

South West Bicester

Design and
access statement

NOVEMBER 2006

Terence O'Rourke


Countryside
Properties
(Bicester) Ltd



*‘Good design ensures attractive usable, durable and
adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable
development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.’*

PPS1 (ODPM London 2004)





South West Bicester

Design and access statement

Outline planning application for
a sustainable new quarter for Bicester
by Countryside Properties (Bicester) Ltd

Produced on their behalf by Terence O'Rourke Ltd
in association with WSP

NOVEMBER 2006

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Assessment and evaluation	5
2.1	Physical context	5
2.2	Social and economic situation	23
2.3	Cultural heritage	25
2.4	Policy context	25
3	Community engagement	29
4	Vision for South West Bicester	33
4.1	Vision	33
4.2	Design principles	33
5	The master plan	35
5.1	Introduction	35
5.2	Response to context	35
5.3	Use, scale and quantum of development	38
5.4	Layout	44
5.5	Landscape structure	48
5.6	Access and movement	51
5.7	Appearance	56
5.8	Phasing of development	63
6	Inclusive design	65





1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This design and access statement has been prepared for Countryside Properties (Bicester) Ltd, henceforth referred to as Countryside, in support of their application for outline planning permission for 1,585 new homes, new schools, a mixed-use local centre, commercial developments, healthcare uses and public open space on land at Whitelands Farm south-west of Bicester, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The site is located to the south west of Bicester. It is bounded to the east by the A41 Oxford Road, to the north by the B4030 Middleton Stoney Road and to the west by the A4095. The northern boundary and part of the eastern boundary abut the built-up edge of Bicester. The southern boundary of the site is open fields that abut Gagle Brook to the north of Chesterton village. The application area extends to some 117.6 ha. It is gently undulating and contains three small copses and is crossed by two public footpaths. Pingle Brook runs across the north-east corner of the site.
- 1.1.3 At the centre of the site are the buildings of Whitelands Farm. From this point, the Bicester town centre is around 1.5km to the north-east, and to the south-west is the small village of Chesterton.



1.2 Scope and content of design and access statement

1.2.1. This statement explains and justifies the master plan. The proposed design of, and access to, the new quarter are explained through a description of the assessment and evaluation of the site and surroundings, how public involvement has taken place and how these factors have informed the design of the master plan. The design process included the following steps:

Assessment and evaluation

1.2.2 This stage assessed the physical, social, economic and policy context. Both the immediate surroundings and the wider context were considered. The information of the site was then evaluated and the opportunities and constraints identified. This is set out in Section 2 of this statement.

Community engagement

1.2.3 The consultation undertaken included consultation with the local community and with local planning and transport officers. How the findings of the consultation have been taken into account and how this part of the design process has informed the master plan is set out in section 3 of this statement.

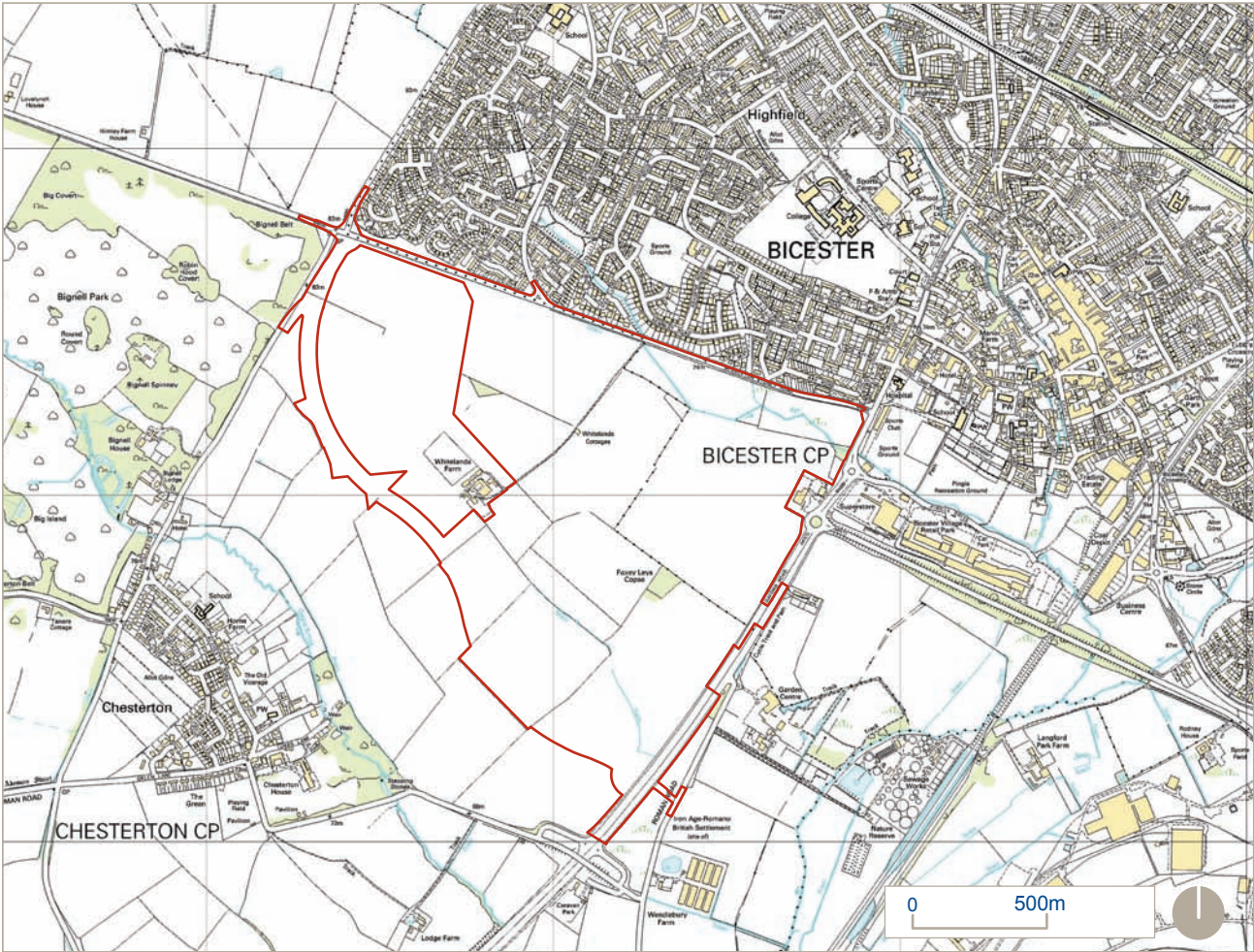


Figure 1.1 Site location plan. The red line shows the planning application boundary



Design and access

- 1.2.4 The process then began to balance the various conflicting issues and started to formulate the vision and design principles for the development. This stage took the results of the assessment and evaluation stage and produced the master plan. The understanding of the immediate and wider context obtained earlier was vital to producing a robust design and access strategy. The vision for Bicester and the design principles underpinning the master plan are set out on section 4. Section 5 describes the design of the master plan, and section 6 highlights the ease of access considered for the area.
- 1.2.5 Other technical documents deal with wider issues, such as planning policy (the planning statement), the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, the environmental statement (ES) and detailed issues associated with access and movement (the transport assessment). These documents are referenced throughout this statement as and when further technical details are considered to be useful in the understanding of the proposals.

1



The Whitelands Farm complex in the centre of the site



Market Square and the church tower, Bicester

3







2 Assessment and evaluation

2.1 Physical context

- 2.1.1 The assessment covered the site and its surroundings, Bicester and surrounding villages. This analysis contributes to the understanding of the nature of Bicester and surrounding villages aiming to inform the appropriate design and access of future development.

The Bicester context

- 2.1.2 Bicester is an attractive market town with a lively mixed-use centre located in the heart of Oxfordshire, close to the M40 motorway, midway between London and Birmingham. The town's development has mainly been focused along the

principal historic routes, which bisect at the town's market square. Along these main routes, the urban form has primarily consisted of terraced buildings, rich in detail and using a wide range of materials including render, brick and stone. The continuity of building form creates an intimate sense of enclosure along these main routes.

- 2.1.3 Bicester has a network of secondary routes radiating from the main routes. These develop into a complex and irregular pattern of narrow lanes, fronted by semi-detached buildings, which lead out to green open spaces. Outside of the core central area,, are a series of suburbs with local centres that provide residents with a variety of services and facilities.

2



Church Lane in Bicester town centre

5





2.1.4 The history of Bicester goes back to Saxon times. Its origins are as a market town which grew up at the junction where the Banbury, London and Oxford roads met. For much of the last 300 years, Bicester remained a small market town with little change in its size or scale. However, the town has experienced rapid growth over the last 50 years, without the commensurate growth in services and facilities. The town centre is much the same size today as it was 300 years ago, yet the size of the settlement is much greater. This rapid growth is shown in the sequence of diagrams.

2.1.5 The proposed development at south west Bicester, while expanding the town further still, is an opportunity to redress this balance and provide a range of services to benefit the whole town.

2.1.6 The assessment of Bicester revealed the following positive features, primarily found in the older parts of town, that the master plan has drawn on for inspiration:

- An area rich in detail and character
- A diverse range of building types creating continuous frontage
- A clear distinction between public and private space
- A good definition of space generally
- A network of views and vistas
- Good visual mix comprising built-form, stone walls, parks, green open space
- Squares overlooked, good places to watch the world go by
- Different types of space – informal and green; formal, triangular and paved
- Clear gateways that create a sense of arrival
- An intimate sense of enclosure formed by narrow lanes
- Wider expanses of green space on the edge giving a feeling of open country

2.1.7 The assessment also revealed the following negative features, predominantly found in the more recent parts of town. The master plan strives to avoid these features in the design:

- Poor connections between the suburbs and the centre
- Poor internal connections within the suburban areas
- Indirect pedestrian routes that do not feel safe or secure
- Pockets of incidental or uncared for 'left-over' space
- Poor quality edges that 'turn their back' to open country
- Wide fast roads that are difficult for pedestrians to cross
- Housing which fails to face the street, instead leaving backs on display
- Lack of gateways to define entrances and arrival points
- A general visual monotony due to lack of variety in colour, texture and appearance
- Layouts that accommodate the car at the expense of other users
- Lack of visual landmarks and views to aid orientation

2.1.8 Analysis of the different forms of development in Bicester show that the more historic parts provide a better quality living environment.

2.1.9 Development in the last 30 years is mainly in the form of cul-de-sacs, while older parts of Bicester are made up of a series of connected streets and spaces.

2.1.10 This assessment of the town has assisted the master planning process by capturing the essence of different parts of town and providing an easily identifiable guide to the sort of place that should be created by the south-west urban extension.

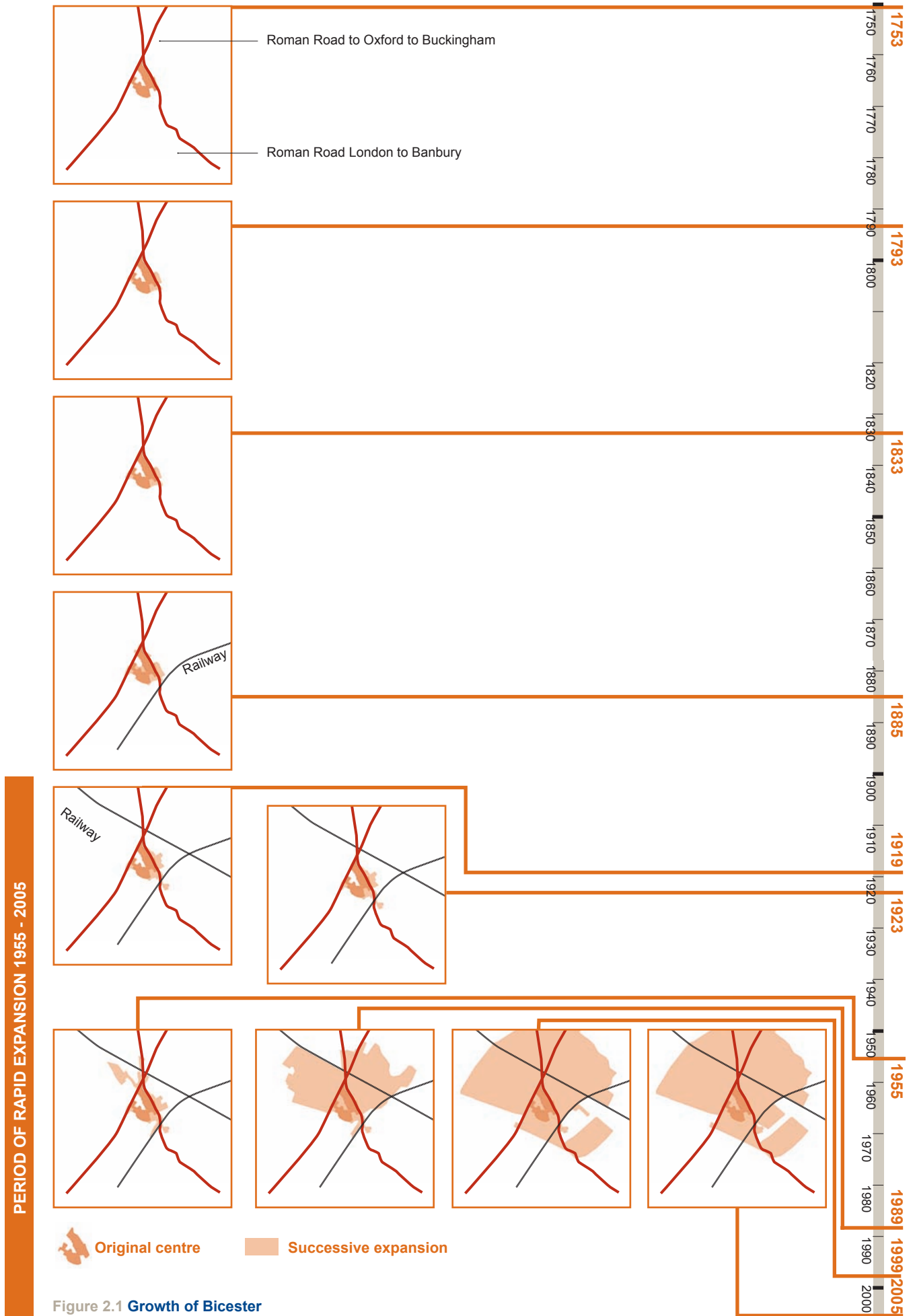
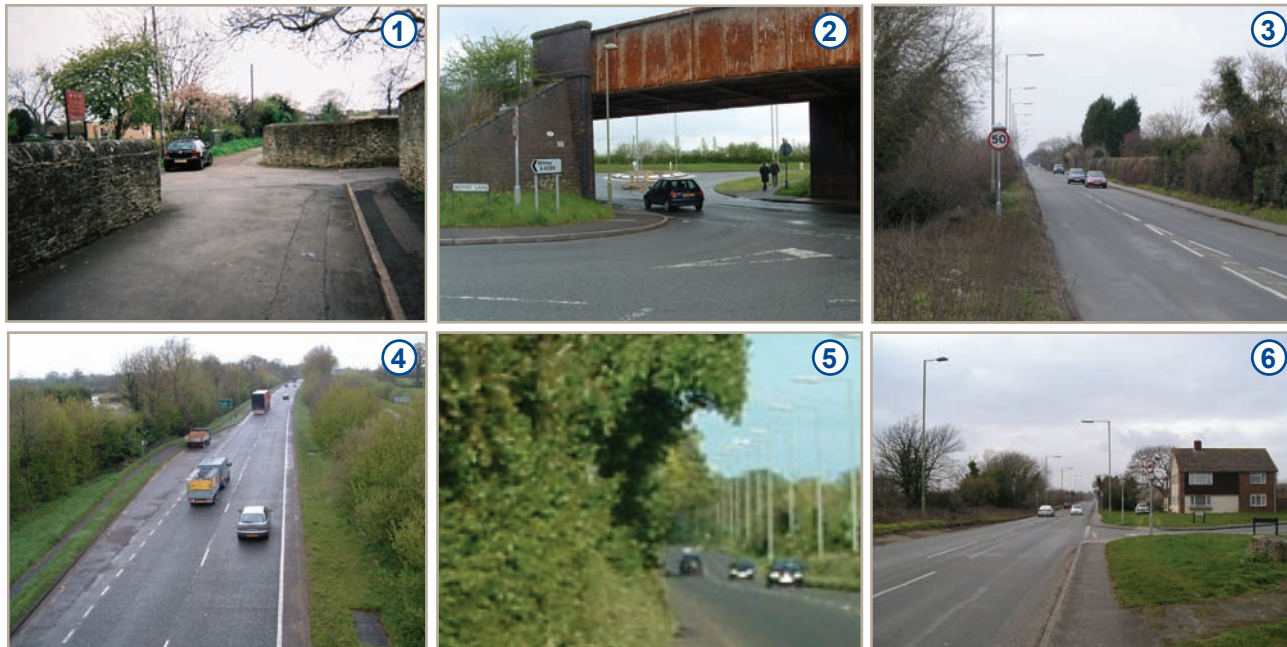


Figure 2.1 **Growth of Bicester**





The site is located adjacent to the A41 Oxford Road, the main route into town. Despite the proximity of the site to the town, there are limited opportunities to connect to the wider area and routes to the town centre (eg Piggy Lane) are often restricted. The two junctions on Middleton Stoney road are the only opportunity to connect to the residential areas to the north. New connections to the Oxford Road will provide the primary points of access.

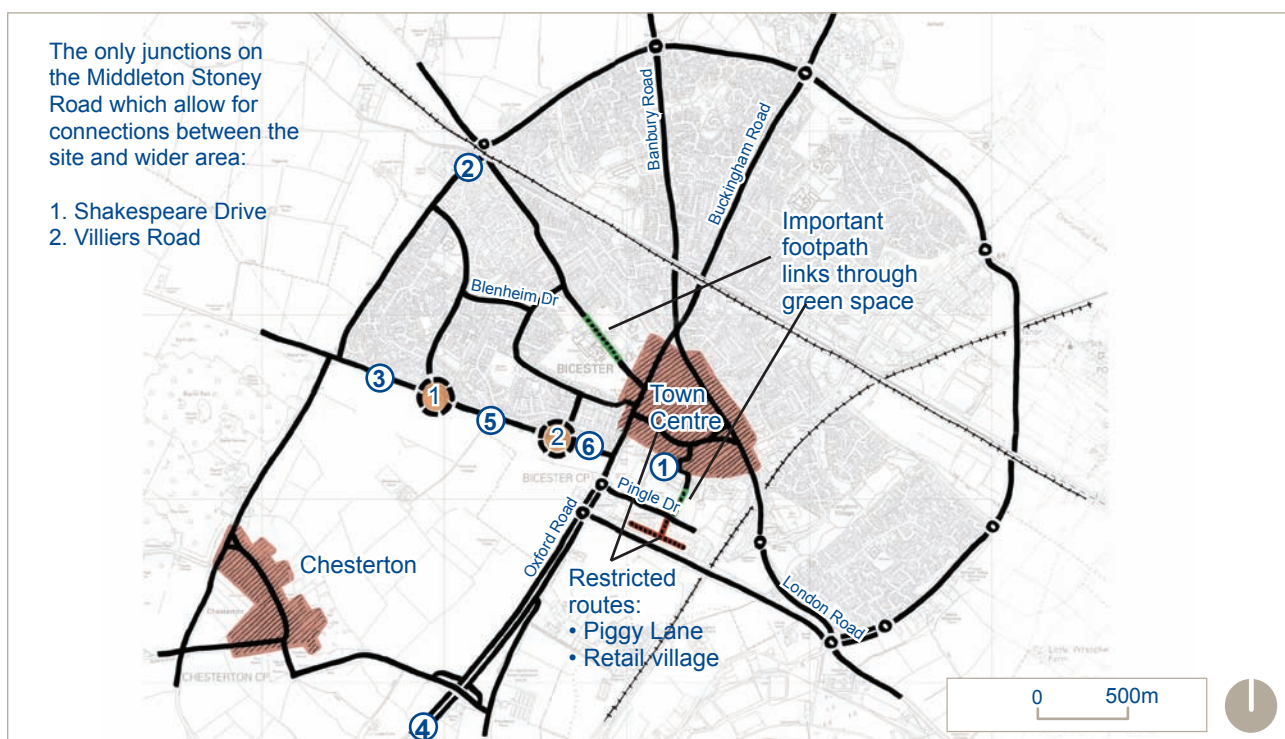


Figure 2.2 Strategic connections





Bicester has a series of local neighbourhood centres, the focus of which is often a few shops, a pub or post office. These provide services to the residents within an approximate 400m walking catchment while the town centre serves a wider area of 800m or so. Many of the local centres are not located on 'through-routes' and therefore do not benefit from passing trade. As such, they have remained small in scale and marginal in viability. The new development needs to learn from this. It must also ensure that it does not undermine the viability of these existing centres.

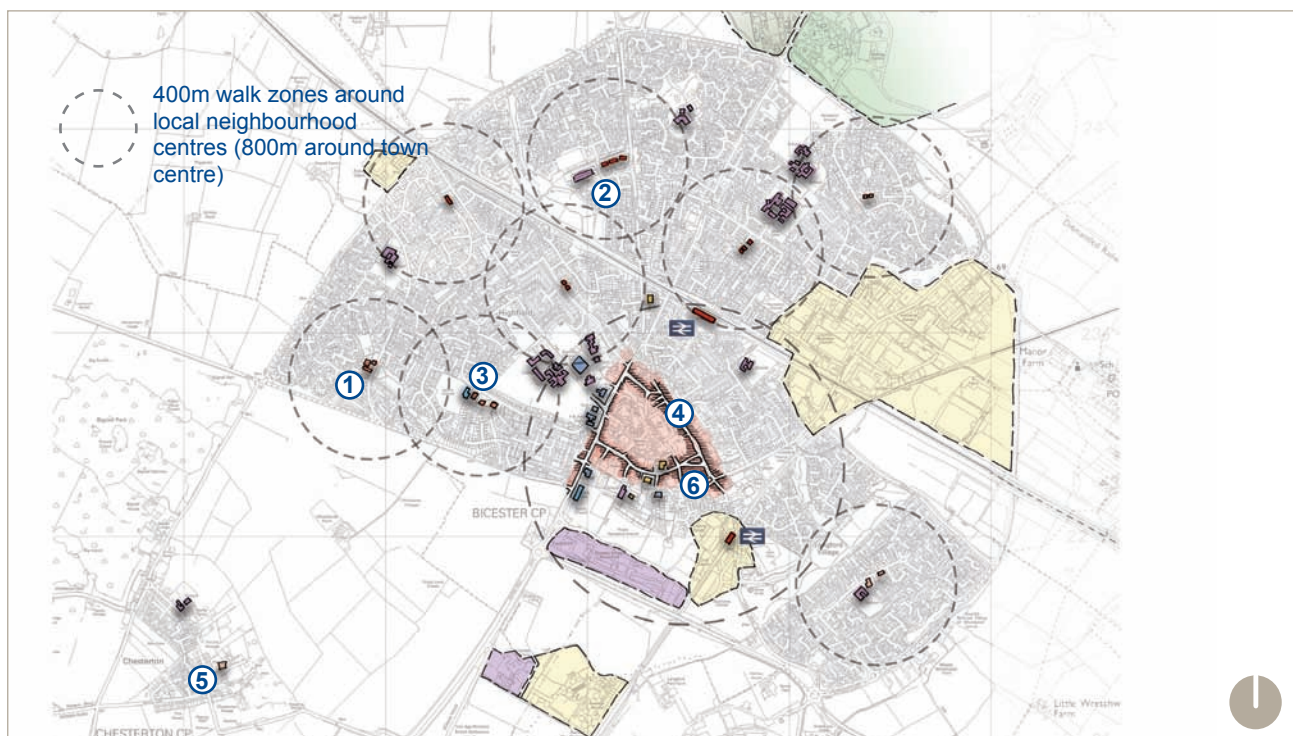


Figure 2.3 Local services and facilities



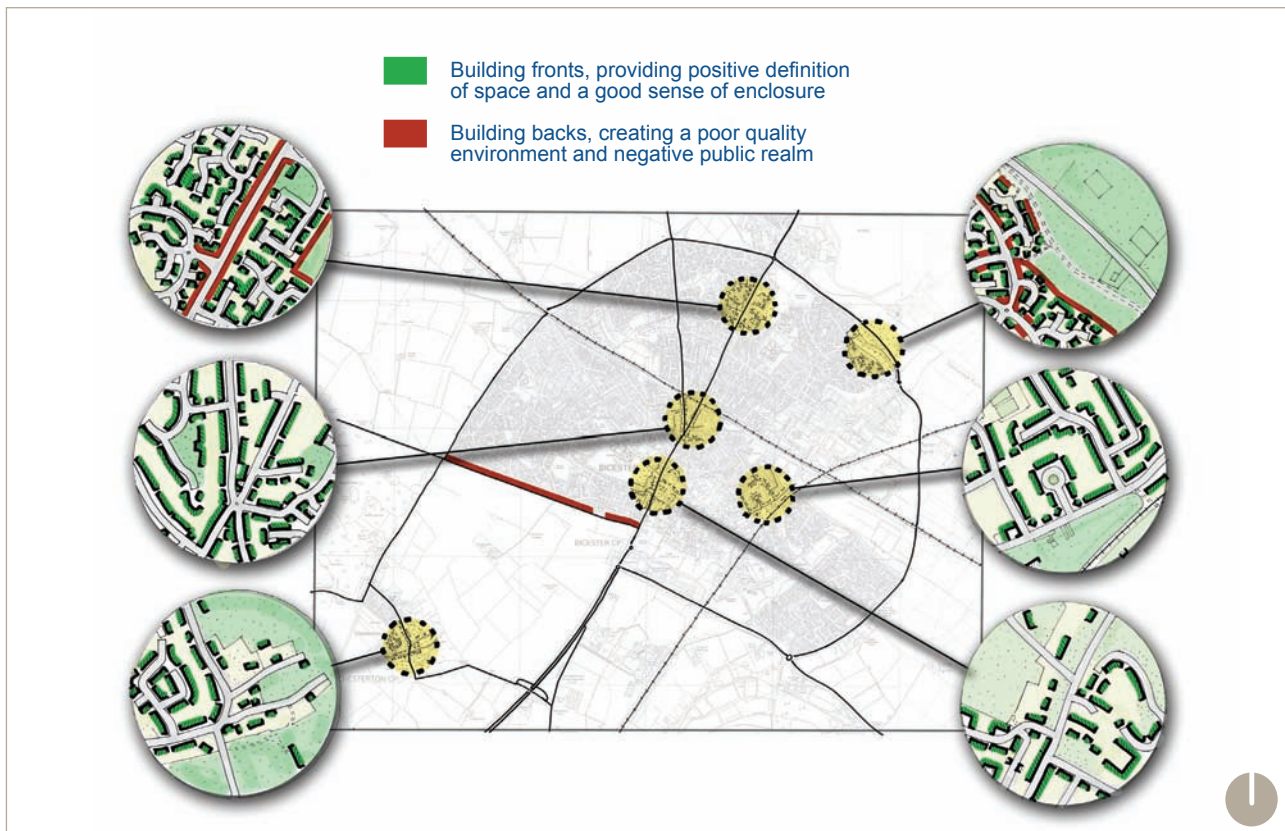


Two examples of streets where houses fail to positively address the public realm.



Two examples of streets where houses provide positive definition and face the public realm.

The more successful parts of Bicester and Chesterton have a clear distinction between public and private space. This is best achieved by ensuring that building fronts are presented to the street, while building backs are kept private. The older parts of town stick to these rules more closely than the more recent suburban developments. The new quarter needs to learn from this, adopt the better characteristics of town and avoid the poorer ones.





Four examples of poor connections in residential areas



The inner areas of Bicester have a series of well-connected streets, providing a wide variety of movement choices. The more recent suburban expansion however consists of cul-de-sac dominated estates, which can often frustrate movement choices. Again, the new quarter needs to learn from these differences and adopt a positive approach to its street patterns.

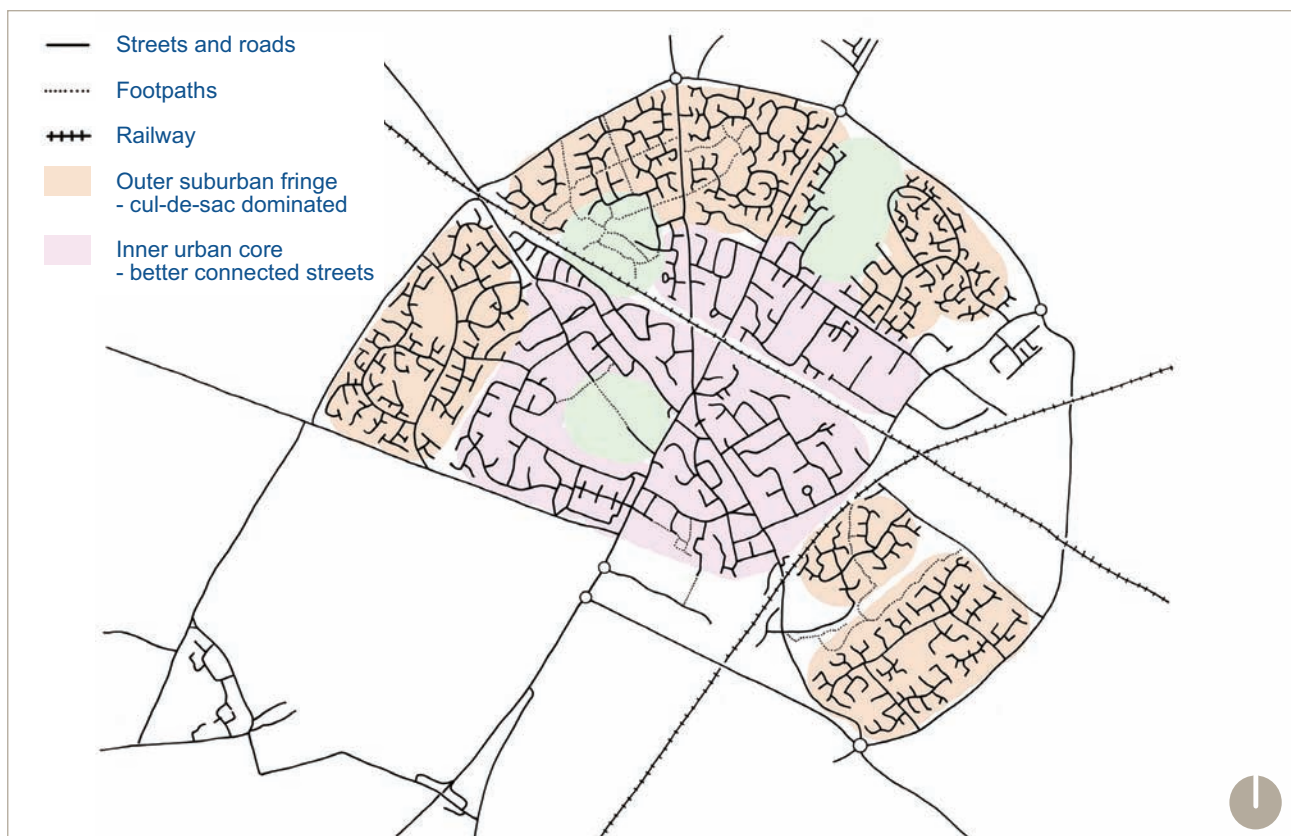


Figure 2.5 Access and movement





Bicester has a wide variety of open space (examples are shown to the left). The proposal needs to provide high quality areas of new open space that complement these. Analysis has shown that while there is a good supply of informal open space, there is a deficiency in formal sports pitches in the town. This shortfall can be addressed through the development at south-west Bicester.

2

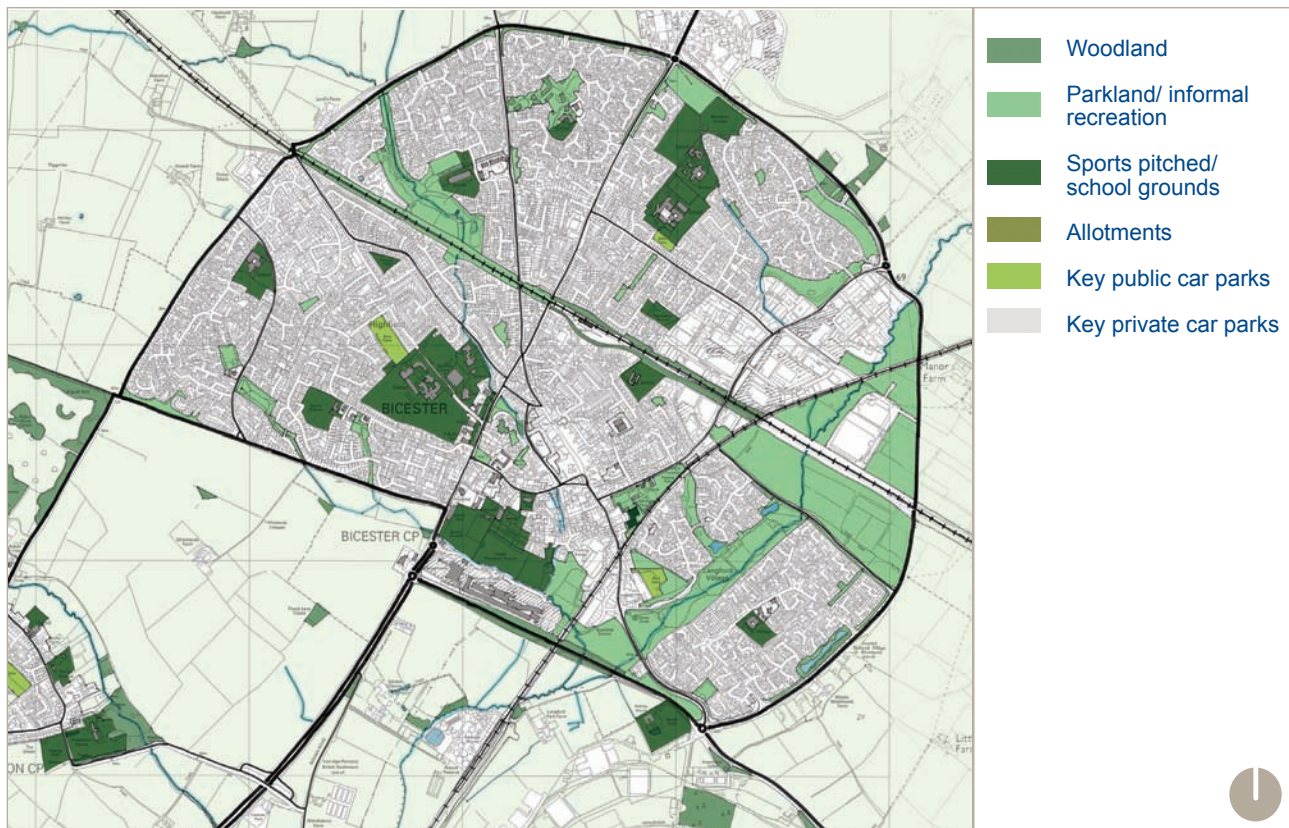
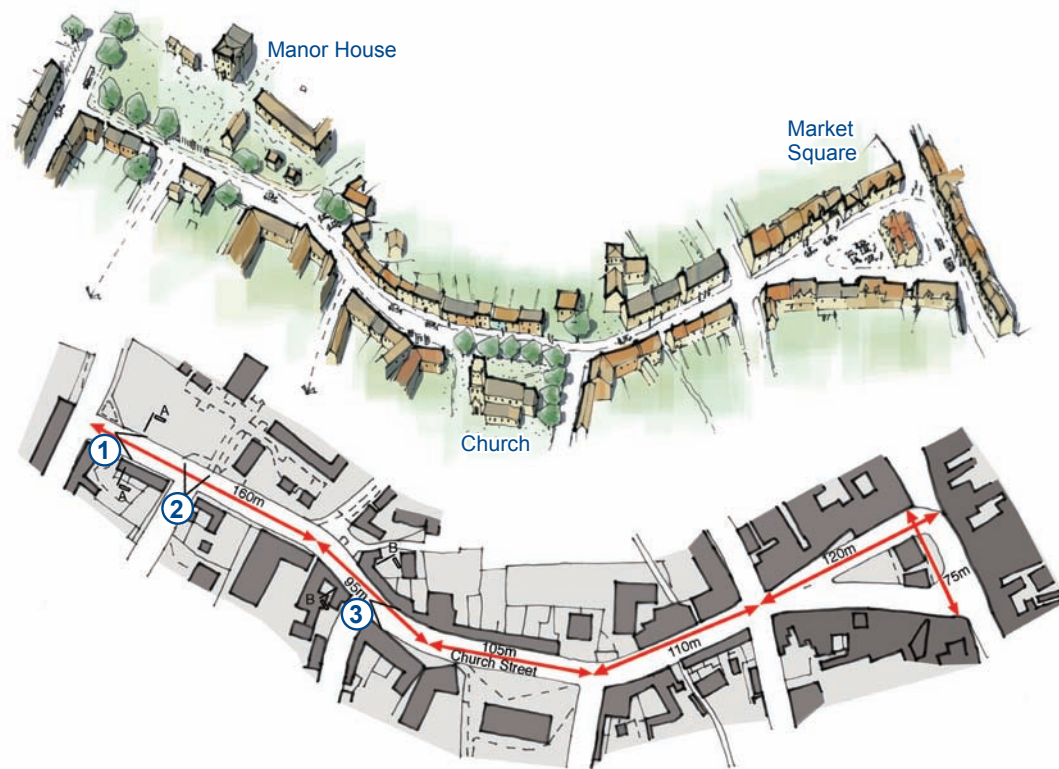


Figure 2.6 **Open space**





Church Street varies in width, with a 'pinchpoint' before it opens up into the town square (left). The street is not always edged by buildings. Private gardens and a church yard enclose the street too, with walls and railings at the boundaries (right).

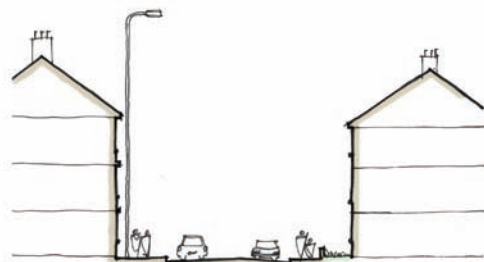
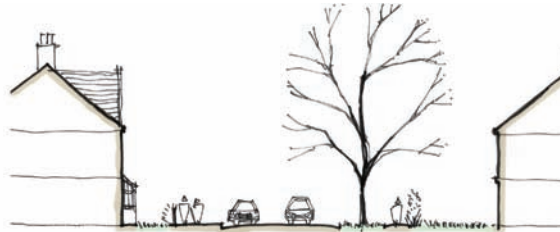


Church Street is one of the finest streets in Bicester, with a constantly changing alignment that creates a series of short views. Building fronts are close up against the street, with more significant buildings, such as the church and the Manor House, set further back to emphasise their importance. The street leads to Market Square, which is triangular in shape and edged with buildings. The new development can learn from this very successful part of town.



Figure 2.7 Analysis of Church Street





2

Queens Avenue varies in width, with a variety of edges, including buildings, walls and railings. Tree-planting is a significant feature, denoting the street as an important through route.



Kings End and Queens Avenue is the main through route in town, with the greatest traffic flows in the town centre. Despite this, the traffic tends to keep moving, even at rush hour, and pedestrians can cross the road easily due to the slow traffic speeds and the numerous dedicated crossing points. The street also feels safe for pedestrians as the majority of the street is overlooked by development.



Figure 2.8 Analysis of Kings End/Queens Avenue





The site and its immediate surroundings

- 2.1.11 The site itself has several distinctive characteristics, all of which have influenced the final form and layout of the proposed development.
- 2.1.12 The site primarily consists of arable fields, divided by native hedgerows. The site falls gently from 82m AOD in the north-west to 65m AOD in the south-east. The southern section of the site falls more noticeably down to Gagle Brook. Following the profile of the brook, a 'shoulder of land' prevents views across the site from the valley bottom. The north-western part of the site is particularly open, the absence of vegetation allowing expansive views across the farmland.
- 2.1.13 The setting of Chesterton and its conservation area has been an important consideration in design of the proposals. Much of the conservation area is inward looking and its setting to the north is primarily defined by the woodland north of Chesterton Lodge and along Gagle Brook. To the west of the conservation area, views from the village across the site are more extensive and open. The landscape setting to the village is limited by a combination of topography, built form and vegetation.
- 2.1.14 In the centre of the site, Whitelands Farm is a prominent and positive landmark in the landscape. The farm's setting is important, in particular in views from the south and east where there is a fine vista to the front of the farmhouse. The combination of the view to the farmhouse, a localized valley and the hedgerow patterns make the fields immediately east of the farmhouse more intimate and attractive. The southern edge of the site is also enclosed in character with pleasant views of Gagle Brook.
- 2.1.15 For the most part, hedgerows are of poor quality, containing a limited number of species and often including large sections of dead elm. The combined effect of the hedgerows and the three copses, is to defuse views across the site. The network of hedgerows, trees and copses positively contribute to the landscape character of the site. The most significant copses is Foxey Leys Copse.
- 2.1.16 The majority of the site is used for arable farming and as a consequence its ecological interest is limited. Pingle Brook to the north is a positive landscape feature and of ecological interest and has potential to be a significant asset for the new quarter.

2



Figure 2.9 Site context



- 2.1.17 On the northern edge of the site, beyond the Middleton Stoney Road, is a predominately residential area, much of which is accessed from Shakespeare Drive. Many of the houses along this edge back onto the Middleton Stoney Road.
- 2.1.18 To the north-east of the site lies the town centre, with shops, offices, workshops, restaurants, pubs, hotels, churches and leisure uses, including a youth arts centre. Civic functions, such as the library, court rooms and the police station, are located on the western fringe of the town centre. To the south of the town centre, is the Bicester Village Retail Park (a factory-outlet centre) and a Tesco superstore. This is separated from the town by the Pingle recreation ground.

- 2.1.19 There are a variety of routes between the town centre and the site, including small lanes which are often pedestrian-only. The Piggy Lane route is the most direct link, leading to Church Street and the Market Square at the heart of Bicester.
- 2.1.20 To the west of the site lies Bignell Park, which has extensive mature tree cover within the grounds. This provides a backdrop to the western edge of the site. The Bignell Park Hotel, close to the Gagle Brook, marks the western edge of Chesterton village.

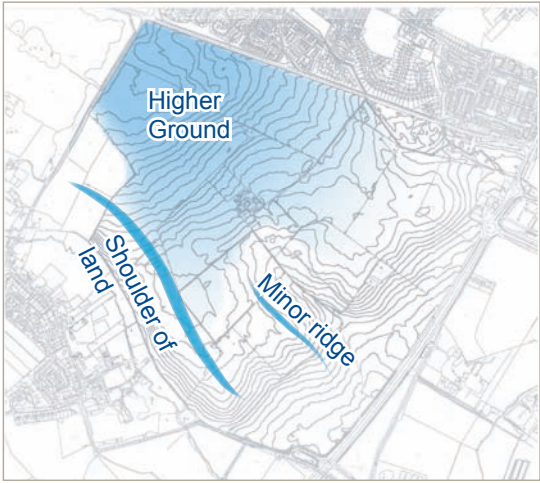


Figure 2.10 Topography



Landscape setting for Chesterton

Shoulder of land as viewed from the lane leading to Chesterton

The site as viewed from the bridge over the A41



2.1.21 To the south of the site, beyond Gagle Brook, lies Chesterton village. The historic core of the village, including the church and pub, has been designated as a conservation area. The church tower is visible from Whitelands Farm.

2.1.22 The northern edge of Chesterton is characterised by domestic gardens and private lanes running downhill, towards Gagle Brook. Two public rights of way cross the site, connecting the village to Bicester town. The village has an attractive appearance and a sensitive relationship with the countryside.

2.1.23 Land to the east of the A41 is agricultural land but is identified (In the local plan?) for employment uses. The A41 (Aylesbury Road) forms the northern edge of this area and is elevated along much of this boundary. The eastern boundary is defined by the extent of the flood plain of the Pingle Brook. The water treatment works and garden centre form the south-eastern and southern boundaries to the site.



One of the mature hedgerows on the site

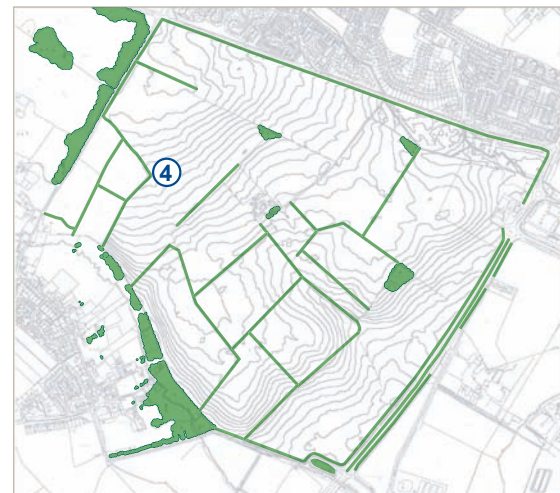


Figure 2.11 **Vegetation**

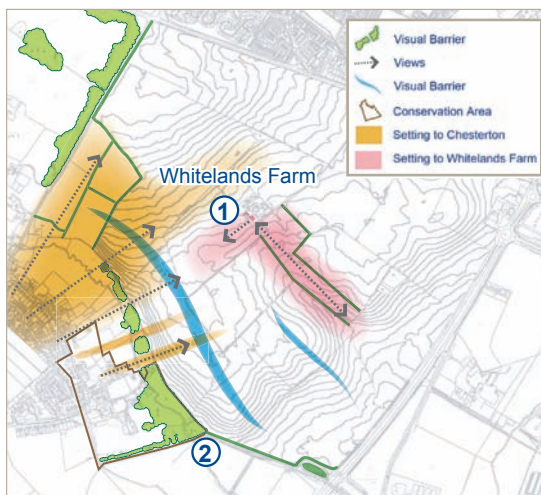


Figure 2.12 **Setting**

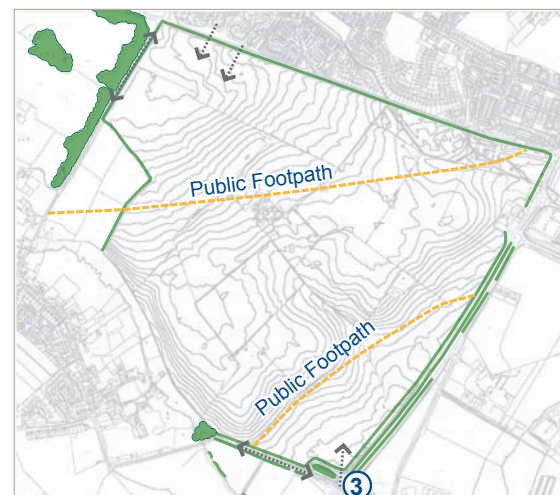


Figure 2.13 **Public footpaths**



The wider context



Figure 2.14 Village location plan, showing the villages looked at during the analysis work

2.1.24 As well as understanding of the site in its context and learning from Bicester, nearby villages where also analysed. Widely regarded as having positive and attractive qualities, these villages have influenced the master plan to achieve a better edge between town and country. The lessons learned from the villages are described here.

Bletchington

- A limited range of materials and a restricted palette of colours
- Parkland and recreation spaces form the transitional areas between the development edge and agricultural land and open countryside
- The limited range of building types, which is restricted to two and two and a half storeys, to create a strong sense of unity

Caulcott

- The use of one to two and a half-storeyed buildings with breaks in sight lines along the main road creates an intimate scale and sense of informality
- The breaks in the sight lines allow for views out to the wider countryside

Chesterton

- Gaps in the built form open up views out to the wider countryside
- The village green is located around key movement corridor
- The use of predominantly two, two and a half and three storey buildings creates an intimate scale and a sense of informality
- A general uniformity of materials and colours

Kirtlington

- A sequence of 'village greens' located along a key movement corridor and focused around important junctions
- A curving street pattern with short sightlines and varying widths with mainly two, two and a half and three-storey buildings to create an intimate scale and sense of informality
- Again, parkland and recreation spaces for the transitional areas between the development edge and agricultural land

2.1.25 These villages provide a series of important principles showing how an approach to built form, spaces, landscape and transport can produce attractive and successful living environments. They provide clues to the way in which the development at Whitelands Farm can be arranged to create an attractive extension to Bicester.

2.1.26 Whitelands Farm presents an opportunity to create a new edge on the south-west side of the town, one that can make the transition from an urban to a rural environment more successfully than other recent extensions to Bicester.



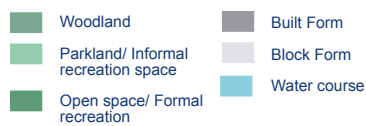
Bletchington



Open space analysis



OS map extract



Understanding the relationship between the landscape and the village

Bletchington has a very attractive village green. This triangular space has two busy sides and one quiet side. This detail has helped inform the design of public spaces for south west Bicester



A harmonious edge between built form and landscape.



The village green is a combination of buildings, stone walls and trees that define the space.



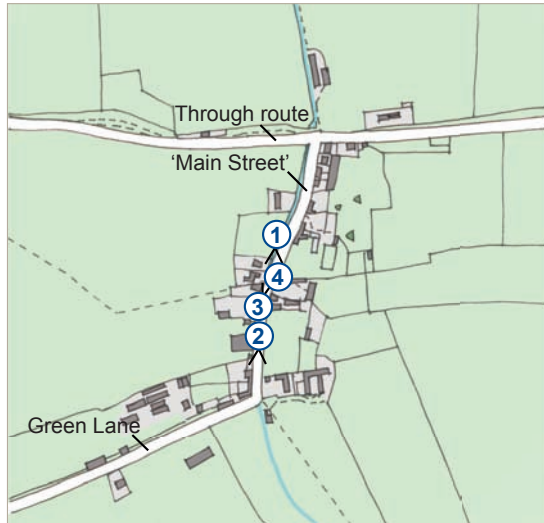
The manor house set in parkland creates a focal point in the distance.

Figure 2.15 Analysis of the village of Bletchington

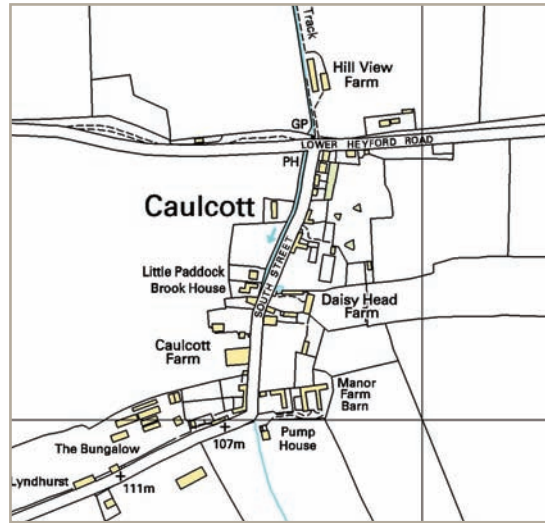
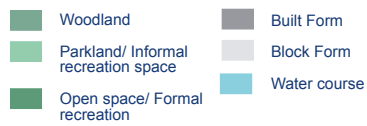




Caulcott



Open space analysis



OS map extract



Intimate scale due to short sight lines and building scale.



View of open countryside from the main street.



Open water course running alongside the main street.



Balancing pond as part of a sustainable drainage system.

Figure 2.16 Analysis of the village of Caulcott





Chesterton

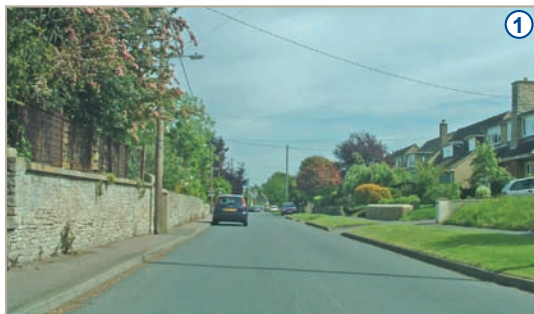


Open space analysis



OS map extract

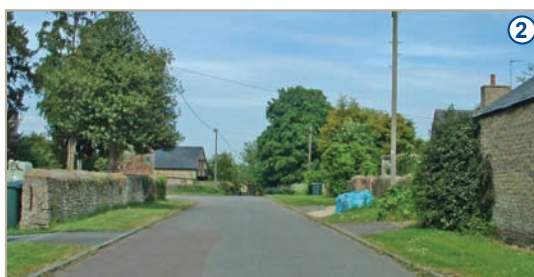
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Woodland | Built Form |
| Parkland/ Informal recreation space | Block Form |
| Open space/ Formal recreation | Water course |



View along Alchester Road. Enclosure is provided by landscape elements rather than built form.



Understanding the relationship between the landscape and the village.



View along private drives toward the site.



View of the north eastern edge of Chesterton. The primary school clearly visible.

Figure 2.17 Analysis of the village of Chesterton





Kirtlington

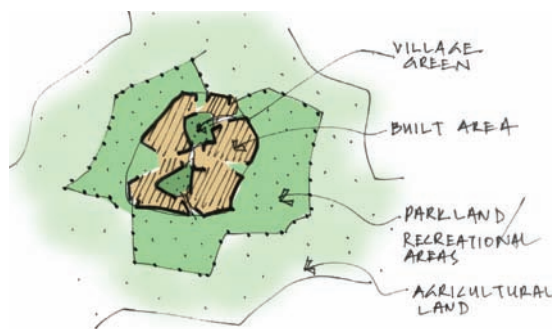


Open space analysis

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Woodland | Built Form |
| Parkland/ Informal recreation space | Block Form |
| Open space/ Formal recreation | Water course |



OS map extract



Understanding the relationship between the landscape and the village



Series of green spaces progressively becoming more intimate and private



Rustic play area overlooking parkland. Note appropriate materials and limited colour range



Formal recreation on edge of village

Figure 2.18 **Analysis of the village of Kirtlington**



2.2 Social and Economic situation

- 2.2.1 Local amenities and services in Bicester include nine primary and two secondary schools (all except one with capacity predicted for 2011), five general practice surgeries, seven dentists (only one accepting new NHS patients without restrictions), three opticians and four pharmacies.
- 2.2.2 The Bicester Community Hospital, located on the west of the town, is operated by the East Oxfordshire National Health Service Primary Health Care Trust (PCT). The PCT is currently proposing to modernise and enhance the services available, through the construction of a new hospital and the ability to rent health provision as and when necessary to better meet demand.
- 2.2.3 There are two main retail areas, Bicester town centre and the Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area to the south of the town centre. The town centre provides local services and amenities

including banks, a post office, supermarket, a variety of independent provisioning shops, some high street chain stores and a number of pubs and restaurants. There are no department stores or any of the larger chain stores in the town centre. The Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area has 90 retail stores (offering end of lines or previous season stock) and three restaurants.

- 2.2.4 Bicester has two hotels and there are a further four in the surrounding area. There are a range of leisure options for the residents of the Cherwell district, including nature conservation, countryside walks, a museum, a multimedia arts venue and three public leisure centres, however, there is a shortfall in formal outdoor sports provision in Bicester.



Figure 2.19 **Bicester High Street**



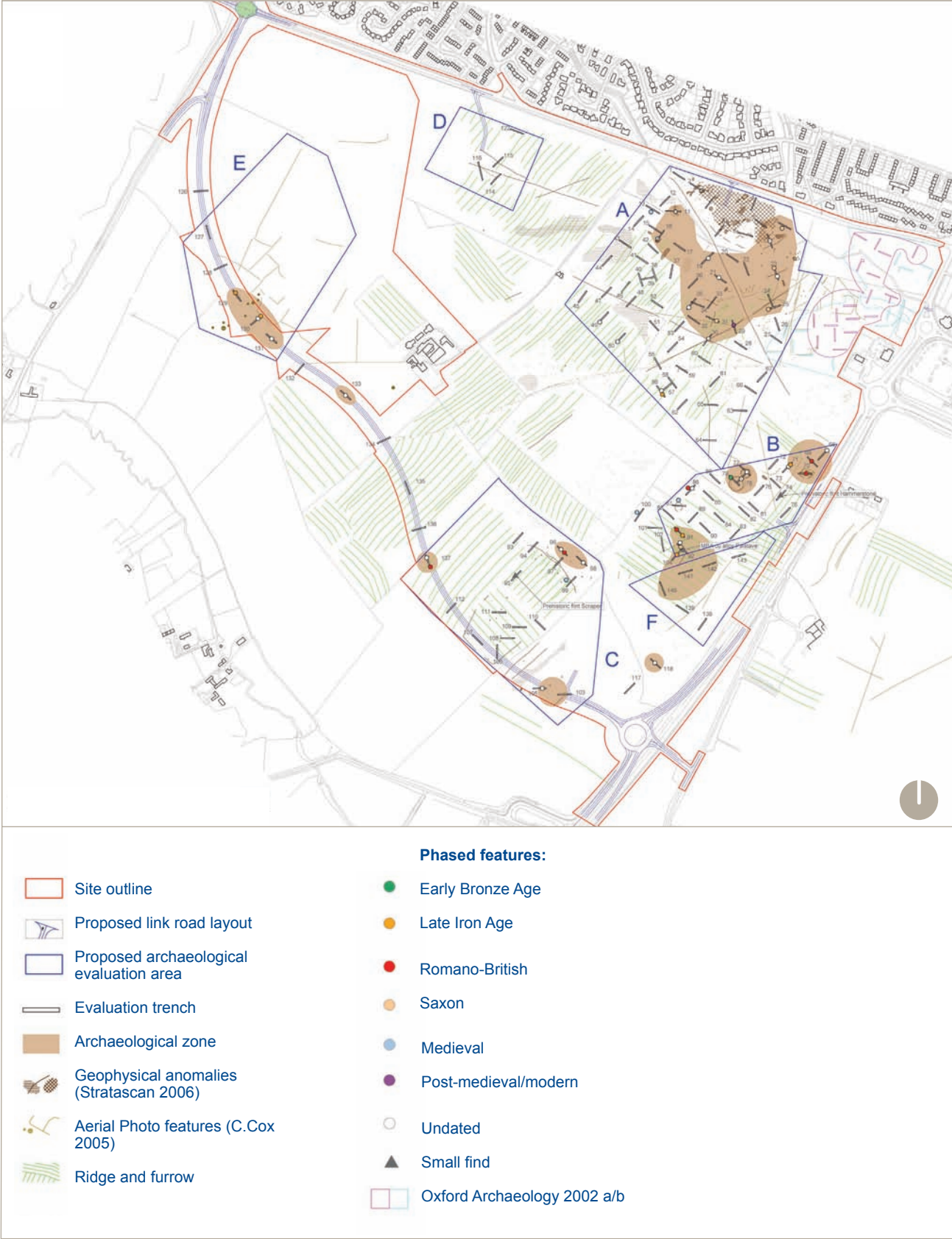


Figure 2.20 Zones of archaeological interest



2.3 Cultural heritage

- 2.3.1 A detailed cultural heritage assessment was undertaken for the proposed development. This involved aerial photography analysis, a geophysical survey and targeted evaluation trenching.
- 2.3.2 There are no scheduled ancient monuments (SAMs), listed buildings or conservation areas within the site, but there are examples in close proximity. The largest concentration of listed buildings is in the village of Chesterton, which is a designated conservation area.
- 2.3.3 Certain areas along the eastern side of the site have been the subject of archaeological evaluation. There are eight archaeological sites/findspots listed within the boundary of the proposed development. Investigations in the north-eastern area uncovered evidence of a late Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead settlement of local or county importance. A settlement of similar date and size, which may be an extension of this farmstead, was uncovered immediately to the east during pre-construction investigations at Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area. The immediate area has a rich archaeological heritage, with the SAM of the Roman Town and Fort of Alchester situated 700m to the south-east of Whitelands Farm.
- 2.3.4 The geophysical survey highlighted evidence of ring ditches, which are the ploughed out below ground remnants of Bronze Age ring barrow monuments. Wessex Archaeology successfully uncovered the remains of both ring ditches, which as a consequence of their excellent state of preservation are considered worthy of preservation in situ. A 50m buffer around these two sites was proposed to ensure no infrastructure works take place that would damage these remains of national importance.
- 2.3.5 Based upon recommendations by Oxford County Council Archaeologist, the associated playing fields for the adjacent primary school are now proposed to overlie these burial monuments, thereby ensuring an extensive area of managed green space.

2.4 Policy context

In this section, the national and local policy context is considered.

National policy context & best practice

- 2.4.1 According to government best practice guidance as contained in 'Design Review', (CABE, London 2002) a well-designed place should:
- Have its own identity
 - Be where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
 - Have attractive and successful outdoor areas valued by people who use them
 - Be easy to reach and move through
 - Have a clear image and be easy to understand
 - Easily change if required
 - Have variety and choice
 - Be where the users feel safe and are as safe as possible
 - Have an appropriate and high quality services infrastructure
- 2.4.2 The qualities of character, continuity and enclosure, quality of the public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability, diversity, security and services are the basis for all good places. They are reflected in numerous other national guidance documents, including *By Design, Urban design in the planning system : towards better practice* (CABE/DETR, London 1999). These principles are the starting point for the design of the south-west Bicester urban extension and this statement will explain how these qualities have been interpreted and applied within the local context particular to this site.
- 2.4.3 The key principles behind a master plan can be found in *Creating Successful Master plans* (CABE, London 2003) and in the Urban Task Force report, *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (ODPM, London 1999). These are set out below, together with brief examples of how these principles have been adopted in this application.



2.4.4 ***A master plan has an overall vision, captured in a combination of words and diagrams, plans and illustrations.*** How? This statement, with numerous illustrations and drawings, is evidence that this approach has been taken.

2.4.5 ***A master plan establishes the principles of development in three dimensions and sets down the different layers of proposed physical change – buildings, open spaces, streets, public transport and other infrastructure such as utilities, telecoms, drainage.*** How? While there is one overall master plan, it is a result of a layers of complementary data that all have a good 'fit' with one another. The series of diagrams in this statement separate the different elements of the master plan to show how these work together.

2.4.6 ***A master plan seeks to show how an area can exploit its distinctive features to give it a character of its own.*** How? Extensive analysis of the site and the wider locality, including the town of Bicester and other settlements, has informed the master plan to ensure it is locally distinctive.

2.4.7 ***A master plan explores, addresses and reconciles different requirements of key stakeholders and interest groups, which may have conflicting yet legitimate concerns.*** How? The engagement process encouraged concerns to be raised and potential design responses to be tested, all in a public forum.

2.4.8 ***A master plan should be visionary; it should raise aspirations and provide a vehicle for consensus building and implementation.*** How? The master planning process involved the extensive consideration of the character of Bicester and nearby villages, learning from the best parts and ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. Integral to the process have been various community engagement events.

2.4.9 ***A master plan should be flexible, providing the basis for negotiation and dispute resolution, and be the result of a participatory process, providing all the stakeholders with the means of expressing their needs and priorities.*** How? The master plan has been arrived at following consultation and engagement. It has been the vehicle for adjusting thinking and ideas in response to issues raised by both the local community and council officers.

2.4.10 ***A master plan should be fully integrated into the land use planning system, while allowing new uses and market opportunities to exploit the full development potential of a site.*** How? Working with the local authority, Countryside has produced a design & development framework (DDF) that has been endorsed as local planning guidance. This framework enshrines the principle of good design on this site within the local planning system, yet remains flexible enough to allow for the design and layout to evolve as the project moves towards the detailed design phase and implementation.

2.4.11 A master plan should be deliverable, it should take into account likely implementation and delivery routes. How? The layout and design of the master plan allows for a phased delivery and minimal disruption to the nearby communities during the construction phase.

2.4.12 In addition to this, the design and access statement has been prepared in accordance with current Government guidance, as set out in the ODPM's second consultation paper, 'Changes to the Planning System', March 2005, as well as more recent publications from the Department for Communities and Local Government, Circular 01/2006 and CABI's document: 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them'.



Local policy context

- 2.4.13 As this statement makes clear, the design of the master plan meets the aims of objectives set out in the Design and Development Framework for land south- west of Bicester, as endorsed by Cherwell District Council in March 2006. The framework is based upon policy H13 and other associated policies found within the unadopted Cherwell local plan. Countryside considers that the proposals submitted for outline planning permission are in accordance with both the framework document and local planning policy.
- 2.4.14 See the planning statement for further details on how the proposal meets national, regional and local planning policy.





3 Community engagement

3.1.1 Countryside believes that the engagement process has helped deliver a master plan that is responsive to the needs of the wider community. The master plan was prepared with the involvement and participation of the local community, members and officers of the local authorities and representatives of local interest groups. These various groups were engaged through a series of events organised and facilitated by Kevin Murray Associates:

3.2 29 June 2005 workshop 'Growth of Bicester'

3.2.1 This daytime workshop included a short discussion about the growth of Bicester so far and its consequences, a site visit, a town planning exercise and a design session examining the strengths and weaknesses of transport, housing, community facilities and open space provision in the town. A public meeting followed in the evening at which attendees could view the results from earlier in the day and add their comments and ideas.



Site visit to Whitelands Farm on 29 June 2005



3.3 18 July 2005 workshop with the Bicester Chamber of Commerce

3.3.1 Members of the Bicester Chamber of Commerce identified key issues of concern, including business life, traffic, the identity and image of Bicester, its location and strategic importance and growth and expansion.

3.4 19 July 2005 design workshop ‘Growing Bicester’

3.4.1 At this design workshop, attendees were split into four groups to develop design principles for the movement structure, housing (density, tenure and layout), community and employment uses, open space, leisure, wildlife and water and drainage for the site. Key issues and objectives were outlined before possible design solutions were drawn up. As with the previous event, a public meeting followed in the evening at which attendees could view the results from earlier in the day and add their comments and ideas.

3.4.2 A summary report, produced by Kevin Murray Associates and available from Cherwell District Council, entitled ‘Growing Bicester: Planning for a Sustainable Future’ gives more details on the community engagement events. It sets out the concerns and the possible design responses that were discussed. The master plan draws on these ideas to ensure the proposal is responsive to the local community.

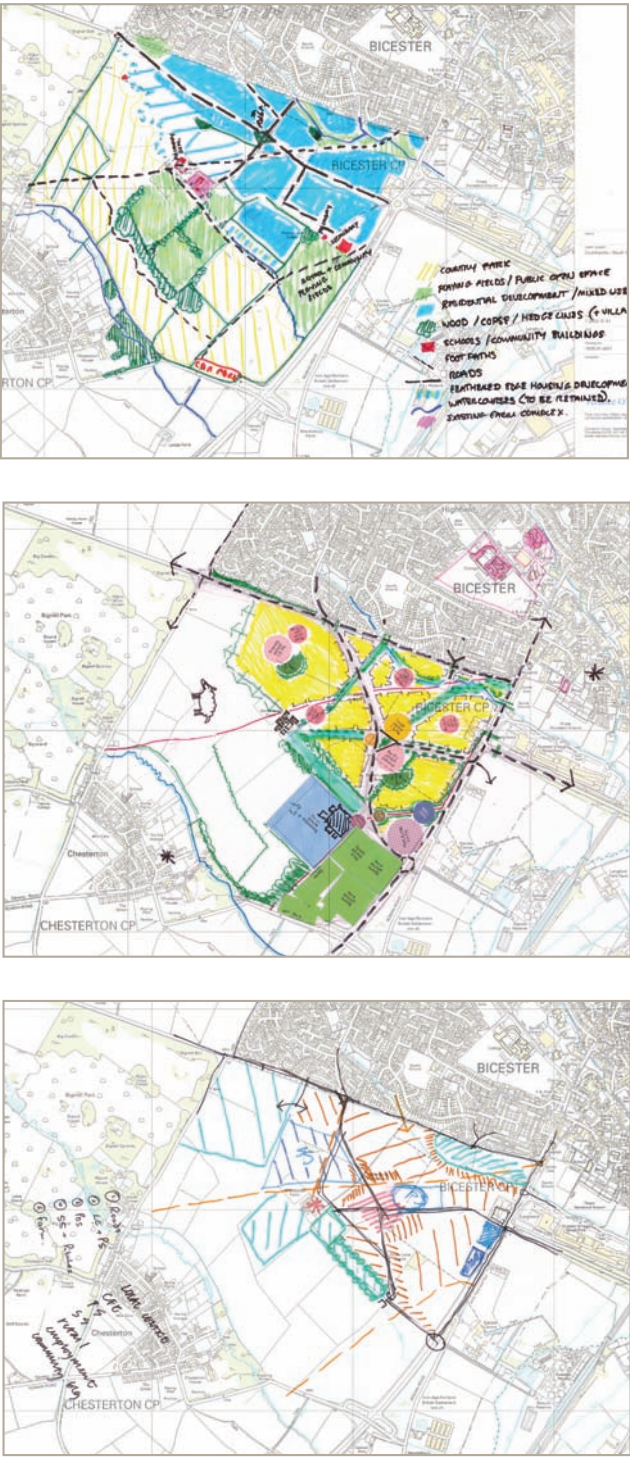


Figure 3.1 The options produced by the working groups at community events on 19 July 2005



Figure 3.2 Amalgamation of three options presented to final community event on the evening of 19 July 2005







4 Vision for South West Bicester

4.1 Vision

- 4.1.1 The lessons from the first parts of the design process (assessment, evaluation and consultation) informed the evolution of the overall vision for the development. This vision has acted as a guidance tool for the remainder of the design process. The vision provides a target towards which all the design principles should aim.

4.2 Design principles

- 4.2.1 In order to meet this vision, the master plan is based on a series of design principles:

“The development must be fully integrated into the life of Bicester, harmonise with the best characteristics of the town and the wider area, and provide a sustainable and enjoyable place for living, working, learning and playing”

The vision for South West Bicester

1 Integrated

New housing, shops, schools, sport and recreational facilities successfully integrated with one another and with the town of Bicester.

2 Robust

A community that is planned and designed in a way that accommodates both present and future needs.

3 Diverse

A development that delivers a mix of house types and a range of activities to meet the needs of a variety of social groups.

4 Beneficial

A development that adds value to the area through the delivery of new services and facilities for all the residents of Bicester to use.

5 Harmonious

A built form that reflects the character of Bicester and the surrounding villages creating a distinctive place that relates to its Oxfordshire location.

6 Accessible

A place that encourages walking and cycling through the design and layout of the buildings and streets, so reducing reliance on the private car.

7 Connected

Clear and direct physical links to the surrounding communities, allowing existing residents to benefit from the facilities in this new place.

8 Inspiring

A place that responds to its context, creating distinct areas of different character.

9 Sensitive

A place that respects its neighbours and its landscape setting.

10 Legible

A place that is easy to move around and is easily understood by those that live or work there or visit.

11 Sustainable

A place that embraces designs, processes and materials that are resource efficient and reduce pollution

12 Public

A series of attractive public streets and spaces that encourage positive social interaction.

13 Vibrant

A local centre that is lively and vibrant, comprising a mixture of complementary uses which create a heart for the community and a focus for activity.

14 Quiet

Residential areas that are peaceful, safe and attractive for all.

15 Safe & secure

A clear distinction between public and private spaces and a local centre with residential uses above ground floor uses such as cafés, shops, offices and community uses.





5 The master plan

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The master plan is at the heart of this statement. In essence, it is the proposed development captured in plan form. The master plan for which planning permission is sought has been subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA).

The precise nature of the EIA master plan, while necessary for assessment purposes, often fails to convey a 'sense of place' or the tangible qualities of a new neighbourhood. The sketch master plan has therefore been prepared. When considered together, the EIA master plan and the sketch master plan perform the following functions within this statement:

- They show how the streets, squares and open spaces are to be connected
- They set out suggested relationships between buildings and spaces
- They determine the distribution of activities and uses
- They identify the network of movement patterns for people moving by foot, bicycle, car or public transport
- They set out the basis for infrastructure, such as services and utilities
- They relate physical form to the socio-economic and cultural context and to stakeholder interests
- They allow an understanding of how the development is integrated with the surrounding context and natural environment

5.1.2 The overall development proposal is explained further in the sequence of diagrams. These 'unpack' the master plan into its development components to demonstrate the responsiveness of the design strategy. The description and design rationale of the master plan are set out in terms of use, scale and quantum of development, landscape structure, access and movement and appearance.

5.2 Response to context

Proximity to Bicester town centre

5.2.1 The north-east corner of the site is around 500m (or a 5-6 minute walk) from Bicester's High Street, bus interchange and railway stations. This part of the site is physically closer to the town centre than many of the existing residential areas around the town.

5.2.2 It is therefore appropriate and reasonable for the development to exhibit some distinctly urban characteristics, particularly towards this corner of the site. This includes a tighter street pattern, a more continuous street frontage, a more enclosed form of streetscape and a greater density of development per hectare. However, this is balanced against the need to protect and retain Pingle Brook and the associated waterside environment. Open areas of green space are retained.

5.2.3 The proximity of the site to the town centre also means it is feasible to walk between the development and the town centre. The introduction of multiple crossing points over the brook for pedestrians and cyclists creates an environment that does not present a barrier to movement between the town centre and the new quarter.

5.2.4 It has also been possible to maintain or create visual links between the site and the town centre, thereby emphasising its proximity and reinforcing the connection. The church tower in Bicester town centre is a visible landmark which orientates the site with the town.



Figure 5.1 Distance from town centre



Proximity to Chesterton

- 5.2.5 The south-western boundary of the development is approximately 1km (two thirds of a mile) from the village street at the centre of Chesterton. The Gagle Brook marks the outer limit of the village, but its setting extends into the site and has been considered as part of the master planning process.
- 5.2.6 Chesterton and its immediate surrounding area have a rural ambience. Maintaining this quality and outlook is important to preserving the village's integrity.

5.2.7 Views to and from Chesterton from the residential areas within the proposed development will be limited. This will preserve the separation of the two settlements and is achieved in part due to the existing landscape. A gentle undulation in the landform creates a shoulder of land between Chesterton and the new development that limits the number of visual connections that can be made. The design and layout of the new development makes the most of this natural feature, by placing the new development north of this shoulder of land. See the landscape section of this statement for further details.

There are some attractive landmark buildings, both on the site and close by. Together, these make a sequence of key buildings that help orientation and legibility. The proposed development will respect these landmarks and ensure that their status with the visual hierarchy of the area is not undermined.

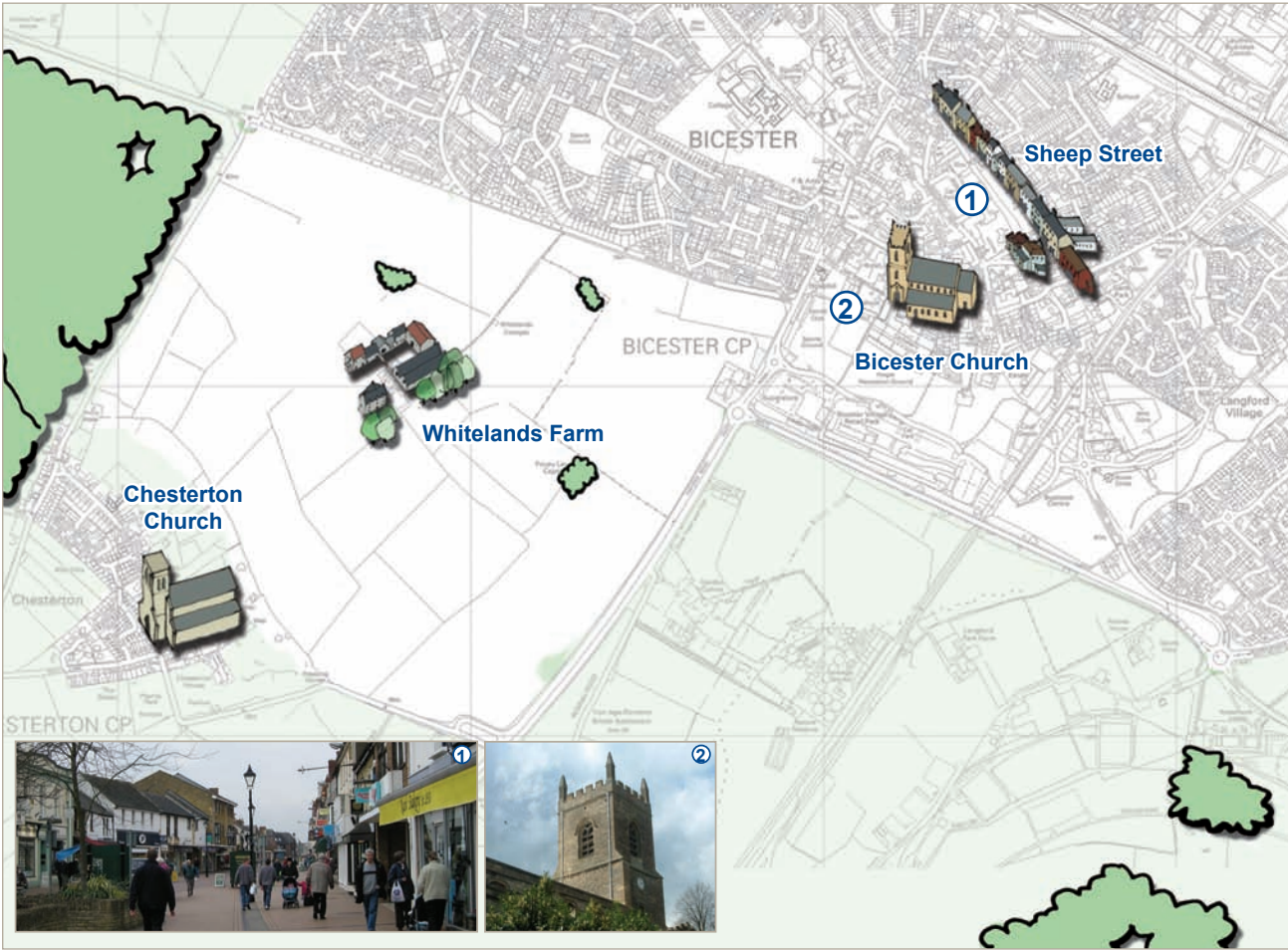
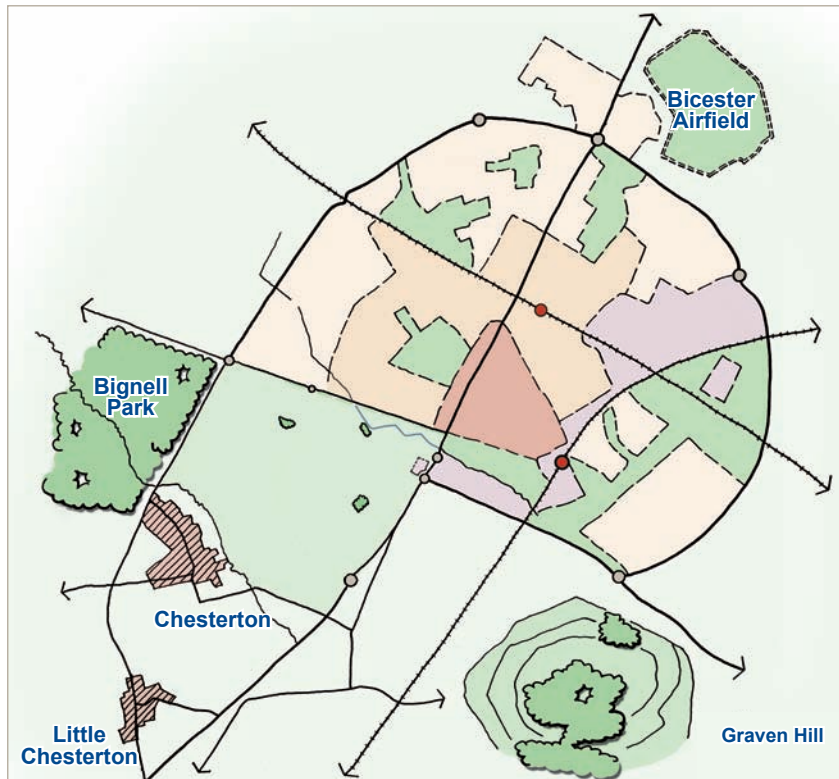
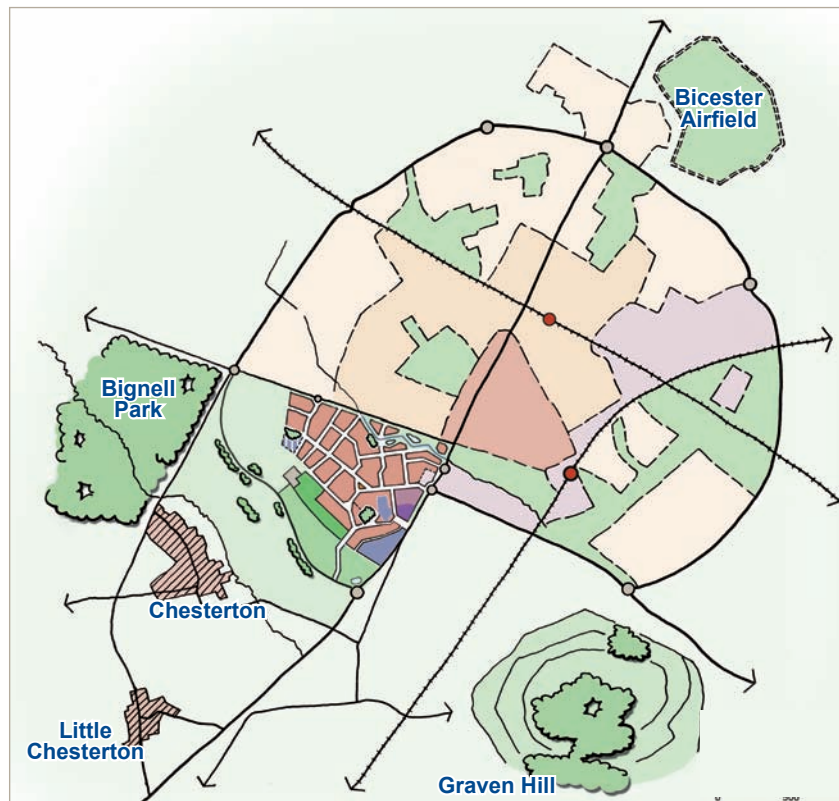


Figure 5.2 Key landmarks on the site and immediate surroundings

**Figure 5.3 Existing context**

The existing context, to which a response is required, is summarised by this diagram. The site lies close to the south west of the town centre, between two significant areas of landscape, Bignell Park and Graven Hill. While neither of these areas are publicly accessible, they are both important structural landscape elements in the wider area. The town consists of a variety of character areas, the more successful of which found in and around the centre. The attractive village of Chesterton lies to the south west of the site. The site contains a number of copses and is crossed in the north-east corner by Pingle Brook.

- Town centre
- Inner residential areas
- Outer residential
- Commercial/industrial uses
- Railway station

**Figure 5.4 The proposed response**

The proposal, which responds to the context, is summarised by this diagram. The proposal maximises the opportunity presented by the proximity to the town centre by 'pushing up' into the north east corner of the site rather than detaching itself from the site edges. This allows a green corridor to be established, linking Bignell Park and Graven Hill, within which a perimeter road with 'country lane' characteristics, sits. This green corridor also provides a landscape setting for Chesterton and allows the village to retain its identity. The master plan has adopted the design principles behind the more successful parts of Bicester and retains and integrates the copses and Pingle Brook.



5.3 Use, scale and quantum of development

5.3.1 The proposal makes a positive response to the social and economic context of Bicester. The development includes a diversity of house types for different household types and sizes, a range of sports and recreational facilities for the whole town to use and a complementary mix of uses (including employment, education, health and community uses). The layout and distribution of the uses ensures that the new quarter will not be in competition with other local centres and will support the town centre. The following pages describe in further detail the use, scale and quantum of development proposed.

Residential development

5.3.2 The master plan provides for the development of up to 1,585 dwellings on the site. In order to comply with the objectives of sustainable development and promote the efficient use of the land, an average density of approximately 34 dwellings per hectare is proposed across the site.






























5.3.3 The density of development will vary across the site (as shown in figure 5.6), with higher densities provided in more sustainable locations, such as adjacent to the local centre, along main public transport spines and close to the town centre. Within these areas densities will average 35-45 dwellings per hectare. Medium and lower densities of development will be provided towards the open edges of the site. Within these locations average densities of 30-35 dwellings per hectare will be achieved.

5.3.4 A range of dwelling types and sizes will be provided across the site to ensure that a mixed community develops. This will include apartments of various sizes, houses ranging from two-bed to five-bed, and an element of housing for people with disabilities and older people. This will be a matter for the design code and consideration later in the planning process.

5.3.5 Affordable housing will be provided as an integral part of the residential development. For further details on affordable housing, please see the planning statement that accompanies the outline planning application.

Local centre

5.3.6 This centre will provide local facilities for the residents of south-west Bicester and will not be in competition with the retail and other facilities offered within the town centre.

-  Application boundary (117.60 ha)
-  Other land in applicant's ownership (74.00 ha)
-  Residential (46.77 ha)
-  Employment (2.00 ha)
-  Health village & employment uses (2.69 ha)
-  Local centre (comprising retail, community uses, nursery, residential & employment) (1.6 ha)
-  Public squares for local centre and school (0.22 ha)
-  Primary school building and hard standing (1.25 ha)
-  Primary school playing field area (1.22 ha)
-  Potential land for primary school (1.31 ha)
-  Secondary school (buildings & hard standing) (3.14 ha)
-  Hotel (1.00 ha)
-  Pavillon (0.35 ha)
-  Primary road infrastructure (5.08 ha)
-  Perimeter road infrastructure (2.37 ha)
-  Proposed strategic footpaths/cycle ways
-  Water courses
-  Existing public rights of way
-  Existing hedgerows/copse/woodland/trees
-  Proposed hedgerows/copse/woodland planting
-  Proposed tree planting within open space
-  Formal open space (including existing and proposed planting) (17.29 ha)
-  Informal open space/children's play (including existing and proposed planting) (14.88 ha)
-  Balancing pond
-  Vehicular access points
-  Residential connectors
-  Possible future site for park and ride
-  New access to existing agricultural land
-  50m buffer zone around Bronze Age barrows
- NB Planting included in both informal and formal open space figures



5.3.7 A range of facilities will be provided to support the local neighbourhood, providing an opportunity to reduce residents' reliance on the private car by providing day-to-day facilities within easy walking distance. This centre will combine facilities such as shops, a community centre, a public house/ restaurant, children's day nursery and offices, parking and residential uses with be located on upper floors.

5.3.8 The community centre will be a multi-functional building, acting as a youth centre and a main community facility. This building will be within the local centre, thereby providing an accessible facility within the heart of the new development, within easy access to its residents. Land will be reserved for the other elements of the local centre, which will then be marketed. The arrangements for this will be the subject of negotiations on the legal agreement.

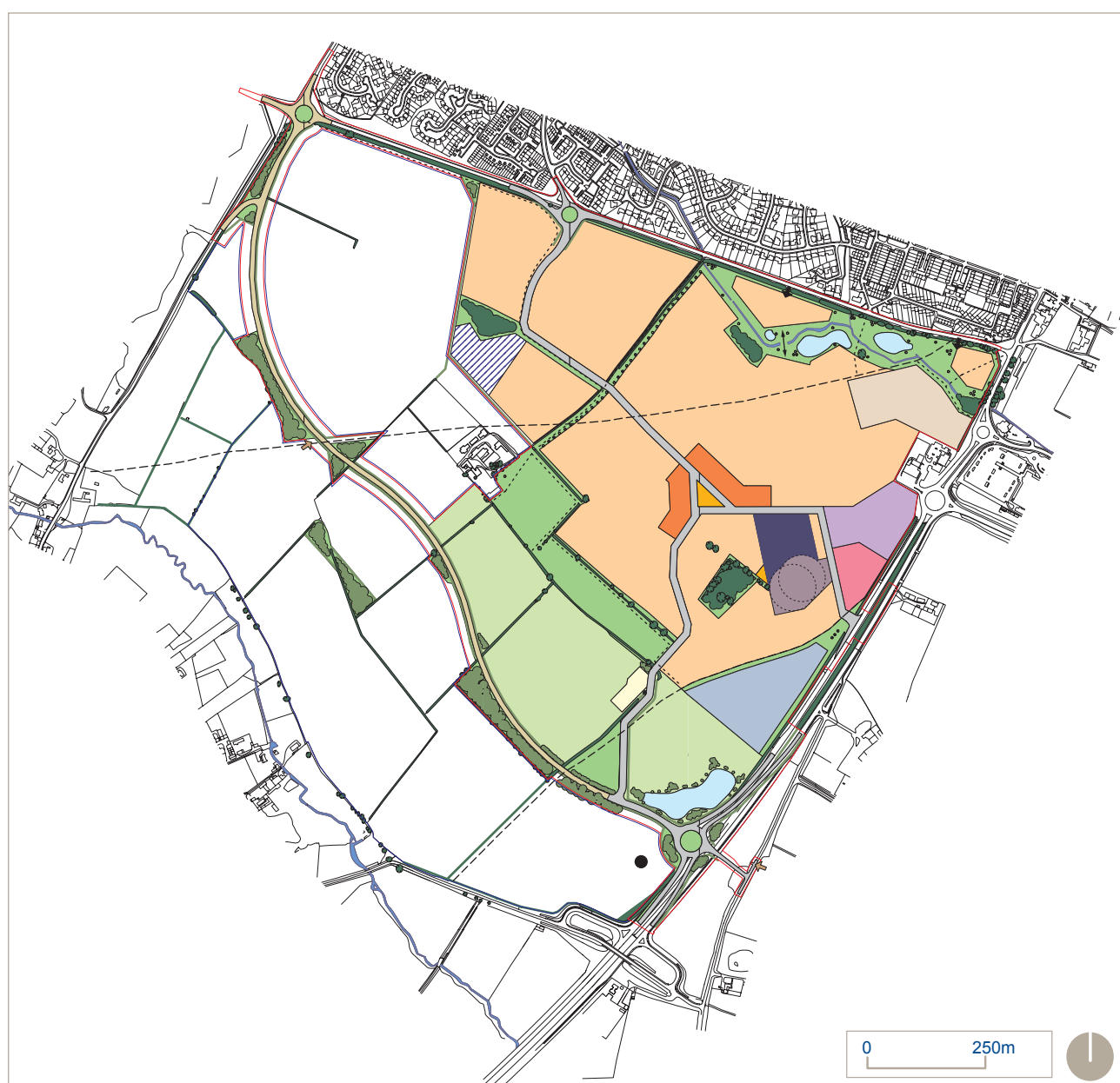


Figure 5.5 The EIA master plan





- 5.3.9 The primary school will be provided next to the local centre. This means that a variety of uses are clustered together to ensure the local centre is busy, vibrant and economically viable. Living above the shop will be encouraged to provide natural surveillance.
- 5.3.10 The local centre will be located at the intersection of the three primary roads through the development so the facilities can benefit from capturing the potential of 'passing trade' from people travelling by car and bus. It will also be highly accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, with its location within 5 minutes' walk of the majority of the development.
- 5.3.11 Siting the local centre in this location avoids significant overlap with the walking catchments of other local shops, including those at Shakespeare Drive, Kings Croft and in the town centre. The design encourages easy links to the surrounding areas to improve the accessibility and integration of the new quarter into the rest of the town.

Employment

- 5.3.12 In order to create a balanced and sustainable community, 2 hectares of employment land is provided as part of the overall planning application. This is located immediately to the west of the A41 so that it can better relate to the new residential development and helps provide a variety of employment opportunities for the residents of the new community. It also allows for the creation of a positive and attractive 'commercial gateway' to Bicester when arriving from the south, as land immediately east of the A41 is also identified for employment uses. This location allows these bigger buildings to shield the remainder of the development from traffic noise from the A41.

Health village






- 5.3.13 A health village complex, comprising a number of different health uses, such as a GP surgery and medical centre, a community hospital, a diagnostic clinic, a nursing home and possibly complementary medical services, will be located in the north-east part of the site. Its exact make-up will be considered in more detail at a later stage in the planning process. For further details on this element of the scheme, please see the planning statement that accompanies the outline planning application.

Education

- 5.3.14 A primary school of up to 2.47 hectares will be provided as part of the local centre, as shown on the master plan. In addition, approximately 1.31 hectares of land will be reserved for a second primary school, if required.
- 5.3.15 Land will be reserved for a secondary school. The secondary school will share the sports pitches and facilities on the formal open space. This will be to the south-east of the local centre, extending towards Whitelands Farm. The site identified for the schools buildings, parking and hardstanding is 3.14 hectares in extent and provides sufficient land for a 850-pupil school, with associated facilities.
- 5.3.16 The secondary school will take children from other developments, such as Upper Heyford and future developments in Bicester, as well as the new south-west Bicester quarter. Both schools will be readily accessible from the residential areas of the development and from the town, allowing pupils to walk and cycle to school. The proposals also seek to ensure that the schools provided on the site are accessible by public transport.
- 5.3.17 The rationale for the location of the secondary school is that:
- It does not sit well close to a neighbourhood centre as it requires a large area of land, and this can frustrate pedestrian movement
 - It can be efficiently co-located with the formal sports pitches to provide a single site solution
 - Most of the pupils for the new school will come from Bicester and Upper Heyford, not from within the site, and so it needs to be easily accessible to the wider community, making a location close to the perimeter road and the A41 suitable
 - It is adjacent to footpaths, cycleways and the main bus route through the site
 - The green space associated with the school will help soften the edge of the development



Density plan

-  Application boundary
-  Other land in applicant's ownership
-  40 - 45 units per ha
-  35 - 40 units per ha
-  30 - 35 units per ha

Building Heights plan

-  Application boundary
-  Other land in applicant's ownership
-  Upto 4 storeys = maximum 14.5m high
-  upto 3.5 storeys = maximum 11.5m high
-  upto 2.5 storeys = maximum 9m high
-  Primary school (building maximum 9m high)
-  Secondary school (building maximum 11.5m high)
-  Pavillon (building maximum 7m high)

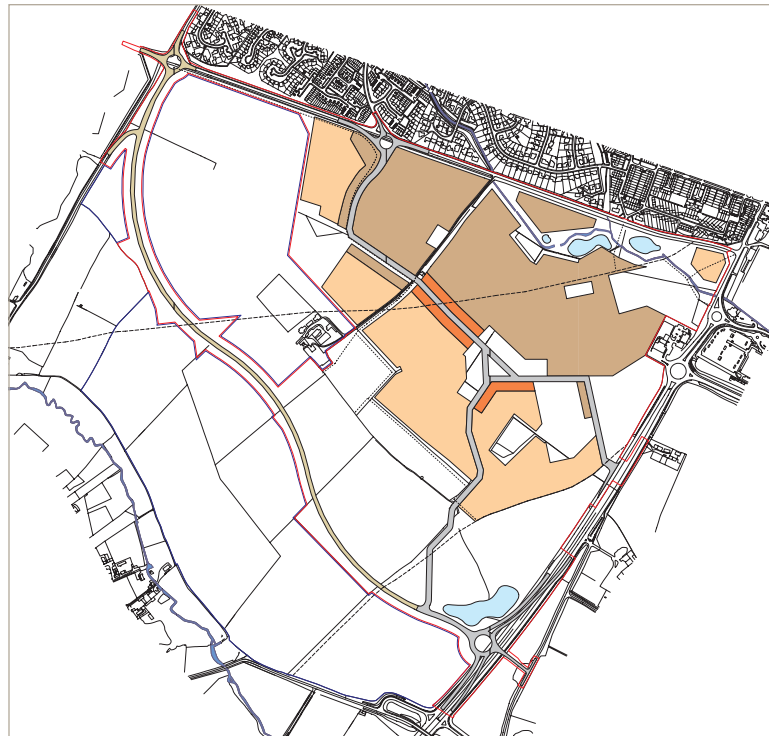


Figure 5.6 **Density plan**



Figure 5.7 **Building heights plan**





Hotel

- 5.3.18 Up to 1 hectare of land will be reserved for a hotel. The hotel is shown on the northern side of the key entry road from the A41, next to the employment area. The use and location make the most of this landmark opportunity and will complement the employment uses adjacent to the site.

Formal open space

- 5.3.19 The master plan shows 17.29 hectares of formal open space including existing and proposed planting. Six hectares required to meet the needs of the residents of this new quarter will be provided south-east of the village centre and will consist of formal sports facilities provision, as well as pitches with lighting. This is the best location for these particular uses as the lit pitches will sit alongside the A41, which is already lit, and therefore it will have the least impact on existing residents of Bicester and Chesterton, as well residents of the proposal.
- 5.3.20 The additional 10 hectares of formal open space will be located to the south west of the proposed secondary school. The sports pitches for the secondary school form part of the overall pitch provision.

Informal open space

- 5.3.21 In addition to the formal open space, the master plan shows 14.88 hectares of informal open space including existing and proposed planting which link together throughout the site. This open space will contribute to the existing spaces in the town. The proposed layout of informal open spaces continues the ribbon of connected spaces in Bicester and integrates the built environment with the landscape. It will provide areas for a wide variety of informal recreation activities and enhance the character and appearance of the new quarter.



- 5.3.22 Pingle Brook is retained as part of this open space strategy, and will be improved and enhanced to create an ecological and recreational asset for all. The existing access track to Whitelands Farm will be enhanced and planted to create a greenway, linking Middleton Stoney Road to the southern edge of the site. Along with the land that will create the setting for Whitelands Farm, this will allow easy access to the secondary school.

- 5.3.23 Hedgerows, trees and woodlands are to be retained wherever possible. Combined with the variety of open space areas, the introduction of ponds as part of the sustainable urban drainage for the site and new landscape areas sympathetically located and planted throughout the development, this will significantly improve the biodiversity of the area from that of a commercial farm.

- 5.3.24 The existing planting on and off site will be strengthened where necessary, as shown on the master plan, to minimise the visual impact of the development for residents of Bicester, Chesterton and the new quarter.

Children's play space

- 5.3.25 Children's play space will be provided within the development and/or on the informal open space. This provision will include equipped play areas. The neighbourhood and local equipped play areas (NEAPs and LEAPs) are shown on Figure 5.8 overleaf. Toddler play areas (local areas of play, LAPs) will be considered at a more detailed planning stage.



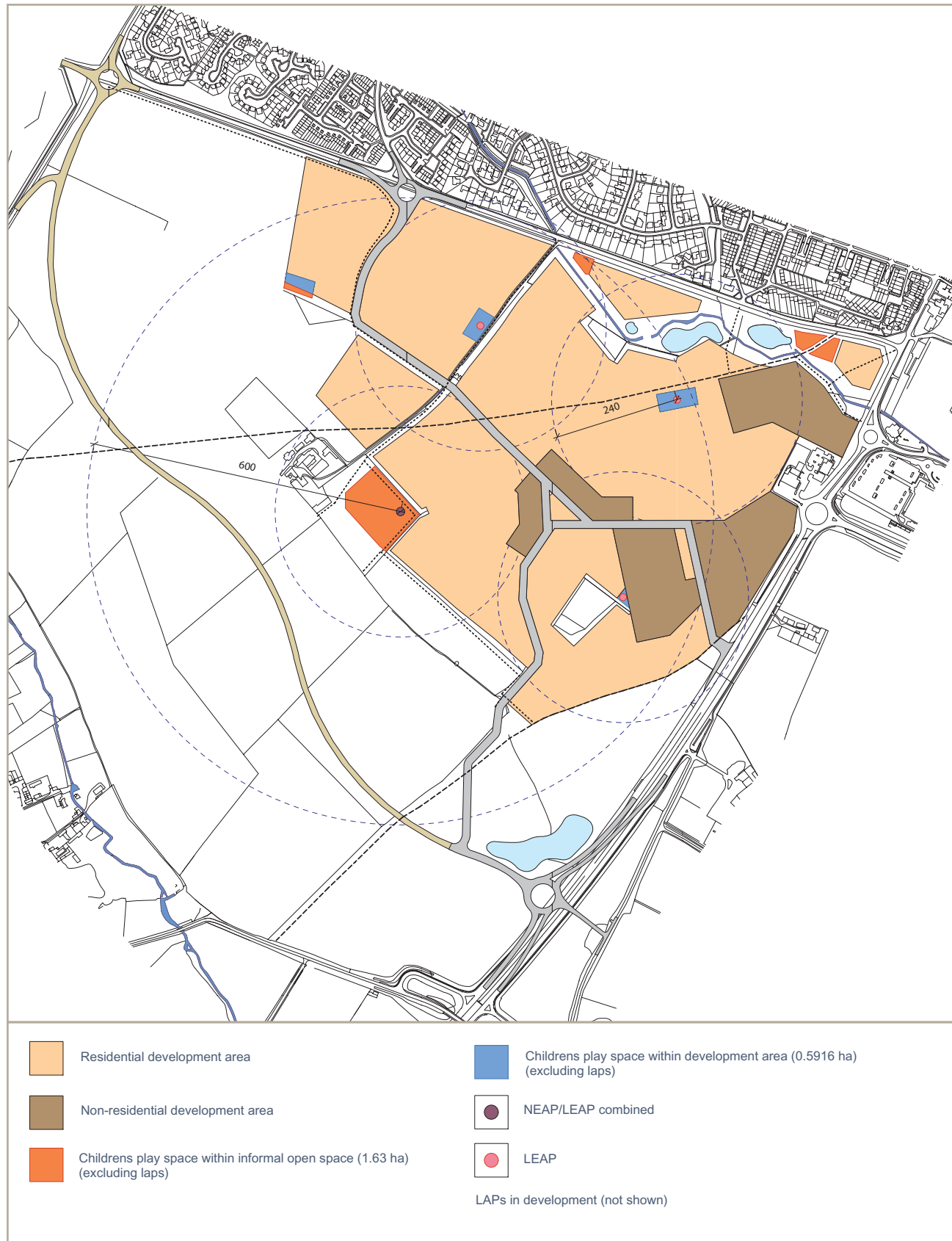


Figure 5.8 Children's play areas



5.4 Layout

The following section outlines the structuring elements that make up the development, including the urban grain, views and landmarks, landscape structure, movement network and access.

Tree-lined avenue approach from Middleton Stoney Road.

Land reserved for a second primary school.

Whitelands Farm buildings retained as a working farm.

Opportunity for equipped play area for children

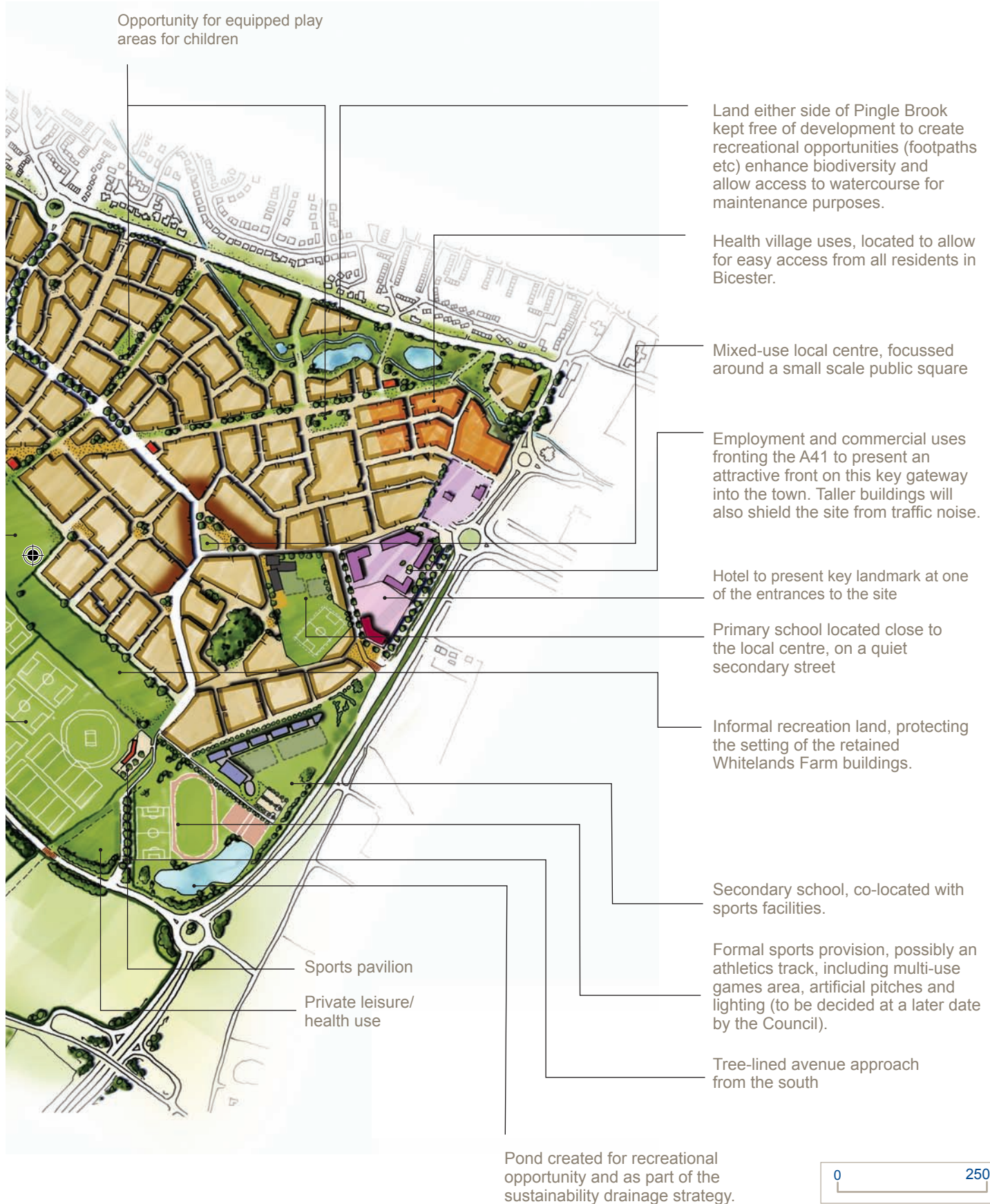
Formal sports pitches, laid out according to the best practice guidelines for orientation and alignment.

Gagle Brook

Agricultural land

This sketch master plan gives an idea about the sense of place that can be created and gives a feel for type of quality mixed-use quarter that can be delivered by the master plan. It adds a layers of informal detail over a base provided by the EIA master plan to give a better understanding about what the master plan is capable of in terms of place-making. Planning permission is not sought for this sketch master plan and it has not been subject to EIA.

Figure 5.9 Sketch master plan



0 250m



Urban grain (blocks and frontages)

- 5.4.8 The development blocks establish a well-connected place that is convenient to move through. Blocks have been designed to be of a size that can accommodate a suitable scale of development, together with the necessary public and private open space and car parking, but are not so large as to become an obstacle to movement (ie requiring residents and visitors to take circuitous routes in order to move around). This diagram shows a high-level block structure. A more detailed level is shown in the sketch master plan.
- 5.4.9 The proposed block structure allows different edges to be given greater or lesser importance in the overall development. Edges that are immediately adjacent to the spine streets and public spaces will have a more continuous and even building line, creating a stronger sense of enclosure. They will also have a greater height than surrounding buildings, even if this is only a subtle difference, to allow for an attractive wide street, which can accommodate tree planting. Residential streets can have a more discontinuous frontage, with detached and semi-detached properties and sides of properties fronting the street on occasion.

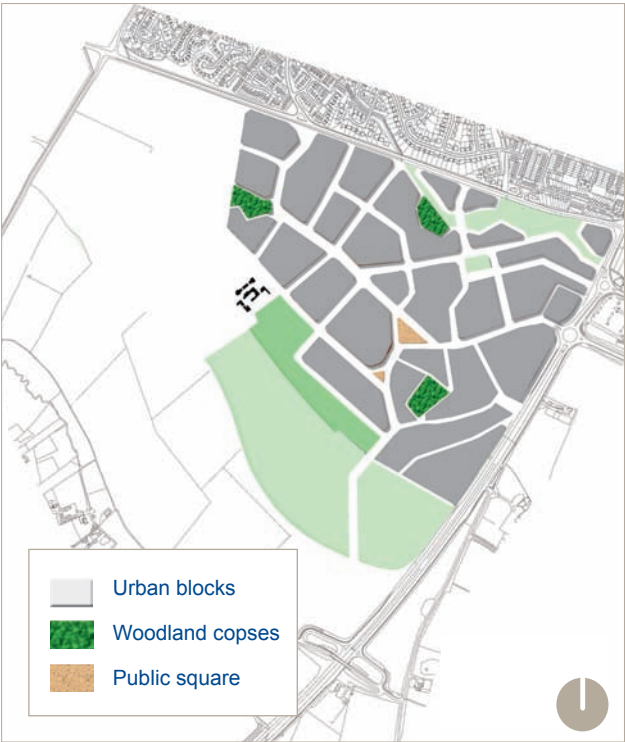


Figure 5.10 **Block structure**

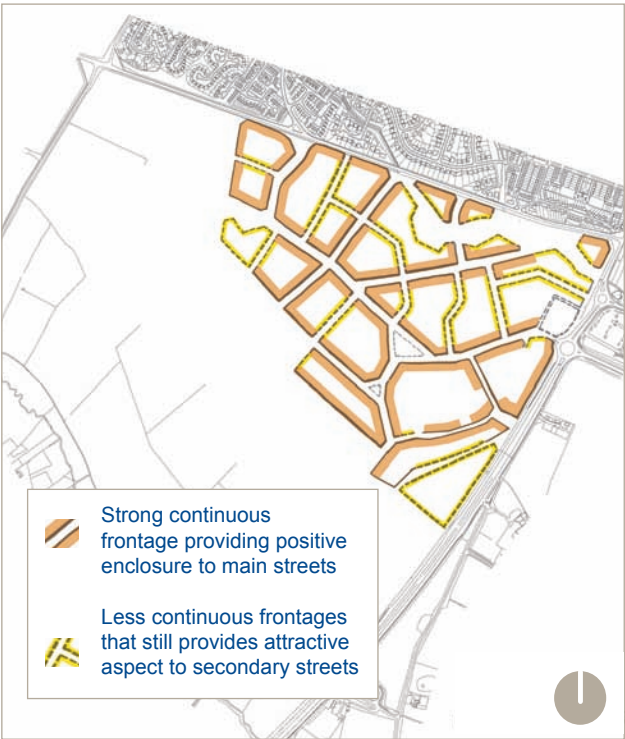


Figure 5.11 **Development edges**



Views and landmarks

To aid with legibility, the master plan has been designed to create a series of landmark spaces and buildings throughout the public realm. These landmarks are celebrated by structuring the layout to allow views and vistas from within the development and surrounding areas. Importantly, existing landmarks, most noticeable the churches at Bicester and Chesterton and Whitelands Farm, have remain important prominent features in views. The gateways into the development have also been carefully designed to create a strong sense of arrival and a clear transition from rural to urban. Figure 5.12 below illustrates the key gateways, landmarks and views.



View towards Whitelands Farm



Figure 5.12 Views and landmarks



5.5 Landscape structure

- 5.5.1 The landscape strategy for the new quarter has evolved from detailed landscape analysis of the site and its context, and through information gathered as part of extensive consultation with the local authority, local groups and stakeholders.
- 5.5.2 While the site is relatively flat when viewed from the edges or the centre, there are subtle changes in level that the master plan has responded to. The site falls gently from north west to south east, with a more significant drop towards the Gagle Brook valley near Chesterton. There is a 'shoulder of land' between the Gagle Brook and the area of proposed development. There are three plateau areas and a gentle valley that runs from the A41 Oxford Road towards the Whitelands Farm buildings. This valley plays a major part in providing the farm complex with an attractive setting and the master plan has strived to preserve this important feature.

5.5.3 The proposed landscape structure works with the existing features to create a framework that will effectively accommodate the development within a wider landscape setting. The landscape structure is also an integral part of the other elements of the master plan, such as the block structure, the access and movement patterns and character areas. Key streets will be tree-lined to emphasise their importance, the copses will be retained and embedded within the block structure and the development edges will positively address the wider landscape. Additional structural landscape works will help assimilate the perimeter road into the landscape.



Figure 5.13 Landscape structure



5.5.4 The key objectives of the landscape strategy are to:

- Ensure that the new south-west quarter for Bicester is successfully integrated into the landscape, being both sensitive, and responsive to, the landscape character and its setting
- Provide strategic new areas of formal and informal open space that is successfully connected with Bicester to ensure that both the existing and new community benefit from this major new recreation resource
- Protect the setting of Chesterton and Whitelands Farm
- Protect existing landscape and ecological interest on the site, and where possible, achieve significant enhancement
- Provide a network of green spaces, including linear spaces such as footpaths and tree-lined avenues
- Ensure that a landscape and management framework is established that will deliver a major recreation asset for future generations



Figure 5.14 [Landscape structure](#)



- 5.5.5 The development of the site affords the potential to extend and enhance the existing strategic open space network of Bicester. This has been an important consideration in determining the structure of landscape proposals for this site. The open space strategy incorporates Pingle Brook, extends the strategic network of spaces into the site, then continues southwards along the greenway to the informal and formal open space and secondary school at the south of the site.
- 5.5.6 The new formal recreational area comprises 16 hectares. This will be jointly used by the secondary school. Recreational uses that require lighting will be located along the eastern edge, next to the A41. In addition to the formal recreation, the two large fields immediately east of the farmhouse will be turned into a large public park including informal open space and children's play areas. As at the villages of Kirtlington and Bletchington, this recreational open space will provide a significant green area between the development and agricultural land.
- 5.5.7 The two existing public rights of way have been incorporated within the development structure and additional footpaths and cycleways are proposed to provide a comprehensive network through the development and the open space.
- 5.5.8 The three copses and majority of the hedgerows are retained. The existing landscape network has been the basis for the new planting. Importantly, the primary objective of mitigation planting has been not to screen the development, but rather to establish an enhanced landscape structure that allows framed views of the development edge.

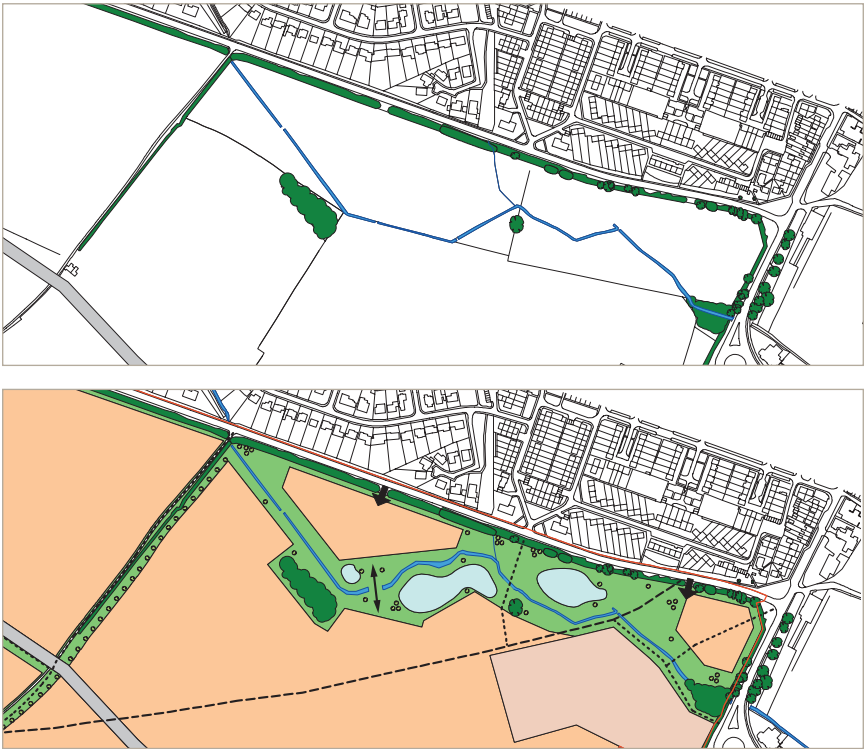


Figure 5.15 Pingle Brook (before and after)



5.6 Access and movement

- 5.6.1 The site is well-positioned for pedestrian accessibility to Bicester's centrally located facilities. It is also close to the large Tesco superstore and multiple retailers at Bicester Village Retail Park. Safe and easy pedestrian access from the new quarter to both facilities will be achieved through new pedestrian-friendly crossings on the A41.
- 5.6.2 For the remainder of the site, pedestrian access is a core design principle, reflected for instance in the retention and incorporation of the existing footpaths across the site. These are incorporated into the layout without the need for realignment.
- 5.6.3 The development is served by three main access points, two from the A41 and one from Middleton Stoney Road. The larger of the two on the A41 will join with an outer perimeter road that will help connections in the south-western quadrant of the town. A new secondary access off Middleton Stoney Road will serve the dwellings north of Pingle Brook. A further access from Middleton Stoney Road will serve the nursing home element of the health village, as it will generate lower traffic levels.
- 5.6.4 The existing track to Whitelands Farm will be closed to vehicular traffic but will provide pedestrian and cycle access to the site.
- 5.6.5 The access and movement proposals seek to reduce the amount of through traffic using Middleton Stoney Road and Queens Avenue through the town centre. This will assist in encouraging walking and cycling between the new and existing communities. A hierarchy of streets will be designed to accommodate different types of vehicular movement. Streets will be designed for slow traffic speeds.
- 5.6.6 As well as providing quick and direct links to the M40 and Oxford, the A41 creates problems of noise and severance. Noise from the road must be addressed, and this is done through a combination of a landscape works that are integral to the whole development and the use of boundary buildings that can protect the rest of the new quarter from traffic noise. The commercial part of the new quarter has been designed with this in mind.

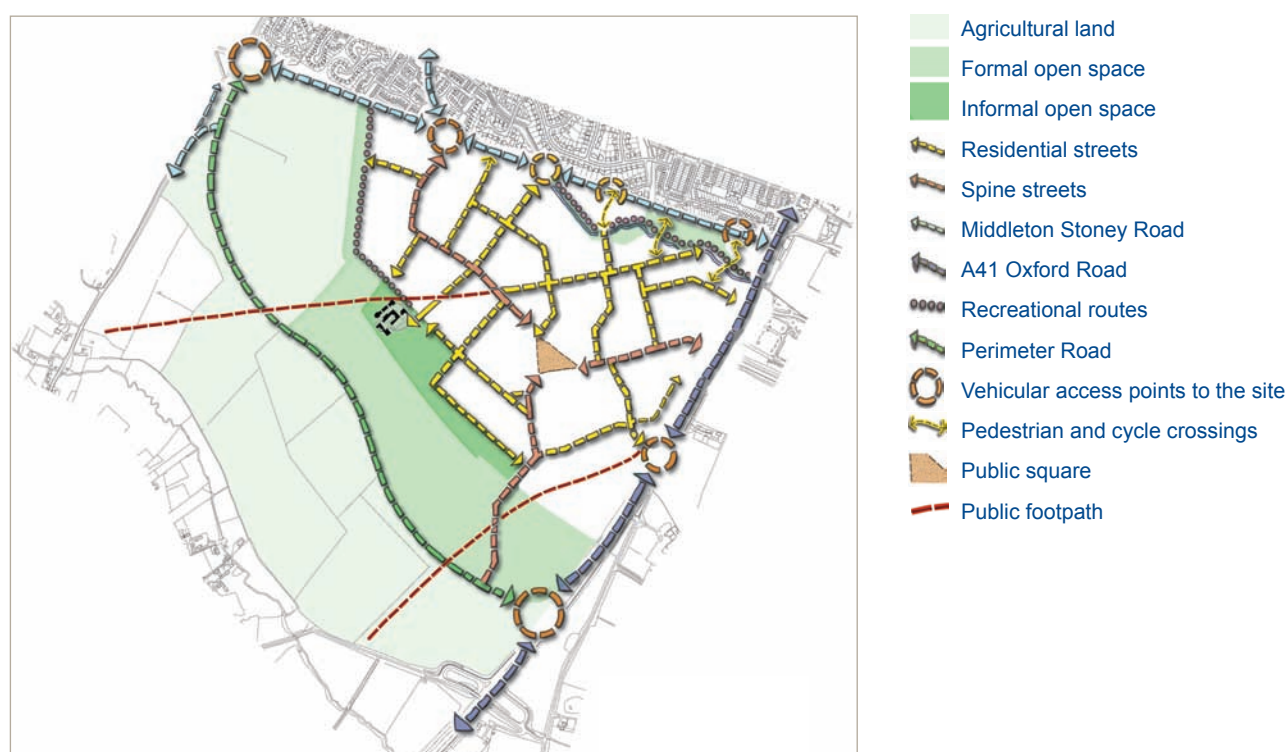


Figure 5.16 Access and movement strategy

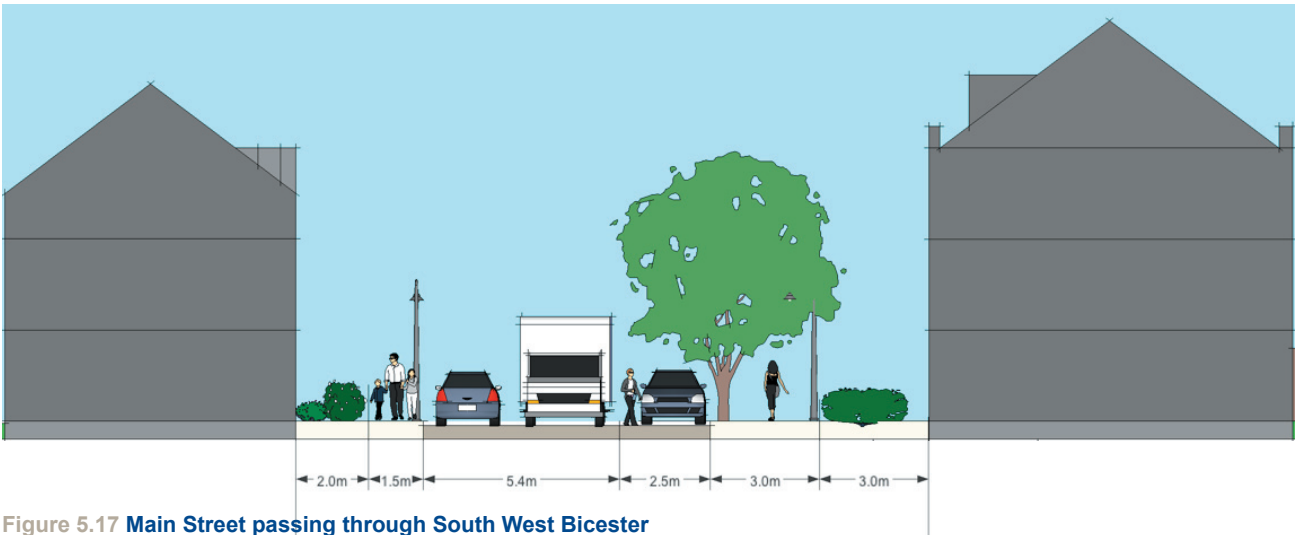


Public transport, footpaths and cycleways

- 5.6.7 The development will link into the existing networks and create new routes of its own. Positive links for buses, bicycles and pedestrians will be promoted throughout the development, concentrated along the main spines, offering access to the railway station, local and town centres and to the A41.
- 5.6.8 The development will retain the existing public footpaths that cross the site. This will be done in a positive way, with development designed to overlook the route as much as possible. The development will also open up new ‘green routes’ that link open spaces, watercourses and woodland areas. These will provide attractive leisure routes through the areas and will complement the street network.

Chesterton rat-running

- 5.6.9 The proposals take into account the residents of Chesterton. It is known that commuters drive through Chesterton as part of a rat-run and the application proposals seek to limit this in the future. The new roundabout at the junction of the A4095, Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane will not link directly to the A4095, but will send traffic down the new perimeter road. As the perimeter road will provide a quicker and more direct route to the A41, this will help reduce rat-running through the village.





Perimeter road

5.6.10 As part of the proposed development, a western perimeter road is proposed linking the A41 with the A4095. The perimeter road will be a 50mph single carriageway with no lighting except at junctions. The development of 1,585 dwellings does not, in itself, justify the provision of this road. However, the county council has insisted on its provision with this planning application.

5.6.11 The main purpose of the road is to remove through-traffic from the town centre and re-route it around the west of the town. It will also provide access to the strategic employment area east of the A41 and to the secondary school for traffic from outside Bicester. The alignment and design of the perimeter road has been carefully selected so that it:

- Avoids long straight sections of road that encourage overtaking
- Closely follows the topography of the site to help assimilate it with the landform
- Takes account of sensitive views in and around Chesterton and Whitelands Farm
- Aligns with existing hedgerows, copses and trees to fit within the landscape
- Minimises potential noise and light pollution.

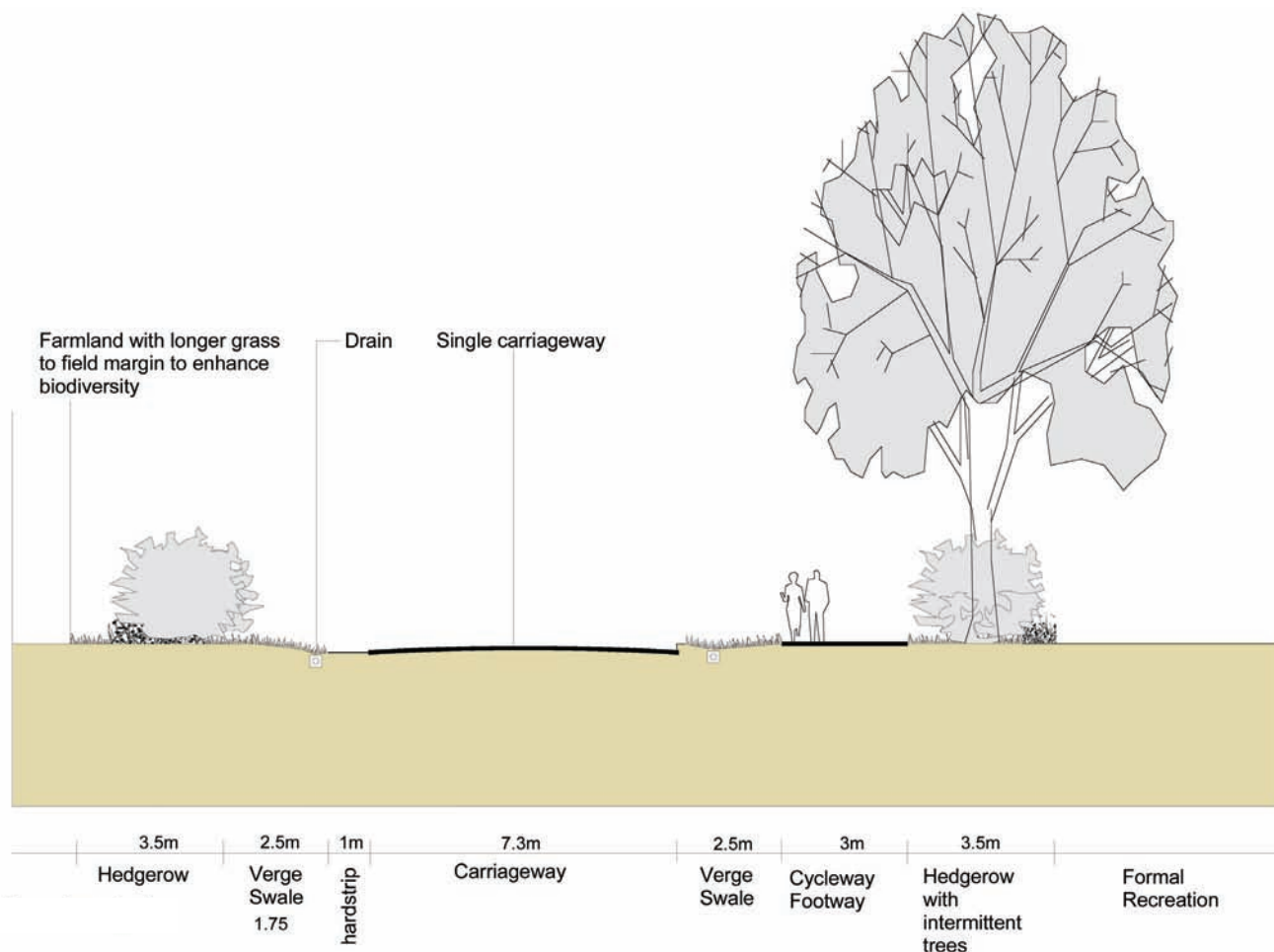


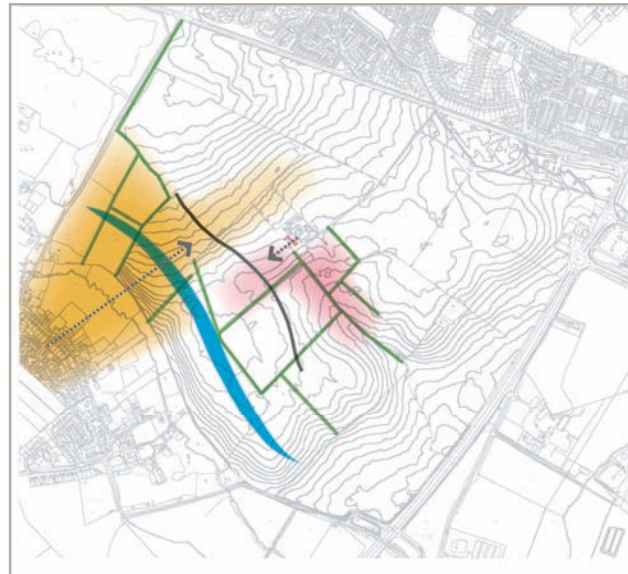
Figure 5.19 Typical cross section of the perimeter road





North west section

- push road away from areas which can be viewed from the properties along Middleton Stoney Road
- avoid crossing the open plateau
- align road to follow existing vegetation



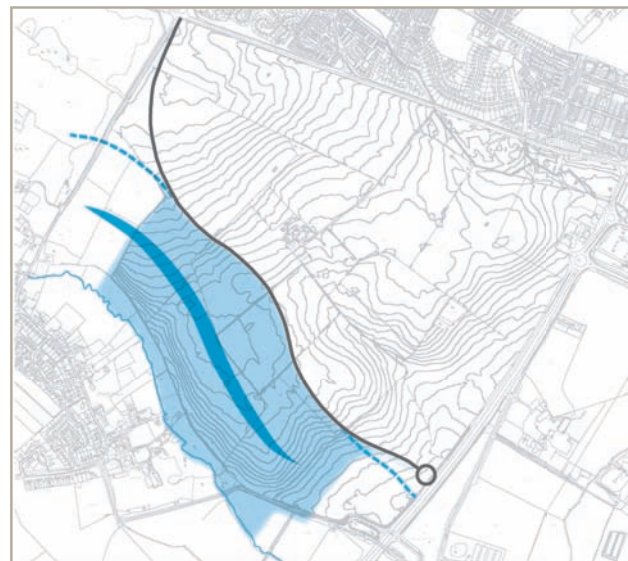
Central section

- push road away from Chesterton and over the ridge
- respects the setting of Whitelands Farm
- align the road to follow the topography
- align road in centre of main field to retain useable fields on either side



South eastern section

- push road away from central valley to avoid degrading the intimate landscape
- align road between the two ridges and next to the existing hedgerow to reduce its visibility from the north and south



Overall proposed alignment

- the alignment of the road closely follows the profile of Gaggle Brook and the general topography of the site

Figure 5.20 Rationale for perimeter road





5.6.12 The alignment of the road was established through detailed landscape analysis of the site and its context. A series of diagrams explain the landscape and visual factors that were considered and the rationale for its alignment.

5.6.13 Tree planting along the road is limited so as not to accentuate the road within the landscape. Instead, the existing hedgerow network has been enhanced with new copse and tree planting, which combine to provide a strong landscape structure either side of the perimeter road. For the most part, the road will be at grade or in cutting.

5.6.14 The network of streets, roads and footpaths has been designed so that the new quarter is a place that is easy to move around. The predominant movement patterns are from north-west to south-east (movement from the west of Bicester towards the A41 Oxford Road) and from south-west to north-east (movement from within the development towards the town centre). The street patterns allow for ease of movement in these directions and provide safe residential environments. The two public footpaths that currently cross the site have been incorporated without need for diversions.



5.7 Appearance

This section explains how the development may look and feel. The illustrations are indicative, their main purpose being to help explain the design principles set out earlier and to show how some of the key public spaces and building may appear.

Land reserved for a second primary school, should it be required. Both primary school sites are adjacent to the retained woodland copses. This co-location provides the schools with an immediate environmental learning resource, provides shelter and shade to the school environment and does not overly confine or restrict the woodland area.

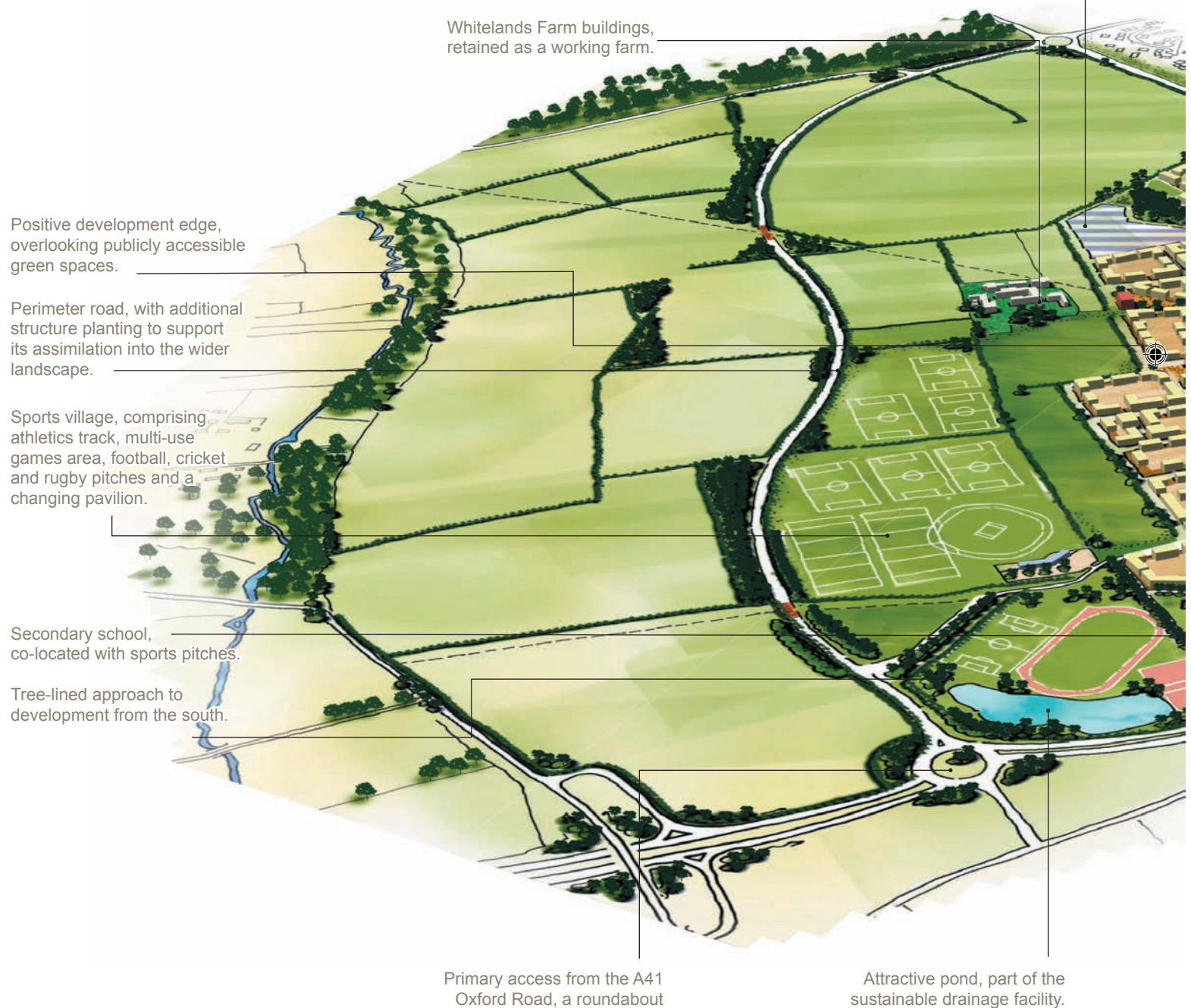
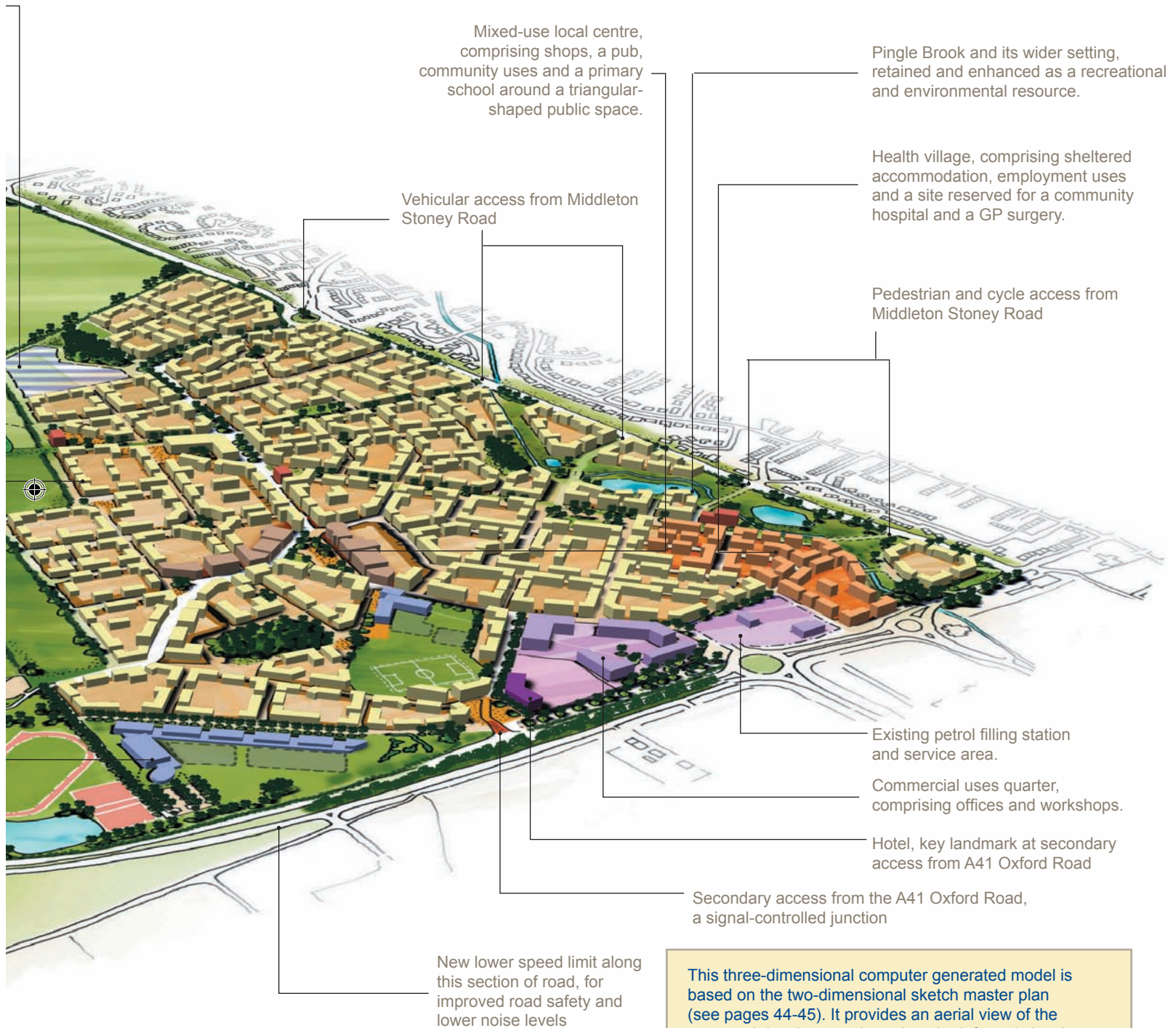


Figure 5.21 Three-dimensional model of the sketch master plan



This three-dimensional computer generated model is based on the two-dimensional sketch master plan (see pages 44-45). It provides an aerial view of the proposed development based on the informal sketch. While the model is only based on sketch details, the heights shown are a reasonable approximation and accord with the EIA work. Please note there is no roof plan on this image and all buildings are shown 'flat-topped' while the actual development will primarily consist of buildings with pitched roofs.



Character areas

- 5.7.1 The development area is of sufficient size to develop different character areas. These seven suggested areas can develop particular characteristics, in response to each specific part of the site, the land uses proposed and the adjacent land uses. For example, the 'Pingle valley' will have a serene character, drawing on its predominantly residential uses, the larger expanses of green space and the adjacent wetlands. The 'village heart' will be quite different, with a vibrant character, resulting from its more continuous building fronts and greater sense of enclosure together with a liveliness from the mix of uses and activities.





Local centre

Food store, with landmark feature on north-western corner and active ground floor uses (e.g. coffee shop, flower boutique etc.) An opportunity for a modern or contemporary design.

Shared car parking for the local centre, including service and delivery access to food store.

Community Hall, with attractive front door and entrance feature onto the square. A secure green space to the rear for outdoor functions.

Limited/controlled car parking (e.g. disabled drivers, short-stay) in the square, beneath tree canopy.

Civic square, primarily hard paved but with significant tree planting.

Offices, shops and residential uses with on-street short stay parking.

Secure parking for mixed-use development.

Garden space associated with a pub or restaurant function fronting the square.

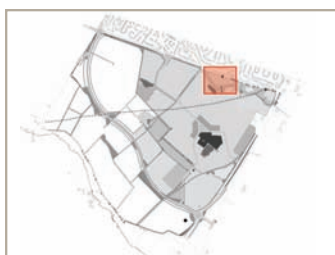
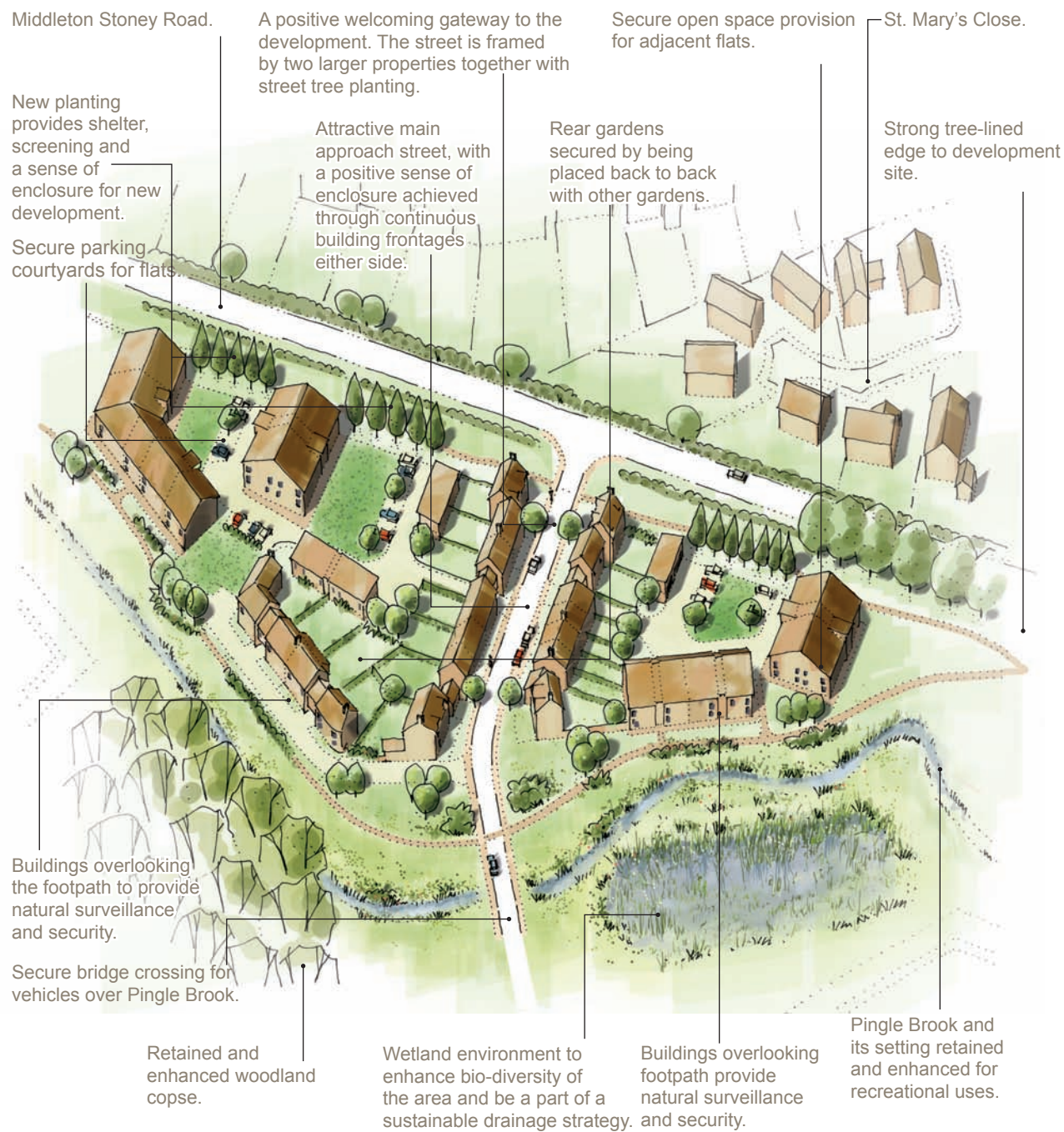
The main spine street leading to the local centre from the south.



Location plan

Figure 5.23 Sketch illustration of the mixed-use local centre





Location plan



A variety of house types



Design details

Figure 5.24 Sketch illustration of the Pingle Brook area





-  Primary School area (2.47Ha)
-  Barrow easement area (50m)
-  Primary School building
-  Vehicular access
-  Protected green open space
-  Protected trees
-  LEAP
-  Square

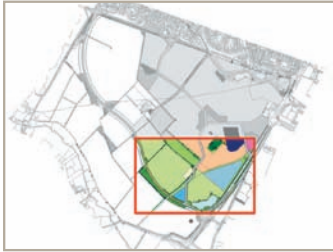


Location plan



Figure 5.25 Illustrative proving layout of primary school and surrounding area





Location plan



Figure 5.26 Illustrative proving layout of secondary school





5.8 Phasing of development

- 5.8.1 A phasing programme has been developed to set out the estimated build rates for residential development in paragraph 3.69 and accompanying table of the planning statement.
- 5.8.1 Construction will begin for the initial residential area of Middleton Stoney Road and off the new access off the A41 and will continue in phases as shown in figure 5.15 below.

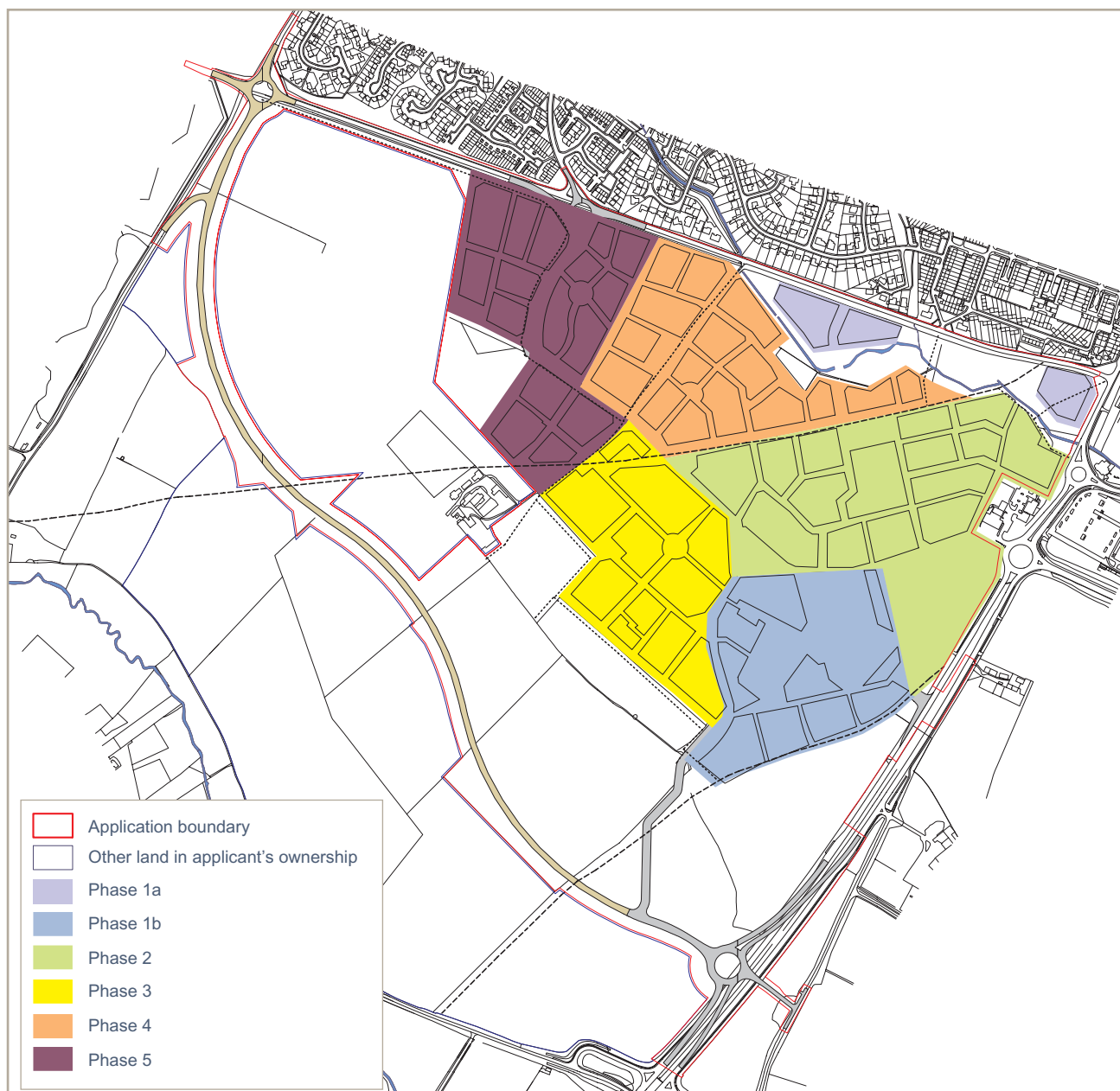


Figure 5.27 **Phasing plan**







6 Inclusive Design

- 6.1.1 A poorly-designed place can lead to the exclusion of particular communities. This proposal adopts and integrates the principles of inclusive design as set out in best practice guidance, Changes to the development control system: second consultation paper (ODPM, London June 2005). This has resulted in a master plan for the new quarter at south-west Bicester that:
- Can be used safely and easily by as many people as possible without undue effort, separation or special treatment
 - Offers the freedom to choose and the ability to participate equally in the development's mainstream activities
 - Values and embraces diversity and difference
 - Consists of high quality designs
 - Allocates appropriate space for people
 - Achieves a safe, comfortable and healthy environment
 - Ensures ease of use, comprehension and understanding
- 6.1.2. The master plan meets these seven standard objectives of inclusive design in various ways:



London Road in the town centre





- 6.1.3 The proposed main access points, the street pattern and footpath network provide good internal connections and give this new residential quarter a natural fit with the host town of Bicester. This allows both new and existing residents to move seamlessly between the new quarter and the rest of the town.
- 6.1.4 The new quarter plays host to a variety of uses and activities including commercial uses (office and workshop accommodation), community uses (such as schools, a community hall, sports pitches and a sports pavilion) and a significant health village, comprising health uses, GP surgery and accommodation for the elderly. This is located in the north-east corner, and is accessible to the wider Bicester community. This combination of complementary activities creates a genuine new neighbourhood quarter, that offers participation opportunities for the whole community.
- 6.1.5 The residential development within the new quarter offers variety and choice for different groups within the community. The creation of character areas in response to the context of the site and surroundings, provides a variety of neighbourhoods, each with a different quality and feel. This diversity will allow the new quarter to appeal to a wider cross-section of would-be residents, allowing a mixed and balanced community to develop.
- 6.1.6 High quality design will be inherent to the development process, from the original thinking behind the master plan, through to the implementation of the final designs as they are built on site. This design and access statement, together with the design and development framework endorsed by the council, offers early opportunities to embed high quality design into the local planning system.
- 6.1.7 The streets and spaces in the new quarter will give priority to people. There will be a diversity of green or 'soft' spaces, including large areas of formal open space, sports pitches, greenways and footpaths. There will also be a diversity of 'hard' spaces, including quarter and neighbourhood squares, courtyards and lanes. A proper mix of spaces will create a 'people place', not dominated by the demands of the car.
- 6.1.8 The combination of good connections, a mix of uses and activities, including sporting facilities and healthcare uses, a variety of character areas and a high quality environment, all with an emphasis on 'people priority', will promote a place that is healthy, safe and comfortable.
- 6.1.9 The judicious use of landmark buildings and designs assists in creating a place that is easy to remember and to move around. Overlaid on the street pattern, and placed at strategic junctions and at the end of key view corridors, these important buildings and spaces will make the new quarter memorable and distinctive.



