



South West Bicester

Planning statement

NOVEMBER 2006

Terence O'Rourke



Countryside
Properties
(Bicester) Ltd



South West Bicester

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

Reproduced from the 2005 Ordnance Survey
1:10 000, 1:50 000 Scale Raster data and
Landline data with the permission of the
Ordnance Survey on behalf of Her Majesty's
Stationary Office © Crown Copyright.
Terence O'Rourke Ltd. - Licence No. AL100017826.

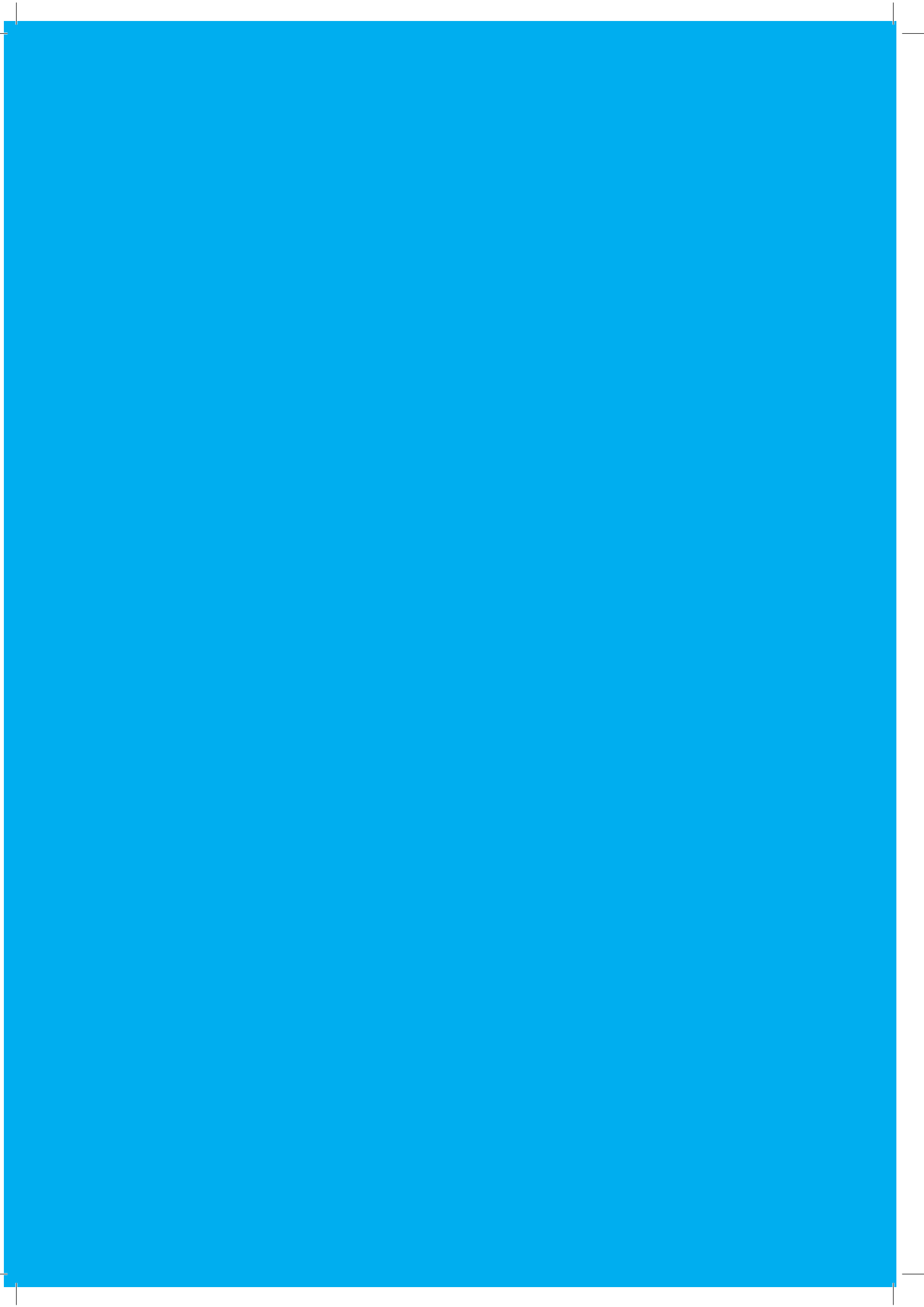
© Terence O'Rourke

Town planning • Urban design • Environmental consultancy
Landscape architecture • Architecture • Graphic design

Everdene House, Deansleigh Road, Bournemouth. BH7 7DU.
T: 01202 421142 F: 01202 430055
E: maildesk@torltd.co.uk W: www.torltd.co.uk

Terence O'Rourke





Contents

Executive summary	page S1	6 Community involvement	59
1 Introduction	1	Introduction	
2 The site and its surroundings	3	Community engagement sessions	
Introduction		Key outcomes	
The site		The Design and Development Framework document	
The site's immediate surroundings		Statement of Community Involvement	
3 The proposals	7	7 Transport	65
Introduction		Introduction	
The master plan		Committed transport schemes	
Schedule of development		Transport strategy/proposals	
Residential development		8 Services	71
Local centre		Introduction	
Health village		Foul water drainage	
Employment		Electricity	
Education		Gas	
Hotel		Potable water	
Open space and amenity provision		Telecommunications	
Children's play space		Buried pipelines	
Roads and access		List of figures	
Beyond the site		1.1 Location of the site	page 1
Archaeology and cultural heritage		2.1 Aerial photograph of the site and surroundings	3
Ecology and natural heritage		2.2 Site characteristics and context	4
Land outside the application boundary		3.1 The master plan	9
Phasing of housing development		3.2 Building density plan	12
Planning obligation contributions		3.3 Building heights plan	13
4 General development principles	27	3.4 Access strategy	19
Sustainable development		3.5 Rationale for the perimeter road alignment	21
Climate change		3.6 Phasing plan	25
Place making		5.1 Extract from unadopted Cherwell Local Plan proposals map	49
Enterprise and education		5.2 Comparison of the Countryside proposal and the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan proposal	51
Transport and movement		7.1 Access strategy	69
Environmental impact			
Design principles			
5 Planning policy	37		
Introduction			
National planning policy			
The development plan			
Other material considerations			
Comparison of planning application and unadopted policy H13			
Supplementary planning guidance and documents			



Executive summary

The proposals for development south west of Bicester have been developed through a series of studies and opportunities for community involvement leading to adoption of the Design and Development Framework for the site, and through discussions with officers from Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. The proposals aim to create a balanced and sustainable community that will have its own identity, while integrating into the existing settlement pattern of Bicester and forming a new quarter of the town.

The following is a brief description of the main components of the master plan for the proposed development.

The main components of the proposed development are:

- **Housing:** The master plan provides for the development of up to 1585 dwellings of various types and sizes at an average density of approximately 34 dwellings per hectare. Within this will be higher densities at more sustainable locations at the centre of the new quarter and lower in more sensitive areas towards the southern boundary. 30% will be affordable housing distributed through the development.
- **Local centre:** The local centre located at the intersection of the three primary roads through the development will provide a range of facilities to support the local neighbourhood, helping to reduce reliance on the private car by providing day-to-day facilities within easy walking distance of homes. The centre will combine facilities such as shops, a community centre, a public house/restaurant, children's day nursery and offices, parking and flats above the units.
- **Health village:** The proposals will provide land that will be made available for public and private health and employment uses. This land could be used for such uses as a GP surgery and medical centre, a community hospital, a diagnostic clinic, a nursing home and possibly complementary medical services.
- **Employment:** The master plan includes two hectares of employment to the west of the A41. This will provide a variety of employment opportunities for the residents of the new community and the town, and make it easier to live and work within this part of Bicester.
- **Education:** A primary school will be provided within the local centre. In addition, land will be reserved for a second primary school, at the western end of the site, and made available if Oxfordshire County Council justifies the requirement. Land will be reserved for a secondary school to the south west of the local centre, sufficient to provide for a 850 pupil school, with associated facilities. The secondary school will share the sports pitches and facilities on the formal open space.
- **Hotel:** Up to 1 hectare of land will be reserved within the residential area for an hotel. Its precise size and type is not yet known. Its location is shown on the master plan.
- **Open space:** The master plan shows more than 16 hectares of formal open space. Of this, six hectares to the south east of the local centre is required to provide for the needs of the residents of the new quarter. It includes areas for formal lit and artificial sports facilities, as well as grass pitches. A pavilion with changing rooms is proposed. The other ten hectares will make up the existing deficiency of pitches in Bicester and meet the needs for the planned growth of the town up to 2011. In addition to the formal open space, a large area of informal open space links throughout the site. This continues the series of linked linear spaces running through Bicester and integrates the built environment with the landscape.
- **Play areas:** Children's play space, including equipped play areas, will be provided within the development and/or on the informal open space.
- **Roads and access:** A new perimeter road will link the A41 with the A4095, at its junction with Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane. The main access points into the new quarter will be from this new road, from a new signalised junction off the A41, and a new access off Middleton Stoney Road. Links for buses, bicycles and pedestrians will be promoted throughout the development concentrated along the main spines of the development. The routes for cyclists and pedestrians have been carefully considered in relation to the distribution of uses proposed, and to likely desire lines.
- These proposals bring together a number of land uses that will help create a socially cohesive, inclusive, safe and healthy environment within which a new community can grow and flourish.



1 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning supporting statement accompanies an outline planning application submitted by Countryside Properties (Bicester) Limited (Countryside) for the mixed use development of land at Bicester. The location of the site is shown in Figure 1.
 - It describes the design principles that have informed the formulation of the master plan and layout
 - It provides an overview of the policy context and related documents that have provided the background and technical detail associated with the application
- 1.2 Other documents support the outline planning application, and should be referred to alongside this planning statement. These documents are the Environmental Statement (ES) and its technical appendices, a Transport Assessment (TA) (in accordance with Policy TR3 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan), a Sustainability Assessment and a Design and Access Statement (in accordance with Policy D2 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan).
 - It describes how the proposals meet Cherwell District Council's unadopted policy for this site, the approved Design and Development Framework, Government planning policy and the Sustainable Communities agenda
 - It provides details of community involvement in the development of this application
 - It details transportation and servicing requirements for the development.
- 1.3 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken by a team of consultants appointed by Countryside. The scope of the EIA was agreed with Cherwell District Council through the submission of a formal request for a scoping opinion.
- 1.4 This statement provides the following information about the application:
 - It describes the development proposals



Figure 1.1 Location of the site



2 The site and its surroundings

Introduction

- 2.1 This section describes the site and its immediate surroundings, identifying the key characteristics of the land.

The site

- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The application site covers approximately 117.6 hectares of land. It is primarily agricultural land (Grade 3), with a mix of arable land farmed under rotation and pasture land mostly grazed by cattle and sheep. This land is currently divided by native hedgerows with Whitelands Farm and cottages at the centre of the site. The site forms part of the landholding of Whitelands Farm.
- 2.4 The site also includes a few small areas of plantation woodland, including some mature native trees. Of the several copses, the most significant is Foxey Leys Copse.
- 2.5 Pingle Brook lies in the north-east corner of the site where several drainage ditches cross the site following field boundaries. Gagle Brook flows north west to south east on the southern boundary.
- 2.6 Two footpaths cross the site, the first linking the A4095 at Bignell House with the centre of Bicester, whilst the second crosses the south-eastern corner of the site.



Figure 2.1 Aerial photograph of the site

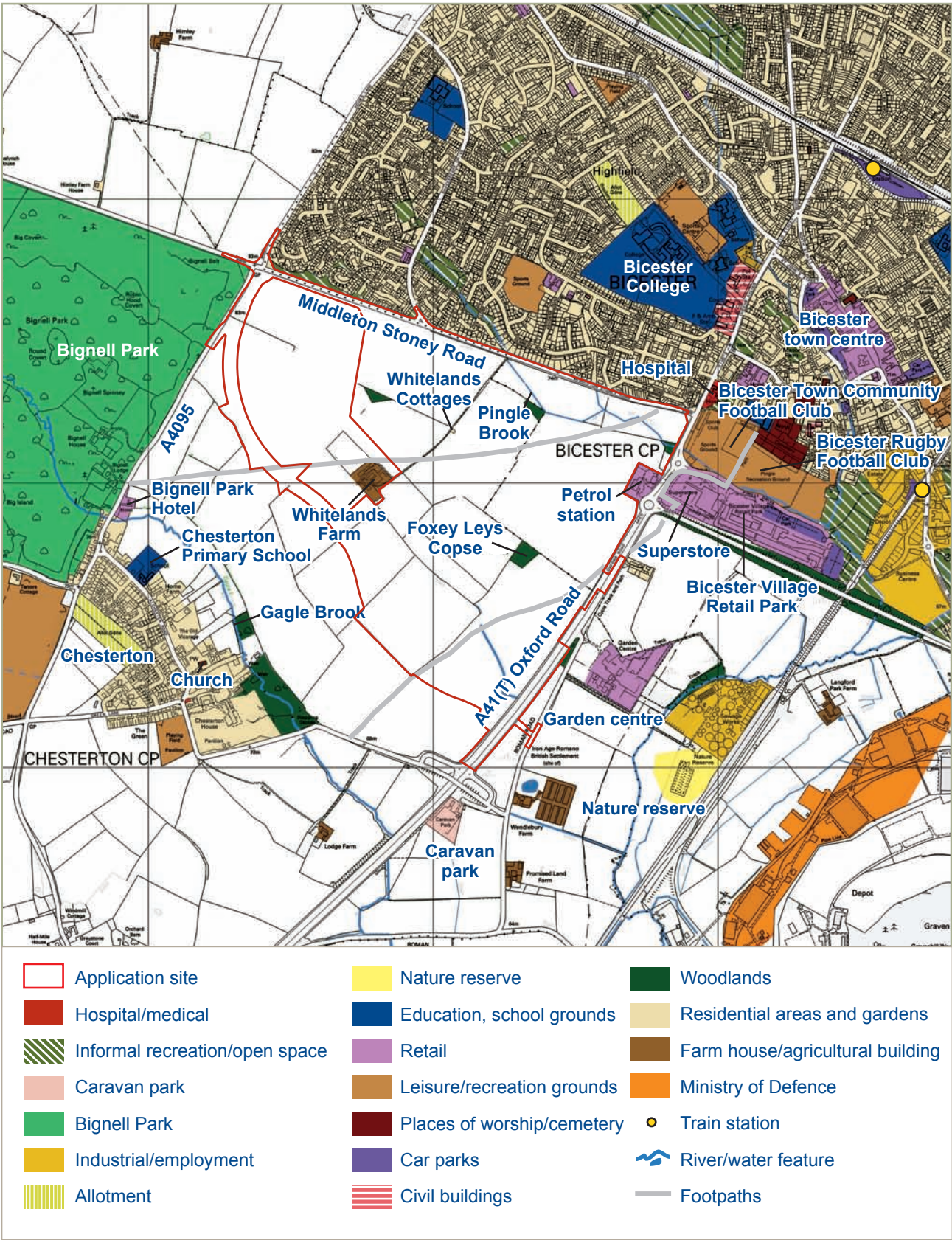


Figure 2.2 Site characteristics and context

The site's immediate surroundings

- 2.7 On the northern edge of the site, beyond Middleton Stoney Road, the land use is predominantly residential in nature with access off Shakespeare Drive. Many of the residential properties within this development back onto the B4030, therefore facing away from the site.
- 2.8 Bicester town centre is to the north east of the site, approximately 1km away, and provides a wide variety of facilities including, shops, offices, schools, businesses, restaurants, pubs, hotels, churches, leisure and culture. Immediately to the north east of the site off the A41 there is a petrol filling station and a roadside restaurant. Further to the east is a Tesco superstore and the Bicester Outlet Shopping Centre.
- 2.9 The eastern edge of the site is defined by the A41 Oxford Road. The section of this road running adjacent to the site is a dual-carriageway with a significant junction adjacent to the petrol filling station identified above.
- 2.10 To the west of the site is the A4095, a rural country road, with Bignell Park west of that. This privately-owned estate mainly comprises open woodland and parkland. There is limited public access to this land that provides the backdrop for the western edge of the site.
- 2.11 South of the site, beyond Gagle Brook, lies Chesterton village. The historic core of the village is designated as a conservation area, including the village church and public house. The spire of the Church is visible from Whitelands Farm and other places through the site. The northern edge of Chesterton, along Gagle Brook, is characterised by domestic gardens, trees and woodland belts, which block the majority of views into and from the village. Figure 2.2 shows an aerial photograph of the site and its surroundings.



3 The proposals

Introduction

- 3.1 As outlined in section 2, the site comprises land to the west of the A41, forming a large part of the site allocated at Policy H13 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan. The development of this site will provide a new, attractive, high quality and sustainable quarter of Bicester, with its own distinctive character and identity, based on a detailed assessment of the site and the surrounding area.
- 3.2 These proposals bring together a number of land uses that will help create a socially cohesive, inclusive, safe and healthy environment within which a new community can grow and flourish. The proposals will provide much needed mixed tenure housing to help deliver the Council's structure plan housing allocation. The new development will have its own identity, even though it will be well integrated with the existing settlement pattern of Bicester and forms a new quarter of the town. The development will also provide employment opportunities and services and facilities for the wider community at the new local centre. There will be an opportunity to provide development that is in keeping with the site's surroundings, incorporating both traditional and contemporary buildings.
- 3.3 The development will also provide a health and employment area, which will reserve a site for a community hospital. These uses together with the new local centre, schools, leisure and sports facilities will provide a variety of employment opportunities.
- 3.4 The development proposals seek to balance a variety of land uses, and reflect the latest government planning policy, the sustainable communities agenda, the policies in the unadopted Local Plan and the Design and Development Framework. The proposals combine different uses to reflect best practice in urban design and sustainable development. The development proposals are viable and can be delivered as soon as planning permission for the details (the reserved matters) is granted.
- 3.5 The master plan has been developed following detailed consideration of the constraints and opportunities on site, the relationship with Bicester to the north, Chesterton to the south, the land uses within the new development, the landscape of the site and the surrounding area and the ecology on site.
- 3.6 Whilst it is acknowledged that the council would prefer the whole of the area allocated under Policy H13 to be included within this planning application, this is not currently possible, as no agreement has been reached with the owners of the employment land to the east of A41. Notwithstanding this, the majority of the requirements specified under Policy H13 are to be provided on the land to the west of the A41, that is on land within the boundary of this planning application. These proposals have been developed, particularly in respect of transport, such that the employment land to the east of the A41 can be brought forward in due course.
- 3.7 The employment allocation to the east of the A41 represents a significant proportion of the employment provision in the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan for Bicester. The allocation of approximately 16.6 hectares of land for employment in such a location and configuration is considered to be a strategic allocation for the town, and not just a balance to the provision of housing to the west of the A41. In order to bring forward a progressive development that will create a sustainable new quarter and a balanced community for Bicester, Countryside has endeavoured to reflect government policy and the sustainable communities agenda. In this regard, Countryside has provided 2 hectares of employment to the west of the A41, where it can better relate to the new residential development, and can contribute to the variety of employment opportunities for the residents of the new quarter and existing local residents. This will help bring together economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life. It will not prejudice the employment allocation to the east of the A41 coming forward in the future, and fulfilling its more strategic need independently of the development of the new quarter.

3.8 Bicester has good accessibility to the motorway, but the employment image of the town is as a distribution centre. In order to achieve the type of strategic employment site that the council has in mind (a high quality business park/science park), the nature of the town will have to change in order to accommodate the market's requirements. The proposed improvements to the town centre regarding the retail and leisure offer will play an important role in upgrading the attractiveness of Bicester. In turn, the south west quarter will contribute to the quality of the town and will set the standard for its setting by providing a new southern gateway to Bicester. A range of good quality homes, together with mixed uses including new schools, will improve the perception of the town to new firms seeking to relocate or existing businesses seeking to grow. Countryside believes that its development proposals will contribute to creating the social and environmental conditions that will attract the quality companies and businesses to Bicester, as sought by the council. This will contribute to the long-term wider sustainability of southern Bicester by creating a place where people want to live, and which enables them to meet their aspirations and potential.

The master plan

3.9 The general location of development required by unadopted Policy H13 has been determined through a series of studies, including the Design and Development Framework, that have formed part of the EIA and other background work. Figure 3.1 shows the master plan, and provides a visual presentation of the proposed development. The remainder of this section provides further details on the elements to be provided by this proposal. The proposals are compared against unadopted Policy H13 in Section 5 (para 5.87 - 5.119)

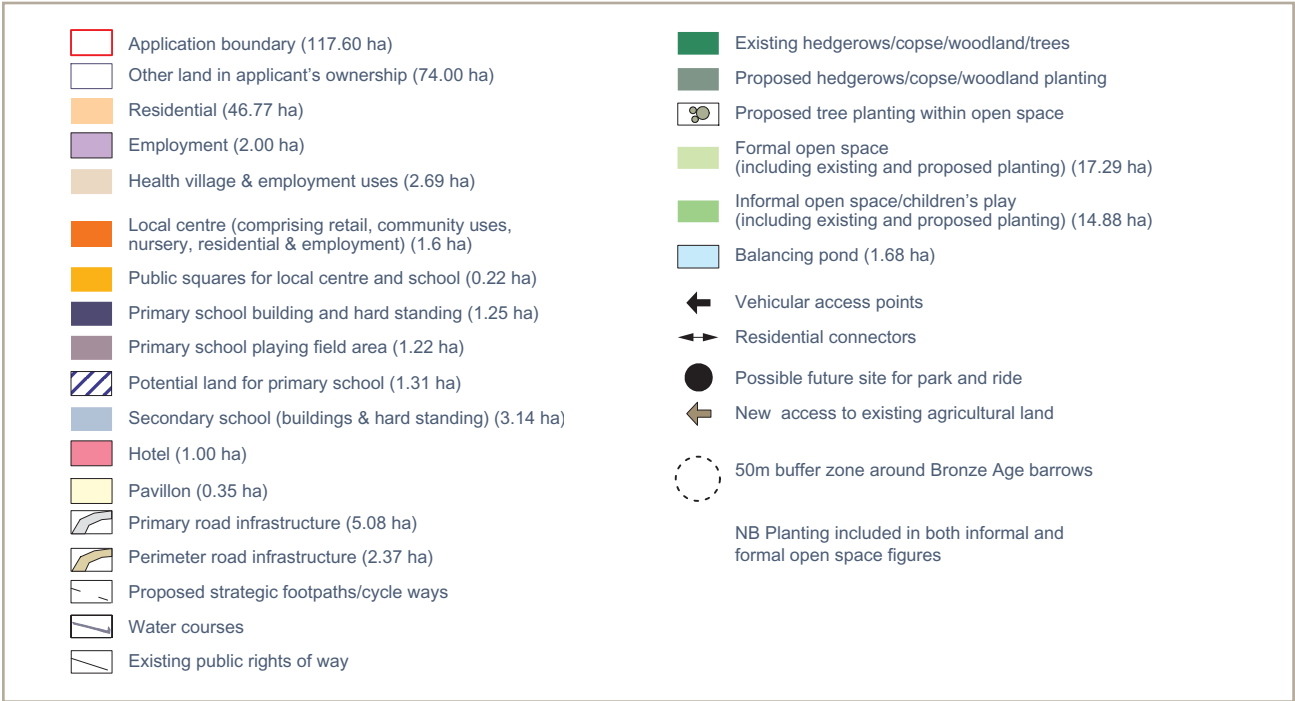


Figure 3.1 Master plan (key)

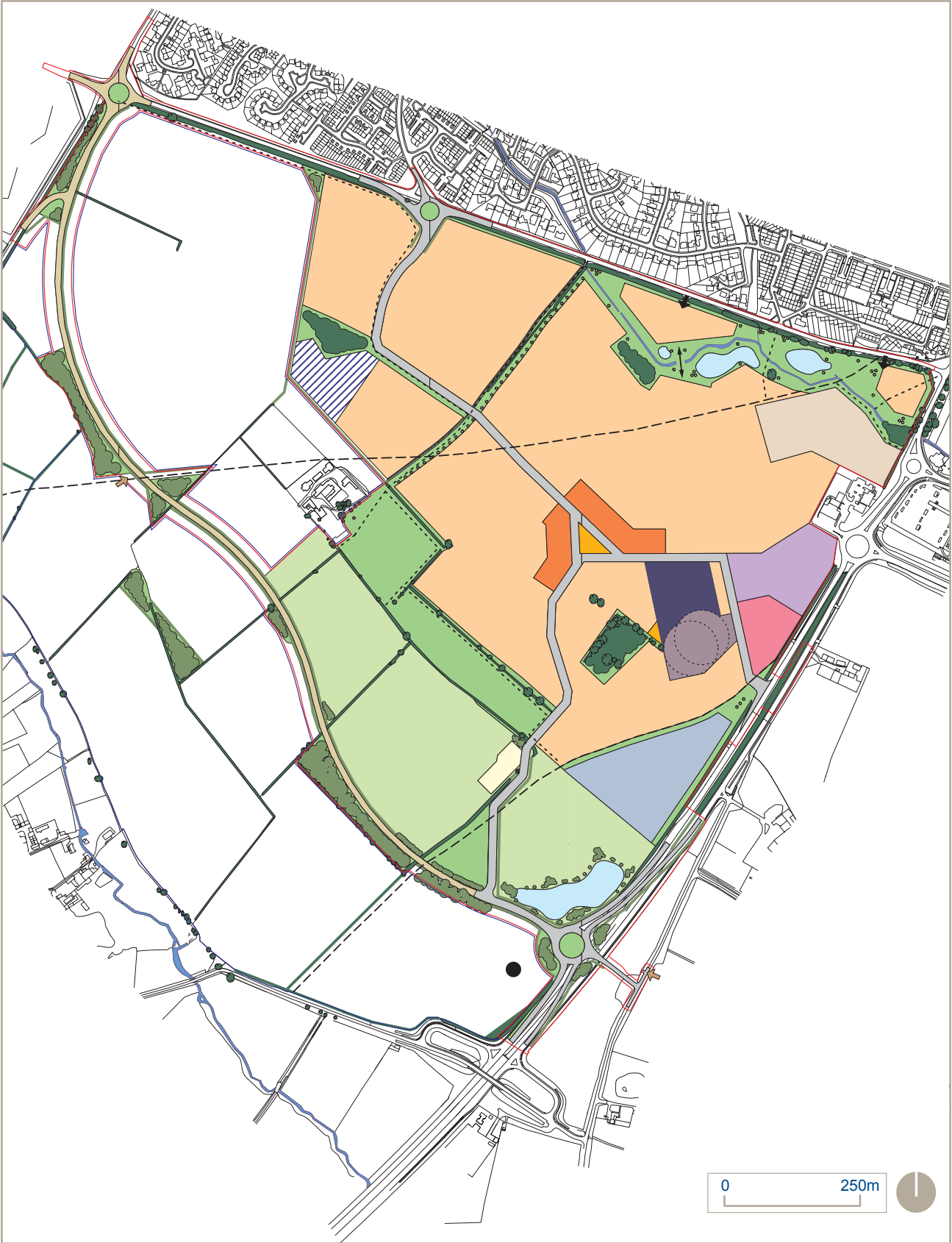


Figure 3.1 Master plan

Schedule of development

3.10 The proposals accord with the provisions of national planning policy, as set out in section 5 of this statement, as well as the policies in the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan.

3.11 The proposals comprise:

- up to 1,585 residential dwellings, at an average of approximately 34 dwellings per hectare ranging from 30-45 dwellings per hectare and 30% of which will be affordable
- up to 1.6 hectares of land reserved for shops, a pub/restaurant, children's day nursery and offices, parking and flats above shops in a local centre
- a community centre within the local centre
- a health village to include health and employment uses, including a site reserved for a community hospital and a GP surgery and a nursing home for the elderly.
- 2 hectares of employment land to be located along the A41 (containing B1 uses (offices, research and development, studios and high-tech facilities) and limited B2 uses (urban 'hive' units for general industrial uses)
- 6.5 hectares of land reserved for a secondary school, with joint use of the outdoor playing space
- a primary school on up to 2.47 hectares
- 1.31 hectares of land reserved for a second primary school, to be made available if required
- 1 hectare of land reserved for an hotel located north of the main access to the site from the A41 adjacent to the employment area.
- up to 17.29 hectares of formal outdoor sports provision and a sports pavilion (including existing and proposed planting) which allows for 16 hectares of useable space.
- up to 14.88 hectares of informal open space (including existing and proposed planting), land around Pingle Brook, a greenway through the site, existing woodlands and tree belts to provide a variety of less formal leisure and recreation opportunities throughout the site, create an appropriate setting for the retained Whitelands Farm and provide an opportunity to increase the biodiversity of the site
- children's play areas within or near the residential development (in the open space areas) in accordance with NPFA and Sports England standards. The location of the neighbourhood (NEAP) and local (LEAP) equipped areas of play are shown in figure 5.8 of the Design and Access Statement
- the retention and improvement of Pingle Brook as an ecological and recreational asset for all
- the creation of balancing ponds to contribute to the sustainable drainage of the site, its biodiversity and amenity
- the retention of existing footpaths
- additional footpaths and cycleways to provide good alternatives to using the car
- the retention of existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows wherever possible
- the strengthening of existing planting to minimise the visual impact of the development
- a perimeter road linking the A41 to the B4030 at its junction with the B4095 and the requisite junction improvements
- improvements to the approaches to Chesterton to reduce rat-running through the village.

- 3.12 Policy H13 (xvi) of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan specifies that a transport interchange facility should be provided adjacent to and with access from A41. However, discussions with the County Council have indicated that the facility it is seeking is a park and ride to serve Oxford. This has been identified as a strategic need for commuters coming through Bicester from the north and east to Oxford. However, Policy TR7 of the Cherwell Local Plan states,

“The Council will not permit further Oxford-based park and ride sites in Cherwell District.”

- 3.13 However a site of up to 2ha for a possible future park and ride is identified with Countryside’s land ownership but it is not part of this application, nor does the Transport Assessment include assessment of a park and ride facility. Oxford County Council has not provided any justification for this proposal but if it were to do so Countryside would be willing to provide the site within the terms of a legal agreement.

Residential development

Number, mix and density of development

- 3.14 The master plan provides for the development of up to 1585 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 will be achieved across the site (using the calculation set out in Annex C of PPG3). This is in accordance with unadopted Policy H3.
- 3.15 The density of development will, however, vary across the site 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 be 35-45 dwellings per hectare. Medium and lower densities of development will be provided in more sensitive areas, including towards the open edges of the site. Within these locations average densities of 30-40 dwellings per hectare will be achieved. This is in accordance with densities set out in PPG3 and Annex C of draft PPS3. This is illustrated in the density plan shown at Figure 3.2.



Housing by stream

- 3.16

Land in the north east corner of the site will comprise residential development. The area will be accessed from Middleton Stoney Road via its own restricted access. The site will have a maximum of no more than 20 units and will be no more than 2.5 storeys (9 metres) high, as shown on the heights plan at Figure 3.3. This land use and its restricted height will ensure less mass in this corner of the site, whilst also providing some development to anchor the site to the town at this important junction. A pedestrian and cycle access has been proposed through this part of the site to optimise permeability to the town and for visitors to Pingle Brook. The site will be designed in more detail within these parameters, at the reserved matters
- stage, to optimise views of Bicester church spire. The copse south of this site, adjacent to Pingle Brook is retained despite being of low quality.

3.17

In accordance with unadopted policy H4, a range of dwelling types and sizes will be provided across the site to ensure that a mixed community is developed. 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, in accordance with unadopted Policy H5.

3.18

Land to the west of the proposed residential development, north of the proposed perimeter road will remain in agricultural use at this time. However, Countryside is concerned with planning
- The figure is a detailed site plan for a residential development. It shows a large area outlined in red, representing the 'Application boundary'. Within this boundary, different colors represent varying building densities: dark orange for 40-45 units per hectare, medium orange for 35-40 units per hectare, and light orange for 30-35 units per hectare. The plan also shows 'Other land in applicant's ownership' in blue. Surrounding the site are existing roads, including Middleton Stoney Road, and natural features like Pingle Brook. A scale bar at the bottom right indicates a distance of 250 meters, and a north arrow is also present.
- Figure 3.2 Building density plan
- 12

sensitively for the longer-term. As such, land to the west of the current planning application and north of the proposed perimeter road is likely to be promoted for further residential development through the planning policy system (i.e. Cherwell's Local Development Framework). This will optimise the use of the proposed investment in social and physical infrastructure currently envisaged as part of this application, and add to the sustainability credentials of this new community. Land south of the proposed perimeter road will remain as open countryside, and possibly used as a country park in the longer term, providing the long-term limits of Bicester and a permanent buffer between the town and Chesterton.

Affordable housing

- 3.19 Affordable housing is a particular issue in Cherwell district, with it being recently reported that there are 4,000 families in need of housing on the Council's waiting list. Affordable housing will be provided as an integral part of the residential development. A range of housing types and sizes will be required to meet identified local needs and to comply with unadopted policies H4, H7 and H13.
- 3.20 Countryside has an agreement with Bromford and Paradigm Housing Associations to provide 30% affordable units, split equally between the associations on the basis that 70% will be social for rent, 20% for shared ownership, including key workers and 10% will be for intermediate rent (i.e.



Figure 3.3 Building heights plan

a rent between social and market rent values, primarily for key workers). This will provide 475 homes for local people. The size and location of the affordable units will be agreed in due course. These units will be coarsely pepper potted (e.g. scattered, rather than grouped) across the development, in accordance with guidance contained within the Design and Development Framework.

- 3.21 The Housing Associations have stated, *“The Registered Social Landlords, Bromford Housing Group and Paradigm Group, are pleased to be the affordable housing providers for the south west Bicester development. The partnership with Countryside Properties will create a sustainable place where people want to live and stay whilst being a part of the existing Bicester community. With the support of the Local Authority we have received an allocation of Social Housing Grant funding for the first phase of the affordable housing. This vote of confidence will hopefully lead to further investment of Government funding in the affordable homes for rent and shared ownership of circa 23 million pounds over the next 6 or 7 years.”*

Local centre

- 3.22 The mixed-use local centre is an integral part of the development proposals and complies with the requirements set out within Policies H13 and D5 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan. 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.

- 3.23 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 flats above the units.
- 3.24 Countryside will provide the community centre, in accordance with unadopted Policy R11. It will be multi-functional, acting as a youth centre and a main community facility. This building will be provided within the local centre, thereby providing an accessible facility within the heart of the new development, within easy access to its residents. Its exact size, specification and the timing of its provision will be considered as part of the negotiations on the legal agreement. Its location within the local centre will be determined at a more detailed stage of the planning process. Land will be reserved for the other elements of the local centre, which will then be marketed. The arrangements for this will also be the subject of negotiations on the legal agreement.



Local centre

- 3.25 The primary school site forms part of the local centre and accommodates the Bronze Age barrows found on site (see Archaeology chapter of ES for more detail), and addresses other issues raised by the County Council. The location will ensure that a variety of uses are clustered together to encourage a local centre that is busy, vibrant and economically viable. The site provides a regular shaped site for the school thereby allowing flexibility for the education authority in terms of the detailed layout. The design of this area creates a strong entrance space into the site from the A41, fronted by residential development and the hotel. The layout also creates a second public square between the primary school and Foxey Leys Copse. The copse will be overlooked by housing on all sides.
- 3.26 The community building is in the local centre. The adjacent public square will provide additional parking for parents, evening events at the school, and act as a drop-off area for the primary school. The LEAP has been located next to the square and a strategic footpath/cycleway that links the housing areas north and south. This is illustrated in more detail in the illustrative school proving layout in figure 5.13 of the Design and Access Statement.
- 3.27 The local centre will be located at the intersection of the three primary roads at the heart of this new quarter. It will therefore be highly accessible by

pedestrians and cyclists (within a 5-minute walk of the majority of the development) and should also benefit the potential of 'passing trade' from people travelling by car and bus. It will also be highly accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

- 3.28 The location of the local centre avoids significant overlap with the walking catchments of other local shops in the locality, including those at Shakespeare Drive, Kings Croft and in the town centre. These existing shops will benefit from a new neighbourhood nearby, if walking between them is convenient, safe and attractive. The design of the proposals encourages easy links to the surrounding areas to improve the accessibility and integration of the new quarter into the rest of the town. Existing shops, particularly those in the town centre, will also benefit from the increase in customers arising from the development of this site.

Health village

- 3.29 Countryside considers it important for the town and residents to have health provision as part of this new quarter. It anticipates that the health village will comprise of a number of different health uses, such as a GP surgery and medical centre, (to accord with unadopted Policy OA6), a community hospital, a diagnostic clinic, a nursing home and possibly complementary medical services. The exact make-up of the site will be considered in



Community centre

more detail at a later stage in the planning process, and through the legal agreement.

- 3.30 Countryside will reserve a site for the community hospital and GP surgery as part of this application, in order to try and enable a better solution for the Primary Care Trust (PCT) in the longer term. The time period for the land reservation will be subject to negotiations with the PCT and Cherwell District Council on the legal agreement. It is conceivable, within this time period, that other funding mechanisms may come forward to realise the town's ambition for a hospital. Countryside will pursue this with the PCT. If the hospital site is not taken up, the site will revert to employment uses. In the event that accident and emergency accommodation is required, a blue light emergency access to the site can be achieved directly off the A41 or King's End.

Employment

- 3.31 In order to create a balanced and sustainable community to reflect government policy, Countryside is proposing two hectares of employment as part of the overall planning application. Located on the west of the A41, this use can better relate to the new residential development, and help provide a variety of local employment opportunities for the residents of the new community, making it easier to live and work within the new quarter. This is in accordance with paragraph 6.9 of the approved Design and Development Framework document. This will not prejudice the employment allocation to the east of the A41 coming forward in the future, and fulfilling its more strategic need independently of the development at Whitelands Farm.

Education

Primary and secondary schools

- 3.32 A primary school of up to 2.47 hectares will be provided centrally on the site forming part of the local centre in accordance with the Design and Development Framework and unadopted Policies OA1 and OA2. This is larger than the required site of 2.22 hectares. The timing of the provision, and any financial contributions, will be the subject of negotiations of the legal agreement. In addition,

approximately 1.31ha of land will be reserved for a second primary school, at the western end of the site, and made available if Oxfordshire County Council justifies the requirement.

- 3.33 In accordance with policy H13 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan, land will be reserved for a secondary school. In response to comments from Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, the secondary school site has been located closer to the development so that it is assimilated more closely with the proposed development and the town and allows the formal open space to be located in one area. It will be highly accessible on foot and cycle by the site's residents, as the existing footpath runs along one of the main boundaries to the site. The site is also accessible by existing and proposed public transport from Bicester, and can easily be accessed from the perimeter road. The area for the built elements of the school and associated hardstanding will accommodate 850 pupils to reflect the County Council's latest requirements. The location of the school site also addresses the issues raised in the Council's landscape consultant's report regarding a previous location site. The land reservation time period and financial contributions will be discussed as part of the negotiations on the legal agreement.
- 3.34 The secondary school will primarily provide for children from other developments, such as Upper Heyford and future developments in Bicester, as well as the new south west Bicester quarter. The site location is sustainable for all pupils from the development town and elsewhere.
- 3.35 The location of the school has been chosen for a number of reasons:
- to be in accordance with paragraph 3.111 of the unadopted local plan
 - it will help soften the edge of the built-up area
 - to be located adjacent to the formal open space requirement for the site (and the significant additional amount of open space required to make up a shortfall in Bicester), in order that the council's requirement for a single site solution for sports pitches can be complied with, and its ambition for a "sports village" fulfilled

- most of the pupils of the new school will come from the town and Upper Heyford, not from within the site; it therefore needs to be easily accessible by coach, bus and car for students to attend from some distance away and from all approaches; so it needs to be near the perimeter road and A41
- it is on the bus route through the site and has footpaths and cycleways to it to encourage children to travel from the new development in other ways than by private car
- it requires a large site that does not sit well within urban areas
- a secondary school is not a good neighbour for people living immediately next to it; it has therefore been located a short distance away from the new residential development, separated by a landscape avenue that forms the setting to the farm, which will help provide a pleasant link from the development to the school

Hotel

- 3.36 Up to 1 hectare of land will be reserved for an hotel as required by Policy H13. The hotel is shown on the master plan located to the north of the main access off the A41. Its precise size and type is not yet known, and will be determined by the market through negotiations with Countryside and the Council. This will be a matter for the more detailed planning stage.

Open space and amenity provision

Formal open space

- 3.37 The master plan shows 17.29 hectares of formal open space – the equivalent to 11 full-sized football pitches. The 6 hectares that is required for the needs of the residents of this new quarter will be provided to the south east of the village centre and will include formal lit and artificial sports facilities, as well as grass pitches. It is considered that this is the best location for these particular uses as the lighting will sit alongside the A41 which is already lit, and will minimise impact on existing residents of Bicester and Chesterton, as well as residents of the proposal. Changing facilities for the site

could be provided as part of the secondary school. In response to comments from Cherwell District Council, the sports pavilion is west of the spine road, and is shown by area on the master plan (this area also covers land for associated hardstanding and car parking). The pavilion will be no more than 7 metres in height. The location of the pavilion is well placed to serve the sport pitches.

- 3.38 The additional 10 hectares of formal open space will make up the existing deficiency in Bicester and meet the needs for the planned growth of Bicester up to 2011. This land is to the west of the proposed secondary school. Cherwell District Council has confirmed that the sports pitches for the secondary school will form part of the overall quantum of pitch provision (letter dated 23 December 2005 refers).
- 3.39 The formal open space has been located to provide the best land use, urban design and landscape solution for the development in accordance with unadopted Policies R6 R12 EN6 and EN7. It will also provide Cherwell District Council with the “single site solution” as required by its letter dated 23 December 2005 and will enable the Council to fulfil its concept of a “sports village” for the town and surrounding villages, as set out in that letter. To date, Cherwell has not indicated what sort of pitches and facilities this formal open space will provide. It is understood, however, that this will be a matter of public consultation later in 2006.

Informal open space

- 3.40 In addition to the formal open space, the master plan shows a large area of informal open space continuously linked throughout the site. This open space (14.88 hectares) will contribute to the existing spaces in the town, which are made up of a series of linked linear spaces running through Bicester. The proposed layout of informal open spaces throughout the new quarter continues this ribbon of spaces 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. This is in accordance with unadopted Policy R3.

3.41 Pingle Brook will be retained as part of this open space strategy, and will be improved and enhanced to create an ecological and recreational asset for all, in accordance with unadopted Policies EN13, EN27 and EN36. The proposed realignment of the brook is shown in figure 5.13 of the Design and Access Statement. The existing access to Whitelands Farm will be enhanced and planted to create a greenway, linking Middleton Stoney Road to the southern edge of the site. All three of these landscape elements were considered to be very important by the participants of the community events, and were included in the final composite master plan of the events.

3.42 Hedgerows, trees and woodlands are to be retained wherever possible to accord with unadopted Policy EN35. Combined with the variety of open space areas, the introduction of ponds as part of the sustainable urban drainage for the site (in accordance with unadopted Policies EN14 and EN15), will significantly improve the biodiversity of the area from that of a commercial farm, in accordance with unadopted Policy EN22.

3.43 The existing planting on site 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

3.44 Children's play space will be provided within the development and/or on the informal open space as shown (in part) in figure 5.8 of the Design and Access Statement. This is in accordance with Policy R8 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan, the Council's Guidance Note on Recreation and Amenity Open Space Provision, 2004 and the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) standards. This provision will include equipped play areas, but the type and size are to be agreed as part of the negotiations on the legal agreement and through the detailed planning stages.

Roads and access

- 3.45 Additional infrastructure is required under unadopted Policy H13, the most significant of which will be a new road linking the A41 with the A4095, at its junction with Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane. The overall vehicular access strategy is shown on Figure 3.4, which shows both the proposed perimeter road and the main access roads into the site.

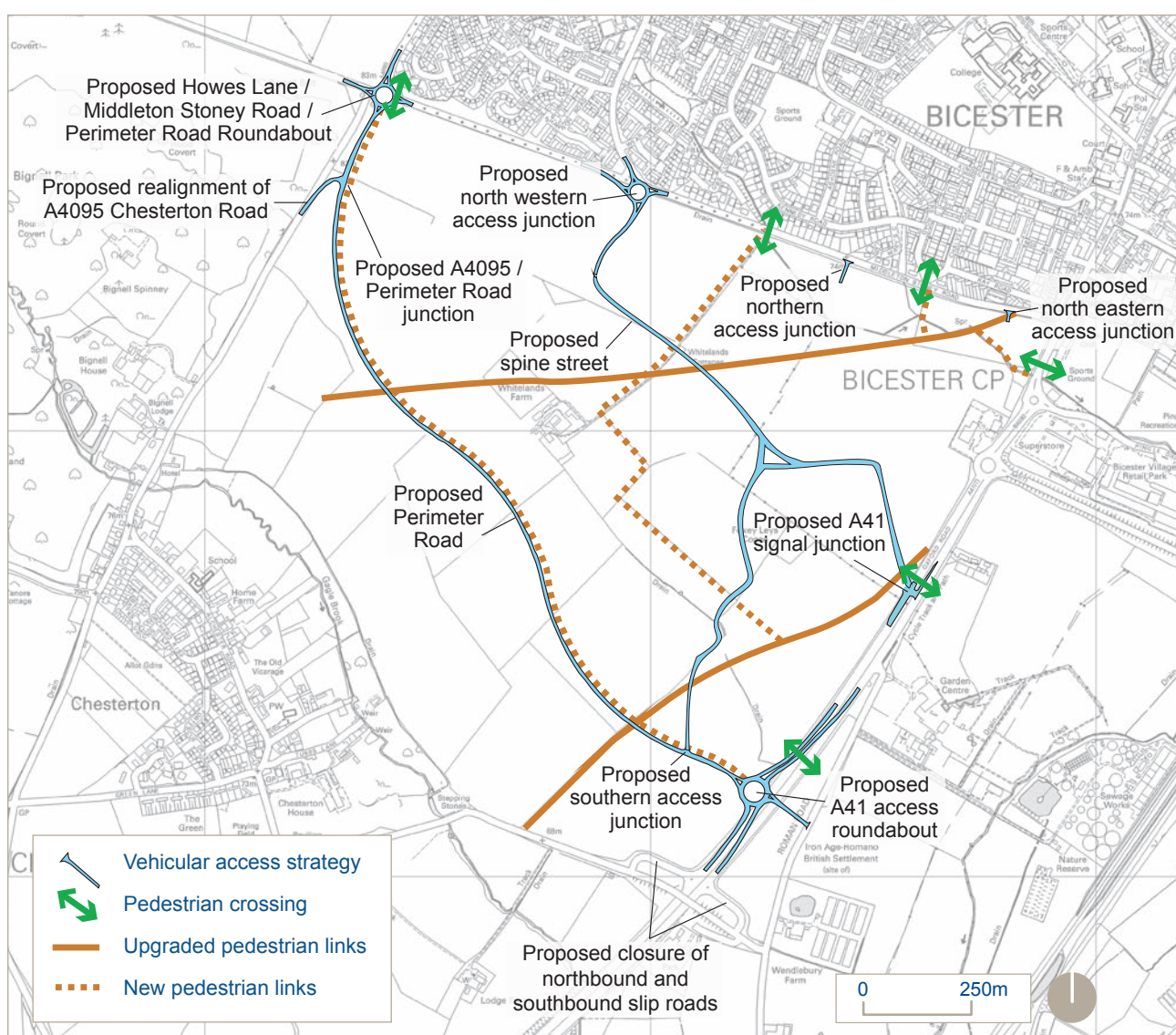


Figure 3.4 Access strategy

Perimeter road

- 3.46 In line with Policies H13, TR26(iii) and TR27(i) of the unadopted Local Plan, a perimeter road will be provided linking the A41 to the A4095, at its junction with Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane. The development of 1585 dwellings does not, in itself, justify the provision of the road. However, the County Council has insisted on its provision with this planning application. The main purpose of the road is to remove traffic from the town centre and to distribute traffic to and from the strategic employment area to the east of the A41 and the secondary school.
- 3.47 The road alignment is different from the Council's suggested alignment, as shown on the local plan proposals map, and on page 14 of the draft Design and Development Framework document, but fulfils the requirements set out in unadopted Policies TR5 and EN7 and paragraph 7.6 of the Framework document. 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, Whitelands Farm and the new development
 - aligns with existing hedgerows, copses and trees to fit within the landscape
 - minimises potential noise and visual impacts associated with the road.
- 3.48 The alignment of the road was established through detailed landscape analysis of the site and its context. Figure 3.3 overleaf summarises the landscape and visual factors that were considered, and the rationale for its alignment. The majority of the road will be planted with hedgerows, but tree planting along the road is limited so as not to accentuate the road in the landscape. Instead, the existing hedgerow network has been enhanced with new copse and tree planting, which when combined, provides a strong landscape structure either side of the perimeter road. For the most part the road will be at grade or in cutting.

Key roads and access

- 3.49 The main access points into the new quarter will be from the proposed perimeter road, a new signalised junction off the A41, and from a new access off Middleton Stoney Road.
- 3.50 A new secondary access off Middleton Stoney Road will serve the dwellings located north of Pingle Brook. Links between this and the rest of the site will be designed to be at the lower end of the road hierarchy with the emphasis on the use of other primary access points. A further access from Middleton Stoney Road will serve no more than 20 houses located in the north east corner of the site. The existing lane to Whitelands Farm will be closed to vehicular traffic (except farm traffic) from Middleton Stoney Road and the new spine road but will provide pedestrian and cycle access to the site.
- 3.51 The proposals seek to reduce the amount of through traffic using the 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 to discourage speeding traffic and seek to accommodate the car, rather than encourage its use. This is in accordance with unadopted Policy TR19.

Public transport, footpaths and cycle ways

- 3.52 Efficient public transport is essential to the creation of this sustainable new quarter if the use of the car is to be discouraged. The development will both 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 of the development, offering access to the railway station, local and town centres and to the A41 (providing links to existing bus routes) in accordance with unadopted Policy TR6.

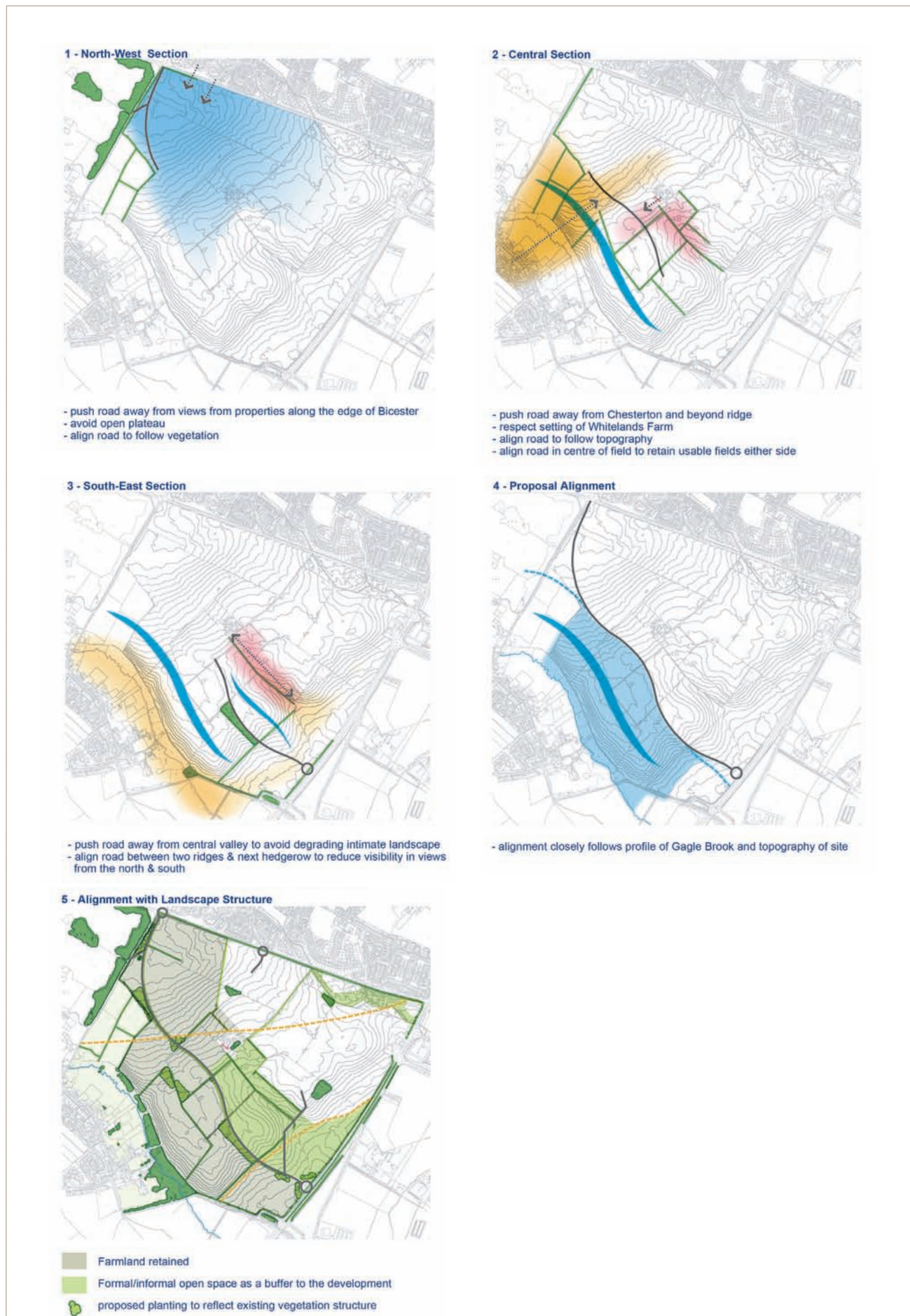


Figure 3.5 Rationale for perimeter road alignment

3.53 The proposed strategy for buses involves the diversion of the 22/23 services through the site, passing through the local centre to the A41 Oxford Road. Bus stops will be provided at appropriate points, including the local centre.

3.54 Easy cycle and pedestrian movement through the site is key to achieving a more sustainable form development. The routes for cyclist and pedestrians have been carefully considered in relation to the distribution of uses proposed, and to likely desire lines.

3.55 The development will retain the existing public footpaths that cross the site in accordance with unadopted Policy R4. This will be done in a positive way, with development designed to overlook the route as much as possible, thereby ensuring security by design. The development will also open up new 'green routes' that link open spaces, watercourses and woodland areas. This will provide attractive leisure routes through the areas and will complement the street network, but not replace it.

3.56 Secure cycle parking, in accordance with unadopted Policy TR9, will be incorporated in a convenient location within the development to encourage people to cycle rather than drive. Cycle lanes will be provided on busier streets along key desire lines. Segregated cycle routes will also be provided for leisure use.

3.57 Parking for vehicles will be provided in accordance with Policy TR11. In respect of the affordable housing, reduced parking may be provided, in light of studies that show that car ownership of occupiers is generally lower than that for privately-owned dwellings. Lower parking provision may also be appropriate in areas that lie close to public transport routes. A flexible approach is therefore likely to be appropriate when detailed proposals are brought forward.

Beyond the site

3.58 The transport proposals and access strategy have taken great care to limit the impact on local residents in Bicester and Chesterton. It is known that commuters drive through Chesterton as part of a rat-run, but the application proposals seek to limit future rat-running as follows:

- The new roundabout at the junction of the A4095, Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane will not have a direct link to the A4095, but will direct traffic down the new link road. As the link road will provide a quicker and more direct route, it is considered that this will help reduce rat-running through the village
- The slip roads on and off the A41 to the village will be removed. Access to Chesterton will be off the new roundabout westwards via the link road or eastwards via the Roman Road and the over-bridge. Again, as the new link road will be quicker and more direct, it is considered this will help reduce rat-running through the village
- Countryside is willing, through the provisions of the legal agreement, to monitor traffic in Chesterton for a negotiated period of time to evaluate whether the new measures have reduced rat-running. If there has not been a reduction, Countryside will contribute to additional measures, that will be agreed and discussed with the Parish Council and the highway authority, Oxfordshire County Council.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- 3.59 Extensive archaeological site investigation has taken place on this site with the full agreement of the County Archaeologist. Two Bronze Age barrows have been found on site, and it has been agreed with the County Archaeologist that these barrows should remain intact and undisturbed with a 50 metre no-build protection zone around them. These barrows have been incorporated within the playing fields area of the proposed primary school with the agreement of the County Archaeologist.
- 3.60 Chapter 5 and appendix 2 of the ES set out the full archaeological site investigation results and the agreed mitigation strategy.

Ecology and natural heritage

- 3.61 The site is not affected by any statutory nature conservation designations, although there are records of a small number of protected species, including common pipistrelle bats and badgers using the site. Fields surveys of the site suggest that the majority of the site is of limited interest.
- 3.62 There is evidence to suggest that parts of the site, including the farm land and some of the mature trees, may be used by bats. Great crested newts are known to inhabit breeding ponds around Bicester. There are no breeding ponds on site and no great crested newts have been found on the site. There is some evidence of badger activity on the site although no setts have been found within the site. There is no evidence of current water vole activity along Pingle Brook.
- 3.63 Proposed mitigation measures for natural heritage meet the legal requirements for protected species and seek to support the relevant policies within the Cherwell Local Plan and objectives of the Oxfordshire BAP and Cherwell BAP. The main areas for mitigation or ecology enhancement are proposed within informal open space areas. These are situated in the north-east of the site along Pingle Brook, south-east of Whitelands Farm and on the eastern boundary around the larger balancing pond.

- 3.64 The following specific mitigation measures are proposed:
- water vole habitat created along Pingle Brook and balancing ponds
 - common reptiles to be translocated if necessary and habitat improvement in informal open space
 - small blue butterfly habitat created on translocated calcareous grassland
 - a net increase in foraging habitat and potential roosts for bats
 - an increase in foraging and nesting habitat for farmland birds (song thrush, bullfinch, reed bunting).
 - net increase in the amount of hedgerow within the site
- 3.65 There will be a small number of adverse effects all of moderate or slight significance. These include some loss of established species-rich hedges, the loss of some foraging habitat for badgers and a slightly increased risk of road casualties together with the loss of foraging and nesting habitat of farmland birds (yellowhammer and skylark).

Land outside the application boundary

- 3.66 Approximately 74 hectares of land remaining within the ownership of Countryside is outside the application boundary. This land is notated by a blue line on the master plan, and includes Whitelands Farm. This land will remain in agricultural use, in accordance with paragraph 6.10 of the approved Design and Development Framework document. An agricultural viability report has been submitted in support of these proposals to show a farm of this size, which is larger than the average UK farm, is viable.
- 3.67 Access to Whitelands Farm house and building complex will continue along the existing access from Middleton Stoney Road, until the spine road through the development is constructed. At that point, access to the building complex will be via the spine road from Middleton Stoney Road and then down the existing access. The detail of how this will be accommodated will be considered as a reserved matter as part of the design of the greenway.
- 3.68 Access to the remaining agricultural land to the north of the proposed perimeter road will be directly from Whitelands Farm, as it is at present. Access to agricultural land south of the proposed perimeter road will be from the existing farm access on Chesterton Road and a new proposed access off the perimeter road indicated on the master plan near the northern public right of way, entitled on the key as 'new access to existing agricultural land'. The detail of this is reserved for future consideration.
- 3.69 The land to the south of the proposed perimeter road forms part of an important area of open land. This land, along with the proposed open space to the north of the perimeter road, will provide a significant buffer between Chesterton and the new development. With the exception of the perimeter road, the main built development will be further away, at least 0.8km or half a mile, from Chesterton than proposed by Cherwell District Council in its unadopted local plan. A comparison between the two plans is set out in Section 5.

- 3.70 The open land to the south of the proposed road will help preserve the setting of Chesterton village and its conservation area, and limit views of the proposed development. This is in accordance with unadopted policies EN32, EN34 and D3.
- 3.71 If the park and ride can be justified by Oxfordshire County Council, a small area of land adjacent to the A41 will be provided for this use, under the terms of a legal agreement which is yet to be negotiated. It will be for Oxfordshire County Council to design an appropriate proposal for this use, and for Cherwell District Council to assess its environmental impacts through a planning application.

Phasing of housing development

- 3.72 A phasing programme has been developed to set out the estimated build rates for the residential development. It has been assumed that construction will commence in 2007 and extend until 2014 as set out below.
- 3.73 Construction will begin for the initial residential area off Middleton Stoney Road and off the new access off the A41 and will continue in phases as shown in the phasing plan at Figure 3.6.

Year	Number of units delivered by March of that year
2006	Outline consent granted
2007	Pre-commencement conditions discharged and submission of first phase reserved matters. Infrastructure and house building commenced
2008	100 units
2009	275 units
2010	525 units
2011	775 units
2012	1025 units
2013	1300 units
2014	1585 units

Planning obligation contributions

- 3.74 Discussions have begun between Countryside and Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to determine the contributions that will be required as a result of the south west Bicester development.
- 3.75 Policy H13 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan outlines a number of required contributions for the whole of the urban extension, including over 16 hectares of employment land to the east of the A41.

- 3.76 Countryside is willing to enter into relevant legal agreements to provide contributions for its part of the urban extension, provided that they satisfy the tests set out in Circular 05/2005, which are as follows:
- (i) relevant to planning
 - (ii) necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms
 - (iii) directly related to the proposed development
 - (iv) fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development
 - (v) reasonable in all other respects.

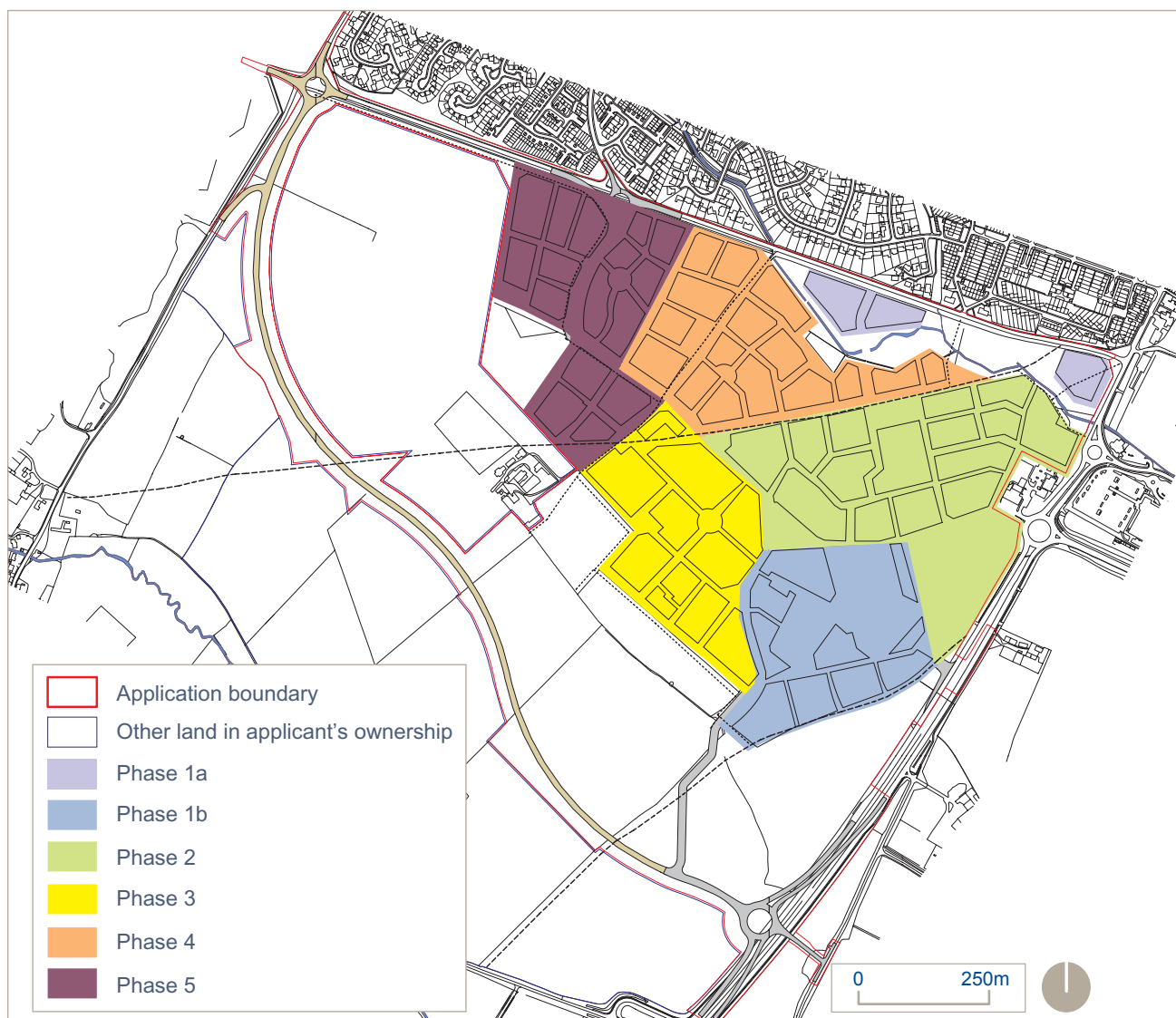


Figure 3.6 Phasing plan



4 General development principles

Sustainable development

4.1 Sustainable development is a key principle underpinning these proposals. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

4.2 The government originally set out its four aims for sustainable development in its 1999 strategy. These are:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- effective protection of the environment
- the prudent use of natural resources
- the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

4.3 For this development these aims are pursued in an integrated way to create an innovative and sustainable community that promotes social inclusion, a just society and personal well being, in ways that protect and enhance the physical environment and optimise resource and energy use.

Inclusive community

4.4 The government is committed to developing inclusive communities that are strong, vibrant and generate community cohesion. PPS1 identifies a number of aspects that contribute to the creation of an inclusive community. New development must ensure that the impact on the social fabric of existing communities is fully considered and taken into account. Countryside has carefully considered the impact of the development on residents on Middleton Stoney Road, the rest of Bicester and in Chesterton. The proposals will:

- provide a perimeter road that will complete the ring road around Bicester, helping to ease traffic congestion by the Retail Outlet Village and Tesco, and in the town centre

- reduce the traffic flow along Middleton Stoney Road
- have a minimal impact on residents of Chesterton, as the development is some distance north of the village. The road and development have been carefully located within the landscape and in relation to sensitive views from the village. Additional landscaping is proposed beyond the area of the planning application whilst within the proposed development, landscaping and building heights will be controlled to respond to the rural edge
- preserve Chesterton's conservation area with the safeguarding of agricultural land to the north, the location of the perimeter road within the landscape and the provision of open space further north
- reduce rat-running through Chesterton, as the roads have been deliberately designed to make it more difficult for commuters to travel through the village

4.5 Communities need to be safe, healthy, attractive and have a good sense of place. Countryside has designed this proposal to address and encompass these attributes, although much of it will come through in the detail of reserved matters.

Public involvement

4.6 Enabling communities to engage in decisions that affect them promotes stewardship, a sense of ownership and develops community cohesion.

- a series of community involvement events took place in the summer 2005, culminating in the production of the Design and Development Framework document. See Section 6 of this statement for more information
- further consultation will also take place within the planning application consultation period through public exhibitions, leaflets and contact with stakeholder groups.

Meeting housing need

- 4.7 The residential development of 1,585 homes will provide:
- much needed market and affordable homes in Bicester; to help Cherwell District Council fulfil its structure plan housing allocation requirements
 - a mix of homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes - from flats and small homes for first time buyers, family homes of various sizes, through to homes suitable for older or disabled people
 - 30% affordable units providing some homes for rent and some for shared ownership
 - A community that has a good social mix and will avoid the creation of housing areas of similar characteristics.
- 4.8 Such communities enhance sustainability by adding variety, diversity and richness, and strengthen sense of place, identity and community cohesion. The development will, importantly, comprise a mixture of affordable and open market dwellings at a variety of densities. As such, the development provides a significant opportunity for Cherwell District Council to meet its housing need, and provide affordable housing that gives all social groups an opportunity to live in a decent home.

Identity and character

- 4.9 The site provides an opportunity to create a development with a unique identity and sense of place that respects the past, whilst creating a high quality scheme for future generations. This relation of the development with the past was an important aspect that resulted from the public consultation undertaken in summer 2005 for the Design and Development Framework. Consultees felt it was important to retain the farm buildings, provide a landscaped avenue to the east and move the perimeter road away from the buildings to provide a proper setting from the south. The proposals reflect these concerns and will:
- maintain links with the rural past by respecting and enhancing the existing farmhouse and farm complex, at Whitelands Farm
 - provide a landscaped avenue approach to the east of the buildings

- provide a landscape setting to the south by locating the perimeter road further south
- limit the impact of the perimeter road on the farm buildings by locating it within the landscape, and reducing the speed of the road.

- 4.10 In order to create a coherent and sensitive development, the colour and type of materials utilised in the buildings and street surfaces will be controlled appropriately. This will be stipulated later on in the planning process when the details are considered.

Accessibility

- 4.11 Enabling safe access for all people to facilities and services is a vital part of achieving a sustainable and inclusive community. Generating access for the mobility-impaired is integral to the accessibility strategy for the site. It is proposed that:
- there will be a well-connected layout that will encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport
 - all houses will be within 400m (five minutes' walk) of a bus route. This philosophy will be continued into the detailed proposals later on in the process.

Supporting an ageing population

- 4.12 Demographic changes indicate that developments need to take account of an ageing population. People are living longer and are remaining healthier, but this will present a growing demand for additional health and social support in the future. As many pensioners live alone and remain single, the scheme will:
- provide a number of suitably-sized units that will be adaptable, on request, to cater for the needs of the elderly and the mobility-impaired
 - provide a nursing home in the north-east corner of the site.

Climate change

- 4.13 Climate change is high on the political agenda. Drafted in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 and international law since 2002, the Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement which legally binds all countries that sign up to it to reduce man-made emissions. As part of the agreement, the UK is committed to reduce emissions of six greenhouse gases by 12.5% by 2012. The government's response to Kyoto and climate change is underpinned by the Energy White Paper, which contains the ambitious goal of reducing the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050. It aims to promote energy efficiency and a growth in the use of renewable energy.
- 4.14 The housing development sector is a significant contributor of carbon emissions, and the government welcomes action by businesses to implement cost effective measures that will cut greenhouse gas emissions as part of a lower carbon economy. Countryside has a good environmental record and will aim to reduce carbon emissions whilst ensuring that a healthy and competitive business base can be maintained.

Energy efficiency

- 4.15 Sustainable building is an important part of creating a sustainable development. Careful design and materials selection can improve the sustainability of the built development. Sustainable buildings are attractive, usable and durable and have a low environmental impact.
- 4.16 Where possible, buildings will be orientated to maximise passive solar gain and natural ventilation. Individual dwellings will achieve a significant improvement on the England and Wales 2002 Building Regulations regarding energy efficiency, in

accordance with Building Research Establishment (BRE) good practice. This philosophy will be continued into the detail, at the reserved matters stage.

Adaptability and durability

- 4.17 Creating buildings that can meet different needs over time and that minimise the use of resources improves sustainability by enhancing the longevity of the scheme. The proposed development will provide some housing which can meet the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities, for example by ensuring that walls and ceilings allow for supports/lifts to be added into designated properties on request. Residential units will be adaptable to accommodate retrofitting of technology. Dwellings will be easily capable of routine inspection, repair, maintenance and renewal. These aspects will be continued at the reserved matters stage.

Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS)

- 4.18 The government encourages the use of SUDS within new development and drainage strategies that take into account flood risk as a result of climate change. A SUDS approach has the benefit of recharging groundwater on site, rather than draining water away in pipes and potentially creating a flood risk elsewhere.
- 4.19 Sustainable urban drainage systems will be applied over the development area where it is practicable to do so. Attenuation will be provided through ponds located next to Pingle Brook and to the south of the site. The rate of discharge will be agreed with the Environment Agency to ensure no increase in run-off from current levels. Greater ecological interest and biodiversity will result from this approach.



Balancing pond

Place making

- 4.20 The concept of the master plan, shown in Figure 3.1, is to create a high quality sustainable environment set within, and relating to, its rural landscape, which will provide a balance of homes, jobs, community and leisure facilities, and be well linked to Bicester. This will be achieved through:
- locating the various uses sensitively in relation to the surrounding environment
 - the careful location and juxtaposition of different uses
 - the siting, scale and massing of buildings
 - optimising connections to the town
 - the protection of watercourses, woodlands, hedgerows and trees
 - the creation of new green spaces to encourage biodiversity.
- 4.21 The general layout ensures that the urban form is compact, of a density that makes the most efficient use of the site and will optimise quality of life for local people. A well connected layout is proposed that will encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Making the best use of land

- 4.22 PPG3 seeks the prudent use of resources by ensuring that housing sites are developed efficiently, in a way that respects future generations. Not all development can be built on previously developed land, but urban extensions that relate well to the town provide the next best option.

- 4.23 The concept of the master plan, shown in Figure 3.1, is to make the best use of the land, whilst protecting the sensitive landscape and ecological elements of the site, and making good connections to Bicester. The proposal will deliver a development of sufficient size, scale and density with the right layout to support the amenities required within the neighbourhood and minimises the use of resources, including land.
- 4.24 Densities will vary across the site, with higher densities around the local centre and the main bus route, and lower densities on those parts of the site adjoining the countryside. The densities will comply with existing and emerging government guidance. This will help provide a critical mass of people to support local facilities, and will enable the best use of previously developed land, whilst ensuring that the environmental capacity of the site is not breached.

Sustainable urban form

- 4.25 PPS1 considers that good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places that contribute positively to making places better for people. The proposed development will be designed appropriate to its context, creating a local character of its own, whilst relating to its surroundings.
- 4.26 The development will be designed to provide different character areas. Each will create different urban experiences for those who live, work and visit the development. This will be a matter for the more detailed reserved matters planning process.
- 4.27 A key focal point will be provided in the centre of the site. The local centre will be a busy and vibrant and will act as the hub of the development and will provide services and facilities for the new and existing community.

Range of amenities

- 4.28 The local centre will occupy approximately 1.6 hectares. This area will include shops and local business opportunities, for such uses as newsagents, food takeaways, florists, dentist, chiropractor and hairdressers. The form and number of these units will be determined by the market and will be subject to reserved matters. The emphasis will be on high quality and providing for the needs of residents.
- 4.29 Provision has also been made for a community centre, a pub/restaurant and a children's day nursery. Living over the shop/office will be encouraged to promote natural surveillance and to give the area some vibrancy outside shopping hours. The design of this area will pay particular attention to designing out crime.
- 4.30 The proposal will also provide a wide variety of other uses as set out in Section 3 of this statement.

Integrating communities

- 4.31 New and existing residents will benefit from the provision of a range of market and affordable housing, a possible new hospital, new jobs, new schools, community buildings, local services and facilities and a large amount of sports provision within the new development.

Enterprise and education

- 4.32 PPS1 promotes a strong, stable and productive economy that brings jobs and prosperity to all. Residential developments should therefore ensure they provide infrastructure and services which are conducive to stimulating enterprise and life long learning.
- 4.33 The proposal offers many different types of enterprise and education opportunities within the site, with the provision of new offices, industrial units and the school sites. The site is also well linked to Bicester town centre and the strategic employment area to the east of the A41.

Employment opportunities

- 4.34 The proposed development will provide a significant number and large variety of jobs on site that will help create a balanced and sustainable community, as shown in the table below. In addition there will be a number of other jobs created such as childminders, window cleaners, domestic cleaners and gardeners.
- 4.35 There are and will be many different employment opportunities within easy walking and cycling distance of the proposed development, at the proposed strategic employment site to the east of the A41, Bicester Village Retail Park and Tesco situated immediately to the north east of the site, as well as all the opportunities the town centre has to offer. Employment opportunities further afield can be accessed to the north east of the site from the railway station, which provides rail services to the regional hub of Oxford.

Education

- 4.36 Land has been reserved for a secondary school. The development of 1585 dwellings alone does not generate enough demand for a secondary school. The usual threshold is at least 6000 homes. However, the County Council has said that a secondary school is required for the children generated from this development, Upper Heyford and future development in Bicester. Countryside has considered it prudent, at this stage, to safeguard a site for a secondary school.
- 4.37 The proposed development generates the need for a primary school, and this will be provided next to the local centre. Oxfordshire County Council has also requested that a site for a second smaller primary school be provided. Countryside has, again, considered it prudent, at this stage, to safeguard a site for a second primary school.

Transport and movement

4.38 The site already benefits from excellent road, public transport, cyclist and pedestrian access to the existing employment, retail, educational and leisure facilities in Bicester.

Car use

4.39 The proposed transport infrastructure within the development will be designed to benefit journeys made by travel modes other than the private car. The proposals will ensure convenience for pedestrians and cyclists and will be designed to encourage use of public transport use. Both measures should restrain car traffic generated by this development.

Buses

4.40 The area surrounding the site is currently well served by bus routes. The proposed development will enhance bus services to future residents by delivering a road network capable of accommodating bus routes through the site, allowing residents good public transport links to Bicester and Oxford. The objective is for all dwellings to be located within 400 metres of a bus route.

Rail

4.41 The railway station provides many opportunities for the site in terms of promoting the use of public transport and reducing the need to travel by car. The station is located only a short distance away, and will be accessible by walking or cycling, through integration of new footpaths and cyclepaths.

Footways and cyclepaths

4.42 A network of footways and cyclepaths will be provided through the developed area and the open space to allow safe and convenient pedestrian movements both within the site and linking to the wider network for new and existing residents. A green corridor approach through the site will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists.



Public transport

Environmental impact

- 4.43 As the site has been farmed for many years, there is little biodiversity on site. The main area of interest is around Pingle Brook. The mosaic of linked green spaces that will be created throughout the proposal will provide a variety of habitats, which will support a greater number of species, increasing the area's biodiversity.

Environmental impact assessment

- 4.44 The proposal has been subject to EIA and an environmental statement has been submitted in support of the proposals. The environmental statement should be read in conjunction with this statement. The non-technical summary sets out the key aspects of the assessment work and the mitigation proposals. It reviews the impact of the proposal on cultural heritage; hydrology and water quality; land use; landscape and visual effects; noise and vibration; social and community effects; traffic and transport; air quality; ground conditions and contamination; natural heritage and waste. The proposal includes mitigation measures to ensure that the development will not have any significant adverse effect on the environment.

EcoHomes

- 4.45 Building quality is an important component of creating a sustainable development. EcoHomes is a set of criteria created by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) for assessing the environmental quality of housing developments. EcoHomes balances environmental performance with the need for a high quality of life, and a safe and healthy internal environment. Seven issues are addressed: energy, water, pollution, materials, transport, ecology and land use. Countryside will seek to achieve at least EcoHomes 'good' with an aspiration over the life of the development to achieve 'very good'.

Recycling

- 4.46 Recycling is an important way for renewing our supply of natural resources. The proposed scheme will encourage a community committed to recycling. This will be considered at the more detailed planning stage.



A Countryside housing scheme

Design principles

4.47 The Design and Development Framework has been approved by Cherwell District Council and is a 'framework for the development of land south west of Bicester at Whitelands Farm'. It takes forward the policy objectives set out in the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan.

4.48 It is considered that these proposals for the new quarter of Bicester meets the vision set out in the Framework by creating a place that will be:

- distinctive
- connected
- sensitive
- democratic
- balanced
- timeless

4.49 The Design and Access Statement, accompanying this application, takes forward the Framework and sets out how the master plan has been formulated.



Public open space

Land use	Standard/assumption	Ratio of jobs to floorspace	Total no. of jobs (full-time equivalent)
Local centre	Retail – 930 sq gross food store - 5 units of 153 sqm = 765sqm		unknown
	Nursery – 175 sqm gross		unknown
	Pub – 400 sqm gross		unknown
Schools - Primary	1 of 2.22 ha } 630 pupils)		57 ¹
- Secondary	1 of 1.31 ha } 650 students		58 ¹
Health village	Community hospital 3 GP Surgery Medical centre (680 sqm) Diagnostic clinic (390 sqm) 80 bed nursing home		unknown 8.5 ² 26 ² 15 ² 80 ²
Hotel	100 bed (3*)	1 per 2 bedrooms	50 ³
Employment – a variety of opportunities	1000sqm gross of B1 offices in local centre	1 per 19 sqm	52 ³
2 hectares of B1 and B2	15000 sqm B1 (offices, R&D, studios)	1 per 19 sqm	790 ³
	5000 sqm of B2, general industrial units, including urban hives	1 per 36 sqm	139 ³
Construction of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 on perimeter road • 200 residential construction • 45 for each non-residential building • 50 skilled or semi skilled per developer 		320 ⁴
TOTAL			1595.5

Sources:

- 1 Education consultant
- 2 Medical centre developers
- 3 Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note, Dec 2004, ODPM
- 4 Countryside Properties, from experience on other sites

