the proposed allocation area despite, in our view, identifying that it makes a greater contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt than area 07 C to the north. Specifically, the area clearly contributes to preventing the coalesce of Berinsfield with Drayton St Leonard to the east.

The proposed allocation site also has no existing defensible boundary to define its edge so would also require significant woodland planting (significantly more than the College's land which already benefits from mature planting to part of the northern boundary), a fact which is not acknowledged within the Green Belt assessment. The built edge of the proposed allocation is some 800m to the east of Berinsfield – a greater distance than the 700m which was seemingly questioned by the conclusions set out in the Green Belt study in relation to the College's land, and the edge of the site to be released from the Green Belt is some 1,400m from the edge of the village.

The rationale for ruling out the release of the College's land from the Green Belt based on the lack of potential for a permanent boundary within 700m of the edge of Berinsfield – a conclusion reiterated in the Strategic Allocation Landscape Sensitivity Final Report 2018 (page 27) is therefore questionable.

We would further question the conclusions of the Green Belt assessment and the basis for releasing land east of Berinsfield without full consideration of alternative, less sensitive, Green Belt sites, or the potential to release a greater area of land from the Green Belt to aid long term delivery of the aspirations for Berinsfield.

The Landscape and Visual Overview and Green Belt Assessment, prepared by CSA, section 6, confirms that the College's land contributes little to the purpose of the Oxford Green Belt and we contend that the release of the land, particularly that previously promoted to the Council to the north of Berinsfield, is justified.

The NPPF (2018) (paragraph 139) sets out that when defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should not include land that it is unnecessary to keep permanently open and, importantly, that revised boundaries should not need to be altered at the end of the Plan period.

We consider that in only releasing land east of Berinsfield from the Green Belt, a short term, piecemeal approach to release of the Green Belt and the growth of Berinsfield is being taken. The Green Belt assessment recognises that land north of the settlement contributes little to the purpose of the Green Belt. A long-term boundary can be provided by enhancing the existing belt of woodland which already partly bounds the northern extent of the College's land.

Therefore, in line with the points raised in relation to policies H1 and STRAT10 regarding the need for the release of additional land around Berinsfield to support the effective delivery of the aspirations for the village and the minimum housing requirement, the release of the College's land from the Green Belt is justified, and should be an amendment to the Plan to ensure it is positively prepared and effective.

The proposed modification will assist in ensuring that Green Belt boundaries can endure beyond the plan period, and therefore, be consistent with national policy.

Land at Berinsfield – Policy STRAT10

The College support the overall strategy of focusing major new development in the Science Vale, including the provision of a strategic allocation in Berinsfield. Development of the College's land would be consistent with this approach.

However, the College wish to raise concern over the effectiveness of the proposed strategic allocation Policy STRAT10 as drafted and raise issues with how their and has been considered in the preparation of the policy.

As indicated by supporting policy paragraphs 4.81 and 4.82 of the Plan, there remains uncertainty on the final regeneration package for Berinsfield, with further work required to explore detailed solutions. Furthermore, it is stated that this work will need to be carried out in accordance with Policy STRAT10. Limb 2i) of Policy STRAT10 requires the entire cost of the necessary regeneration package, including social, environmental, recreation, housing and public services infrastructure to be delivered by proposals.

Therefore, it is vital that Policy STRAT 10 provides the greatest level of flexibility to allow solutions to be found, and ultimately, for the regeneration of Berinsfield to be realised. The extension of the strategic allocation to include the College's land would increase the level of flexibility in the delivery of the allocation. The College are willing to work with the adjoining landowner to achieve this.

Whilst the addition of the College's land to the allocation would extend the amount of developable land available around Berinsfield and the number of homes in the area longer term and would increase the need for reinforcements to the local highway network, as covered in the accompanying Highway Note, its release would help to ensure the delivery of at least 1,600 homes within the plan period alongside the regeneration requirements. Importantly, as raised in relation to policy STRAT 6 (Green Belt), the release of the land now would ensure the Green Belt boundary would not need to be revised again at the end of the Plan period, in line with Government policy.

Limb vi) of Policy STRAT10 requires proposed to deliver all necessary transport infrastructure as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which is likely to include a new junction and access onto the A4074. An indicative route alignment is shown on the Concept Plan accompanying Policy STRAT10. The alignment of the road would pass through the Site alongside the northern edge of Berinsfield. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan refers to this potential new Access on to A4074 stating that the "*exact location of additional access to be confirmed following review of north and south options. Land adjoining the allocation will be required*".

As set out in the accompanying Transport Note prepared by Paul Basham Associates (**Appendix 3**), an access in this location to serve both the proposed allocation and the College's land is achievable and the College are willing to work with the local authorities and adjoining landowners in considering these access options. If options 2 or 3 were to be pursued, a second entrance from the A4074 may be needed, but as shown on the concept plans, this can easily be achieved.

A Concept Plan is provided alongside the policy. However, it is unclear how the concept plan has been derived and the evidence base supporting it. Furthermore, we do not consider there to be a need to provide a Concept Plan, given the policy requirement for a Comprehensive Masterplan to be prepared for the development. The requirement should therefore be deleted from the Plan.

Notwithstanding the comments above regarding the need to expand the allocation at Berinsfield, the College also have concerns as to how their land interests have been considered in developing the Plan.

The College's land was first promoted for consideration as part of the consultation on the Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme in January 2017. The land was further promoted in November 2017 as part of the Regulation 18 consultation to the Local Plan, albeit this only covered the area covered by Option 1 (see Appendix 4) which extends to some 55.5 hectares.

Despite this promotion, the full extent of the College's land has not been included for assessment within the South Oxfordshire Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) January Update 2019 and despite being recognised as being suitable for development in other evidence based documents, for example in the Strategic Allocation Landscape Sensitivity Final Report 2018, it does not appear to have been given due consideration for allocation to meet the needs of Berinsfield, specifically in the Site Selection Background Paper (January 2019).

As in previous versions since 2013, the SHELAA 2019 only assesses two narrow smaller parcels of the College's land, which lie immediately adjacent the northern settlement edge of Berinsfield. These are identified as:

- 'Land north of Berinsfield' SHELAA ref: 1201/BER5 which comprises 4.3 hectares of land and is assessed as having capacity for 116 dwellings.
- 'Land north west of Berinsfield' SHELAA ref 1202/BER6 which comprises 2.5 hectares of land and is assessed as having a capacity for 68 dwellings.

No intrinsic constraints were identified and both sites were assessed as being suitable for housing and suitable for further consideration within the plan making process. However, for clarity, we do wish to highlight that there is an error in the assessment as the sites availability for development is listed as "unknown", despite the availability of the land being promoted formally in 2017.

Sites BER5 and BER6 were also considered within the Landscape Capacity Assessment: Sites on the Edge of the Large Villages in South Oxfordshire (2015).

In 2018, the majority of the College's land was identified as potential allocation: 'Berinsfield Area A' within the Strategic Allocation Landscape Sensitivity Final Report 2018, which addresses the College land.

The report recommends that 'Berinsfield Area A' is considered further as a Potential Strategic Allocation on landscape and visual grounds, but that only the area adjacent to the northern edge of Berinsfield is considered further for housing on landscape and visual grounds. The report concludes (page 33):

"It is recommended that existing valuable native vegetation is retained and protected. It is considered important that a substantial Green Infrastructure link and landscape buffer is created to the northern edge. The preferred access would be via housing and / or industrial estate to the south, avoiding urbanisation of the A4074 to the west. A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final sensitivity of the potential development. A lower density may be necessary to avoid visual intrusion from the built form."

The Council's own evidence therefore suggests that the College's land is a suitable location for the strategic growth of Berinsfield. Despite this, as has already been noted, there appears to be no proper justification as to why the site has been discounted in favour of land to the east of the village.

Part 1 of the Strategic Site Selection Paper (January 2019) explains that Sites 1201/BER5 and 1202/BER6 were excluded from further consideration as the residential site capacity was less than the 500 dwelling threshold set for strategic site allocations. Thus, they were not carried forward for detailed assessment in the Part 2 Strategic Site Selection Background Paper despite being adjacent to an area selected as a strategic location for growth. As it has not been included in the SHELAA, the College's wider land holding is not listed in the Site Selection Background Paper (page 37) as a site for future consideration. This is an omission which means that due consideration has not been given to all reasonable alternatives.

In developing options for how Berinsfield could grow, we consider that it would have been reasonable to fully assess the potential for all sites put forward for consideration, including the College's land, rather than simply carrying forward the proposed strategic site without considering whether this constitutes the most appropriate site.

Without consideration of the reasonable alternatives, specifically consideration of the College's land to the north of the settlement, set out in Appendix 1, and to a lesser degree the other smaller parcels of land identified in the SHELAA, through the site selection process, the Plan is unsound as the strategy has not been properly justified.

To make the Plan sound further assessment of the options for the growth of Berinsfield needs to be undertaken to properly justify the decisions made. Based on the Council's own Green Belt Assessment and the evidence submitted alongside this representation, it is considered that a revaluation of the options will suggest that land north of Berinsfield should be allocated for development.

Chapter 5 – Delivering new homes

Chapter 5 summarises the contribution that different sources of land supply will make towards meeting the Plan's housing requirement which, as set out in response to policy STRAT2, should be expressed as a minimum figure.

Table 5c identifies that 11,362 homes are expected to be completed from existing commitments by 2034, with a further 10,375 being completed on new strategic allocations. This includes 1,600 homes at Berinsfield, as identified in policy STRAT10. Combined with existing completions and small sites, the plan does therefore provide an element of flexibility in land supply with land over and above the (minimum) requirement of 22,775 identified in the plan.

However, the College contend that given the reliance on strategic sites, which make up over 80% of the 'new components of land supply' identified in table 5c, and concerns regarding the deliverability of the

assumed density of development in new allocations, raised in response to policy STRAT5, increased flexibility is required.

Whilst the addition of small sites in sustainable locations would help with this, the College contend that the specific circumstances in Berinsfield suggest their land should be added to the existing allocation, increasing the amount of developable land in the area, maximising the opportunities to deliver the regeneration requirements of the village and increasing the certainty of delivering 1,600 homes around the village, as required as part of the plan.

In addition to land supply, such a change would bring additional benefits to the area including:

In particular, the College's land offers the following benefits:

- Additional housing within the Science Vale to contributing to District housing needs, including the unmet housing need from Oxford City in an area accessible to Oxford.
- Enabling the delivery of a new vehicular access and potential "ring road" to be created onto the A4074. Potential to Identify a new access for bus services onto the A4074
- Opportunity to create a new substantial buffer planting along northern and western boundaries to contain housing, create a strong new countryside edge to the Green Belt and to soften views from the wider landscape of new development and existing large-scale buildings within industrial estate.
- Opportunity to enhance access of the remaining Green Belt
- Opportunity to allow a more direct access to the light industrial units and small business parks at the north-eastern end of Fane Road, negating the need to access them via Wimblestraw Road and through primarily a residential area. Vehicular access to Fane Road from this new access road could be achieved by use of part of the allotment land at the northern end of the road, with replacement allotments provided on our client's land.
- Enhance the line of a Roman road crossing the College's land to provide a natural green corridor/pedestrian link into and out of Berinsfield, including the potential to create a cycle route along the Roman Road to Oxford;
- Contribution towards the local infrastructure for Berinsfield.

It is therefore suggested that for the Plan to be effective, in line with comments made on other elements of the plan, the supporting text, specifically table 5c and its footnote, needs to be revised to reflect the need for addition allocations to provide flexibility and contingency in land supply.

Summary

The College wish to object to soundness of the Local Plan. Key concerns are:

- The amount of land identified for development in the Plan (STRAT1, Chapter 5)
- The distribution of growth within the identified strategy (STRAT10, Chapter 5)

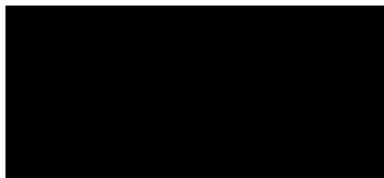
- The ability of the Plan to support delivery of the housing requirement (STRAT5, Chapter 5)
- The need for the housing requirement to be expressed as a minimum (STRAT2)
- The ability of allocated sites to achieve the densities set out in policy STRAT5
- The lack of justification for the choice of land to be released from the Green Belt around Berinsfield and the lack of long-term planning with regards to the longevity of the revised boundary (STRAT6, STRAT5).
- The general lack of consideration of the College's land as a strategic site option in developing the plan (STRAT10)

The College's land is suitable, available and achievable for a residential-led mixed use development. The land offers the potential to provide further flexibility in the deliverability of the investment and regeneration need in Berinsfield, which is to be delivered in accordance with the strategic allocation.

In making these representations, we request to participate in the relevant hearing sessions during the examination of the Local Plan.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge safe receipt of our representations in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Smith, AssocRTPI
Senior Planner

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan

Appendix 2: Landscape and Green Belt Appraisal, prepared by CSA

Appendix 3: Highways Note, prepared by Paul Basham Associates

Appendix 4: Concept Masterplan Option 1

Appendix 5: Concept Masterplan Option 2

Appendix 6: Concept Masterplan Option 3