

5 Planning policy

Introduction

- 5.1 The development proposals have been developed in accordance with national and local planning policy guidance. This section demonstrates how the proposed development complies with relevant policy and guidance, in particular, policies contained in the development plan.

National planning policy

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering sustainable communities

- 5.2 PPS1 sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. Policies of PPS1 must be taken into account in the preparation of plans forming part of the development plan and may also be material to decisions on individual planning applications.

- 5.3 PPS1 begins by discussing the importance of sustainable development:

‘Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations...’ (para 3)

- 5.4 Planning is expected to facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by:

- *“making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives;*
- *contributing to sustainable economic development;*

- *protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;*
- *ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and*
- *ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.” (para 5)*

- 5.5 In line with this PPS1 promotes a plan-led system which seeks to encourage integrated, mixed-use communities (paragraphs 14-16 and 27ii) with access to jobs, health, education, shops, leisure, community facilities, open space, sport and recreation (paragraph 27v), whilst protecting and enhancing the environment. The proposals take account of these requirements, providing for a variety of uses on site that are integrated into their surroundings, facilitate development of the rest of the urban extension and minimise impacts on the environment.

- 5.6 In order to facilitate the creation of such communities, planning authorities are expected to bring forward sufficient land in appropriate locations to meet the expected needs for housing and other types of development. New development must be in locations that ensure that everyone can have access to facilities by a variety of means of transport, other than the car. The allocation of South West Bicester in the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan (NSCLP) as part of the urban extension is intended to meet the needs of Bicester over the next decade. This application is intended to bring this to fruition, in a sustainable way.

5.7 PPS1 recognises the importance of good design in the achievement of sustainable development and good planning. Paragraphs 33 and 35 state that:

“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.”

“Good design should:

- Address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services;*
- Be integrated into existing urban form and the natural and built environments;*
- Be an integral part of the process ensuring successful, safe and inclusive villages, towns and cities;*
- Create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society; and,*
- Consider the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment.”*

5.8 Due to the size of this site and its potential to act as a gateway to Bicester, particular attention has been paid to design and the master planning of the development at this outline stage. This is reflected in the Design and Development Framework and the Design and Access Statement accompanying this application.

5.9 PPS1 introduces great emphasis on community involvement in planning. The development of the proposals for the South West Bicester site has been the subject of a series of public consultation exercises, outlined in Section 6 of this document.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing

5.10 PPG3 confirms that local planning authorities should plan to meet the housing requirements of the whole community, providing sufficient housing land and creating more sustainable patterns of development. The government’s objective set out in PPG3 is primarily that everyone has the right to a decent home.

5.11 Paragraph 21 establishes the need to adopt a sequential approach to the allocation of land for housing development, with priority given to the re-use of previously developed land in urban areas. PPG3 does, however, recognise that planned extensions to urban areas are likely to prove the next most sustainable option, especially where it is possible to utilise existing physical and social infrastructure, there is good access to public transport (or where good public transport provision can be planned into the development), and there is good access to jobs, schools, shopping and leisure facilities.

5.12 As part of a wider urban extension, the South West Bicester site complies with this forward thinking approach. It creates an opportunity to accommodate development at Bicester that cannot be accommodated within the town itself, in a sustainable manner and in compliance with national policy. As a new quarter to the town with good links to the existing urban area, providing facilities and services to support residential development, it is the most sustainable means of providing additional development in this area, as recognised by the non-statutory local plan.

5.13 PPG 3 continues to emphasise the need to create more sustainable environments which:

- are linked to public transport
- provide mixed-use development
- provide a greener residential environment
- have a greater emphasis on quality and designing places for people
- make the most efficient use of land.

These key principles have been taken into account in developing these proposals. Their application is outlined in this supporting statement.

5.14 PPG3 recognises the importance of achieving good design and layout within new residential developments. Paragraphs 54 to 56 stress the importance of not viewing new housing developments in isolation; consideration of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard to the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. This is supported by paragraphs 52 and 53 noting that well designed layouts can not only contribute to the greening of residential areas, but towards the energy efficiency of new developments.

5.15 This issue has been an important consideration throughout the development of proposals and is reflected within the design analysis and final proposals, where the site's wider context and landscape have influenced the final master plan. A sensitive, integrated scheme has been developed considering all constraints and opportunities, so as to enhance, not detract from the quality of the local environment.

Consultation paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

5.16 A draft version of PPS3 was published during December 2005 for consultation. This document builds upon much of the information set out above, however, in relation to this project, brings in two additional considerations. The first is set out in paragraph 41 below.

“When considering planning applications for housing which are received in advance of the relevant development plan document being reviewed (particularly the first development plan document), local planning authorities should take into account the policies in this statement as material considerations, as they may carry greater weight than the relevant policies in the development plan. In these circumstances or for sites not allocated in the development plan, local planning authorities should consider favourably planning applications for housing development:

- (a) *where there is evidence of an imbalance between housing demand and supply, having regard to affordability issues and housing market conditions;*
- (b) *if the site is suitable for housing development (including land allocated or previously used for industrial or commercial use, which is no longer needed for that use 14); and*
- (c) *the planning proposal makes an efficient use of land, offers a good housing mix, is of high quality design and does not have an unacceptable impact on the environment.”*

- 5.17 This paragraph sets out criteria with which development proposals on the South West Bicester site should conform. PPS3 should be taken into account when determining planning applications where there is no adopted plan in place. Secondly, paragraph 42 states that applications should not be refused on the grounds that they may prejudice preparation of development plans.

“Local planning authorities should not refuse applications for planning permission simply on the grounds that the preparation or review of site allocation development plan documents would be prejudiced. However, local planning authorities should not grant applications for planning permission where it can be shown that to do so would clearly discourage the development of allocated developable brownfield sites.”

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and geological conservation

- 5.18 PPS 9 seeks to promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced and the diversity of England’s wildlife and geology is conserved, enhanced and restored. Development should contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance by enhancing biodiversity (predominantly within green spaces) and ensuring that it takes account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.
- 5.19 To date no protected species have been identified on the site despite significant survey work. There are no nature conservation designations or areas of significance. However, a number of sensitive areas have been identified on the site (including copses, hedgerows and streams) and the master plan has sought to accommodate and incorporate these, minimising conflicts and enhancing existing assets through increased access and management, and providing increased opportunities for biodiversity.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport

- 5.20 The objectives of PPG13 are: *“to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level to:*
- *Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;*
 - *Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and,*
 - *Reduce the need to travel, especially by car.”* (para. 4)
- 5.21 PPG13 re-emphasises the aim of PPG3 to provide housing in sustainable locations, where there are opportunities to exploit and deliver accessibility to jobs, services and leisure facilities, by means other than the private car. Paragraph 20 advocates the location of day-to-day facilities such as primary schools, health centres and convenience shops near to the people that they serve. The creation of mixed-use development, including housing, is further encouraged at paragraph 30, which acknowledges that such developments can provide *“very significant benefits”* in terms of promoting vitality and diversity and in promoting walking as a primary mode of travel.
- 5.22 The South West Bicester development proposals have been designed to optimise non-car uses and integrate a variety of means of transport, other than the private car. It will provide access to public transport through bus stops in the neighbourhood centre and along the principal routes that link to key destinations within the town. Walking and cycling will also be important forms of transport to a range of ‘day to day’ facilities provided on site, together with links to the town centre and adjacent areas. Facilities will be located on a main bus route providing easy access from both within and outside the development by a variety of transport modes.
- 5.23 A detailed Transport Assessment has been undertaken (as required in paragraph 29) aiding the development of appropriate and successful proposals for the road network running through the site and linking to the existing network. This information is detailed in Section 7.

***Planning Policy Guidance Note 16:
Archaeology and planning***

- 5.24 PPG16 states that archaeological remains are a finite and non-renewable resource. Accordingly, where they exist appropriate management is essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. Early consideration of archaeological issues is encouraged to reduce the potential for conflict, with an initial assessment undertaken before a planning application is made.
- 5.25 Countryside is aware of the potential of this site for archaeological remains from earlier work; and considered this aspect very early in the process, in liaison with the County Archaeologist. Site investigation work has been carried out and is reported in full in the ES. The findings to date indicate that the risk from the proposed development would come from the possible damage to any unknown, below ground, archaeological features caused by the construction process.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation

- 5.26 Where planning permission is granted for new development PPG17 states that local authorities should ensure that provision is made for local sports and recreational facilities, including public open space. The master plan accommodates not only the requisite amount of open space for the proposed development, but also a substantial area of land to address a residual shortfall in Bicester.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 24: Noise

- 5.27 PPG 24 gives guidance to local authorities on how to use their planning powers to minimise the impacts of noise on new residential development. This guidance introduces the concept of defining potential residential development sites in terms of 'noise exposure categories' (NEC).

- 5.28 In recognition of the potential impacts of noise as a result of the proposals, a noise assessment has been undertaken and forms part of the ES. This confirms that the site is suitable for residential development, provided that certain mitigation measures are provided during construction. The only permanent noise impact of the proposals is beneficial, as a result of reduced road traffic noise on the A4095. Details of these are contained in the environmental statement.

***Planning Policy Guidance Note 25:
Development and flood risk***

- 5.29 PPG 25 aims to: "reduce the vulnerability of the country to the dangers and damage caused by unmanaged floods contributing to the achievement of a better quality of life and the objectives of sustainable development" (para. 8). It is primarily concerned with reducing the risk of flooding to existing and new development but also recognises that flooding can be affected by increased run-off.
- 5.30 Changes of land use alone can cause adverse effects as a result of increased run-off resulting from an increase in hard surfacing, as outlined in paragraph 40. This application acknowledges the potential impacts of the development of this greenfield site, and seeks to mitigate them, as recommended in paragraph 41 of PPG25. Further details of measures to achieve this are included within the ES.

***Draft Planning Policy Statement 25:
Development and flood risk and
flooding direction***

- 5.31 This consultation draft maintains the principles outlined within the existing PPG25 to ensure that development takes account of future possibilities of flooding, taking opportunities to reduce flood risk to communities. This PPS also seeks to ensure that applications in flood risk areas are subject to thorough scrutiny, enabling appropriate, sustainable development to continue.

The development plan

5.32 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the content of the 'development plan' has changed significantly. It now comprises the regional spatial strategy and the local development framework. Neither document has been adopted yet. Transitional arrangements mean that for a period of around three years existing regional planning guidance, structure plans and local plans continue to form part of the development plan. In the context of this planning application the development plan comprises:

- Adopted Regional Planning Guidance 9, March 2001
- Adopted Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016, October 2005
- Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 – 2001, November 1996

Regional Planning Guidance 9 – March 2001 with amended chapters 9, 10, 12 and 14

5.33 RPG 9, adopted 2001, covers the period to 2016. It will be replaced by Regional Spatial Strategy 9 (RSS9) once that is formally adopted by the government (due to be submitted for approval Spring 2006).

5.34 Policy Q1 sets out the guiding principles that should govern urban development or redevelopment, focusing on suitable use of land (having regard to PPG3), design of the urban fabric and protection of the green belt. This is supported by Policy Q2 which emphasises the importance of achieving high quality forms and design within the urban fabric to improve quality of life. The South West Bicester development has been carefully considered in terms of its form and design complying with guidance set out within the Design and Development Framework document.

5.35 Housing policy H2 states that an annual average of 2,430 dwellings will be developed within Oxfordshire up to 2016. Policy H3 goes on to say that the adequacy of this housing provision and distribution will be reviewed regularly in accordance with guidance set out in PPG3 (Housing) and PPG11 (Regional Guidance). This is roughly in accordance with the adopted Structure Plan target however, a more accurate figure may be provided within RSS9 when adopted.

5.36 RPG9 states the government's intention that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home. It states within Policy H4 that this can partly be achieved through the provision of a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of the whole community. The South West Bicester development makes provision for a large mix of dwellings, distributed throughout the development and will incorporate both market and affordable units.

5.37 Policy H5, regarding development on previously developed land, states that when allocating land for development a sequential testing approach should be adopted. The South West Bicester site scores well within this approach; although it is not previously developed land, sustainable urban extensions are the next most appropriate sites for large-scale residential development.

5.38 Policy E5 outlines the importance of protecting existing areas of woodland and the potential to increase these and other areas of potential or established nature conservation areas. The South West Bicester proposal seeks to conserve and develop areas of existing valued landscape and proposes further areas of planting to complement these and enhance the site as a whole. Further information regarding these strategies is contained within the Landscape Strategy and Environmental Statement.

5.39 Policies INF4 and INF6 seek to encourage high standards of energy efficiency in all development and the achievement of the minimum targets for renewable energy. Standards of energy efficiency, subject to economic viability, can be achieved through design, layout and orientation of buildings. Both aspirations have been a consideration when developing proposals for the South West Bicester site and their potential achievement will therefore be as a result of careful design.

5.40 The transport strategy for the region aims to achieve a transport system which progressively reaches standards of the best in north west Europe. The three key methods of achieving this are: promoting management of and investment in the system; rebalancing the structure and use of the transport system in favour of more sustainable modes; and supporting the regional spatial strategy, particularly managing and investing in inter-regional corridors and delivering urban renaissance and sub-regional objectives.

5.41 The South West Bicester development not only provides increased opportunities to reduce the use of the private car, and increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycling, but also invests in the local and regional network surrounding the site, providing infrastructure such as the perimeter road.

Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016

5.42 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan was adopted in October 2005. It sets out the County Council's strategy for development and use of land in Oxfordshire to 2016. The plan seeks to concentrate development on the main urban areas, and identifies Bicester as a town where a large number of houses and other development are already planned.

5.43 The general strategy of the Structure Plan is to: *"provide a framework for development to sustain economic prosperity, meet housing and other requirements and guide the investment decisions of a range of organisations for the period to 2016."* Policy G1 goes on to state that development will be concentrated in areas where a reasonable range of services and community facilities exist or can be provided, and where the need to travel by private car can be reduced and walking, cycling and use of public transport can be encouraged.

5.44 Policy G1 encourages development to be focused in and around the main urban areas. The creation of the South West Bicester urban extension is therefore in line with the aspirations for development outlined within the plan. Policy G2 seeks to improve the quality and design of development, through consideration of issues such as scale and type of development, layout, design and landscaping, reducing the need to travel and encouraging non-car modes of transport.

5.45 Policy HI, addressing housing distribution, states;

"Provision will be made for about 37,300 additional dwellings (net) between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2016. The provision will be distributed as follows:

<i>Cherwell</i>	<i>9,350</i>
<i>Oxford</i>	<i>6,500</i>
<i>South Oxfordshire</i>	<i>7,500</i>
<i>Vale of White Horse</i>	<i>7,150</i>
<i>West Oxfordshire</i>	<i>6,800</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>37,300"</i>

- 5.46 Bicester is highlighted as one of the main locations for new housing, with about 3,300 dwellings to be provided during the plan period. A countywide assessment of the potential to accommodate housing on previously developed land has been carried out. This resulted in a target that at least 55% of new housing should be built on brownfield sites within urban areas, with the remaining 45% built on other land, including greenfield sites. Policy H2 identifies RAF Heyford as a new settlement providing 1,000 dwellings.
- 5.47 Policy H3 highlights the importance of the design, quality and density of residential developments. It seeks a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare on housing developments, but offers the flexibility to achieve higher densities in areas where it is more appropriate to do so, such as in close proximity to local centres and services hubs, and lower densities in more sensitive locations. The South West Bicester proposals offer this flexibility with the more sensitive southern parts of the site at lower densities (30-35 dwellings per hectare) and higher densities (40-50 dwellings per hectare) around the local centre and closer to the town centre. Average density across the site accords with Policy H3.
- 5.48 Design has become an increasingly important aspect of new developments and Policy H3 requires a high quality of design to be achieved, taking into account of the local character, and the variety of dwellings being offered. The Design and Access Statement details the design quality of the development and the rationale behind design and structure proposed.
- 5.49 The need for affordable housing in the county is an important issue. Policy H4 seeks to ensure that affordable housing is sought through local plans or LDFs, at a level commensurate with the identified need for housing in the district.
- 5.50 In respect of sustainable travel, Policy T1 emphasises meeting the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport whilst balancing demands for ease of traffic movement. Objectives for securing a convenient, reliable and high quality public transport network are set out in Policy T3, whilst those for safe and desirable pedestrian cycle networks are identified in Policy T5. Policy T6 advocates the need to promote and manage principal transport hubs, corridors and projects related to the plan's overall development strategy and regional context, which include the Oxford to Bicester corridor. The location of further park and ride facilities along principal transport corridors to serve Oxford is identified at paragraph 4.13. These schemes are to be investigated in more detail and supported where appropriate.
- 5.51 The protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment continues to be a priority in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, with policies concerning landscape character (EN1), biodiversity (EN2), archaeology (EN6), flood risk and surface water drainage (EN9).
- 5.52 Policy R1 encourages local authorities to ensure that where there are opportunities to create new outdoor facilities for countryside recreation, such facilities are appropriate in scale and sensitive to rural locations. Policy R2 goes on to encourage increased and improved access to the countryside, through maintenance and improvement of existing rights of way.

Cherwell Adopted Local Plan 1996 - 2001

- 5.53 This plan, although it has now reached the end of its plan period, remains the only statutory adopted plan for Cherwell district. It is out of date and does not accord with some aspects of current government policy, and does not respond to the 1998 or 2005 adopted Structure Plans.
- 5.54 A number of allocations for residential development are identified in the plan (Policy H1 and H8), all of which are virtually complete. These do not include land south west of Bicester.
- 5.55 Policy H5 states that an element of affordable housing will be sought where there is demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local need, where it is economically viable and to meet longer term local needs. Supporting text proposes a target in Bicester of 15% of new dwellings on sites over 1 hectare.
- 5.56 The adopted proposals map shows the north east corner of the South West Bicester site designated for hotel and associated tourism, recreation or leisure-based development. This site is also associated with Policy T4 seeking to facilitate the provision and operation of an efficient public transport system.
- 5.57 Policies TR1, TR2 and TR3 seek to ensure that all new developments make adequate improvements or contributions to improvements to local road networks which are impacted as a result of the proposed development. They seek to minimise conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, with Policy TR4 seeking the provision of effective public transport systems as a genuine alternative to use of the private car.
- 5.58 The plan identifies a deficiency in the provision of formal open space in Bicester but an adequate provision of informal open space. Accordingly Policy R12 normally requires that all new housing developments provide a minimum of 2.43 hectares of public open space per 1000 population, to be provided as amenity open space, children's play space and sports grounds. Policy R10 provides support for proposals for new or extended sporting and recreation facilities subject to other policies in the plan.
- 5.59 The plan contains a range of environmental policies of relevance to this application in particular Policy C7 (landscape conservation), Policy C14 (trees and landscaping), Policy C26 (archaeology), Policies C30 and C31 (design considerations), ENV3 (noise) and ENV9 (surface water run-off). These have been taken into account in bringing forward these proposals.
- 5.60 Most of these policies, and others, have been taken forward into the unadopted plan. This statement considers the proposals against the unadopted policies as they are more up-to-date, although they do not attract the same amount of weight.

Other material considerations

- 5.61 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning application shall be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following section sets out what other documents comprise other material considerations.
- 5.62 Following the introduction of the planning reform through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning authorities are currently undertaking the drafting of a new set of documents: regional spatial strategies (RSS) and local development frameworks (LDF). The South East England Agency (SEERA) has published the Draft South East Plan Part 1, which forms part of the RSS, and is a material consideration in regard to this proposal. Cherwell District Council has yet to start to publish the local development documents that will form the LDF.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East – The Draft South East Plan

- 5.63 The South East Plan will supersede the structure plan as the strategic planning framework for Cherwell District. The plan is split into two parts, Part 1: Core Regional Policies and Part 2: Sub-regional Details, together representing the vision through to 2026.
- 5.64 The draft RSS was submitted to the Government on 31 March 2006, and published for public consultation.

- 5.65 The draft RSS sets out at Table C3 the proposed annual rates of provision of housing for sub-regions, including counties, within the south east. In respect of Oxfordshire, the rate is 1700 dwellings per annum. It is acknowledged that these figures are provisional, pending the conclusion of work at the sub-regional level and public consultation on district housing figures.
- 5.66 The strategy for the sub-region within which Bicester is located (central Oxfordshire) seeks to capitalise on the sub-region's dynamic economy, whilst taking account of green belt constraints, as well as improving housing availability and affordability.
- 5.67 Policy CC8 seeks to ensure the developments in and around urban areas, including new urban extensions, are well designed and consistent with the principles of urban renaissance and sustainable development.
- 5.68 Whilst district housing figures are not currently available, Policy H3 gives guidance in respect of the location of housing. It states:
- “In meeting the requirements set out in Policy H1 (District Housing Requirements), creative use should be made of opportunities for housing development within the region's cities and towns, while recognising the need to provide for other community needs that contribute to the quality of life. Local planning authorities should encourage mixed-use developments where appropriate.”*

- 5.69 This policy draws on principles laid down by PPG3 and further supports the principles behind the South West Bicester proposals. The idea of using urban extensions as a sustainable form of development, will be used to provide for Bicester's housing need over the plan period. This development will be mixed-use, avoiding a single-tenure neighbourhood and contributing towards community needs in line with Policy H3.
- 5.70 Paragraph 3.1 states that *"the delivery of agreed housing allocations for each district and unitary authority in Policy H1 is essential to the achievement of the overall spatial strategy in the South East Plan"*. Clearly the delivery of the South West Bicester development will assist with this.
- 5.71 Policy H3 follows the sequential approach to the location of housing, but acknowledges that new housing needed to meet district requirements, whether on brownfield or greenfield land, should be in sustainable locations where there is the necessary infrastructure, services and community provision, or it can be provided. It goes on to state that housing developments should be in locations that are served by a range of modes of transport. The South West Bicester proposals provide Bicester with a sustainable quarter that seeks to provide all of the facilities required to form an extended community, integrated with the existing town.
- 5.72 The south east is acknowledged as an area where affordability of housing is a key issue. Accordingly, policy H4 requires LDD to contain policies that deliver a substantial increase in affordable housing.
- 5.73 Housing design and density is also considered important with a regional density target of 40 dwellings per hectare, subject to local variations. In order to make efficient use of land, the site will be developed at an average net density of 35 dwellings per hectare, with higher density (e.g. 40-50 dwellings per hectare) applied where appropriate, such as adjacent to the local centre, along the main public transport spines and close to the town centre. This will allow for areas of lower densities (e.g. 30-35 dwellings per hectare) in out lying areas along the new edge of Bicester.
- 5.74 There are a number of other policies and issues that require consideration. Bicester is within the Flood Zone 3 (PPG25) as shown on Map NRM2 of the RSS. Paragraph 5.7 dealing with flooding and surface water management highlights a number of measures to be implemented as a means of reducing the probability and impact of flooding. The South West Bicester proposals include the implementation of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems), which should be considered under Policy NRM1 (Sustainable water resources, ground water and river water quality management).
- 5.75 Policy NRM8 on noise states that measures should be developed at regional and local level to address and reduce noise pollution. One criterion for achieving this is locating new residential developments away from significant sources of noise. The South West Bicester site is well positioned and has no significant noise issues. The main generator of noise is the A41 Oxford Road; residential development will be located away from this boundary with a buffer to shield a significant amount of the noise.

- 5.76 The draft RSS seeks to encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy through Policy EN1. This may include LPAs preparing development briefs and/or supplementary planning documents to promote these issues in development design.
- 5.77 Under Policy C4, countryside access and rights of way management, local authorities are encouraged to enhance and promote public rights of way networks, seeking to reduce the use of the private car. The South West Bicester proposals include plans to maintain and enhance access routes for both pedestrian and cyclists within the site and linking the site to the wider area. Together with the layout of the development, this will potentially reduce the use of the private car, increasing the amount of trips taken on foot or bicycle.
- 5.78 Policy BE1, management for an urban renaissance, states that the concentration of development in the region's urban areas will require significant improvements to the urban environment of many areas, thus making them more attractive places to live, work, shop and spend leisure time. This policy requires local authorities and their partners to establish a shared vision, initiate active management programmes and, promote and support built excellence.
- 5.79 As outlined within the Design and Access Statement, a high standard of built form will be developed on the South West Bicester site. In line with policy, a mixed-use development will be achieved providing opportunities for high density residential development where appropriate.
- 5.80 As part of the work being carried out to aid the production of the RSS, Oxfordshire County Council has undertaken a period of consultation on where the 21,000 new homes (2016 to 2026) should go. Most of the housing development will be focused in central Oxfordshire, with around 8,000 homes needing to be built on greenfield land. Both options presented as a part of this consultation include greenfield development in Bicester (either 4,000 in option 1 and 2,000 in option 2).

Unadopted Cherwell District Local Plan

- 5.81 Cherwell District Council began a review of its adopted local plan in 1998. However, due to the introduction of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations, which come into force in July 2006, the council decided not to proceed with the local plan once it had reached pre-inquiry changes as it would not be able to fulfil the requirements of the SEA Regulations.
- 5.82 Cherwell District Council resolved on 13 December 2004 not to proceed with the local plan, but to approve it for the purposes of development control. The Cherwell Local Plan Revised Deposit Draft incorporating pre-inquiry changes (June 2004), known as the non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan (NSCLP), is the most up to date local plan document, but does not form part of the development plan, as it is not adopted. As this plan did not proceed to inquiry or beyond, it carries little weight, however, it is a material consideration.
- 5.83 The Local Development Framework has not reached a stage where the Council has either formulated new policies or identified which existing policies it intends to take forward. The Core Strategy is expected to be published for public consultation in November 2006 and adopted in 2008. The Bicester and Central Oxfordshire Site Allocations document is programmed for public consultation in August/September 2007 and is expected to be adopted in October 2009.
- 5.84 The unadopted plan acknowledges that there is a need to provide 4,200 new houses between 1996 and 2011 to meet the Oxfordshire Structure Plan requirement, as set out in the 1998 adopted plan, upon which the local plan is based. This is mainly to be achieved through existing allocations at Slade Farm and Bicester Fields Farm, through redevelopment of brownfield sites within the town and the allocation of land to the south west of Bicester as an urban extension. The latter replaces the RAF Bicester site allocated in the adopted local plan.

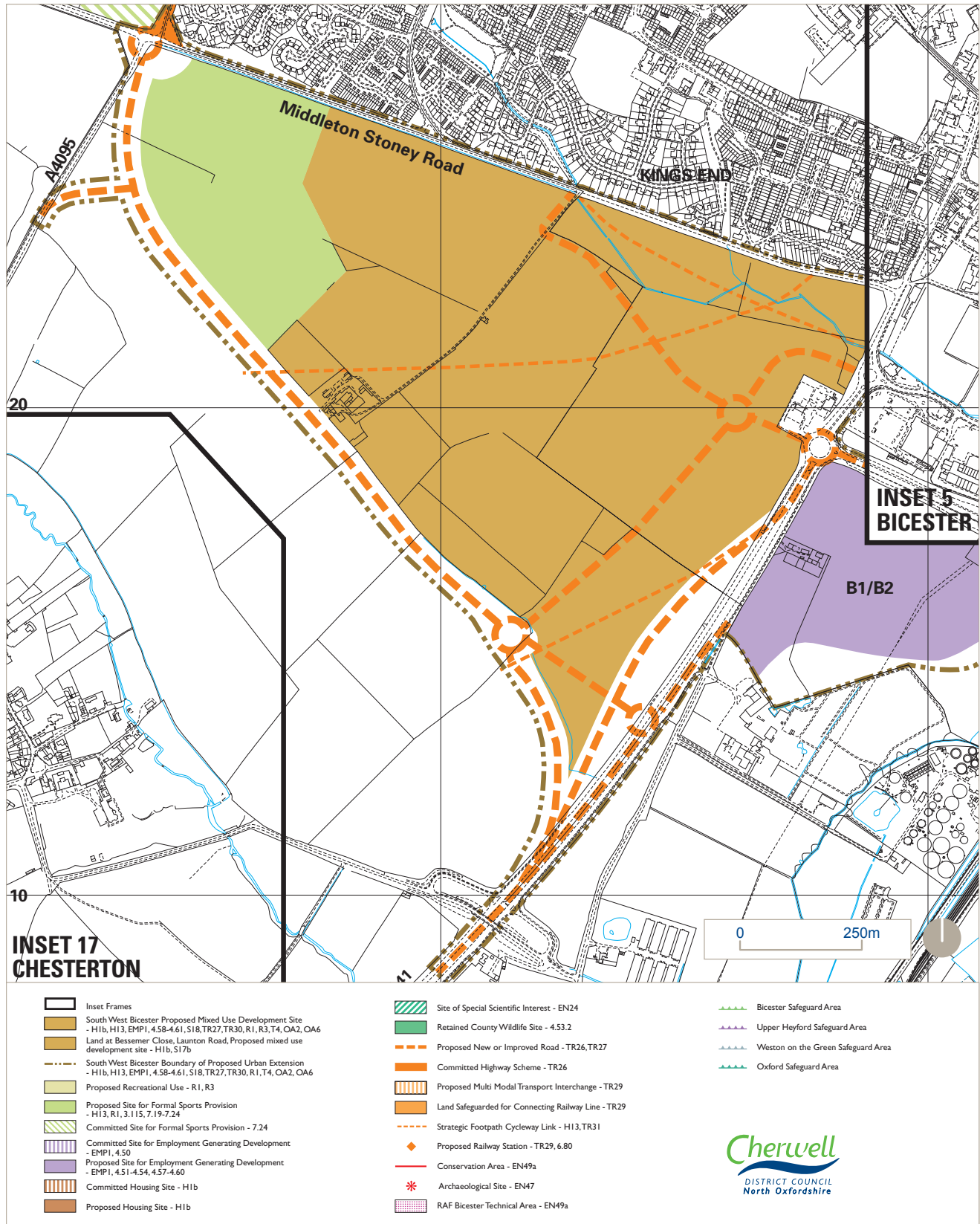


Figure 5.1 Extract from the unadopted Cherwell District Local Plan South West Bicester Urban Extension Proposals Map

- 5.85 Policy H1b identifies three phases of residential development, which in respect of South West Bicester are as follows:

Phase 1: 2001-2005	None
Phase 2: 2005-2008	700 units (210 affordable)
Phase 3: 2008-2011	885 units (265 affordable)

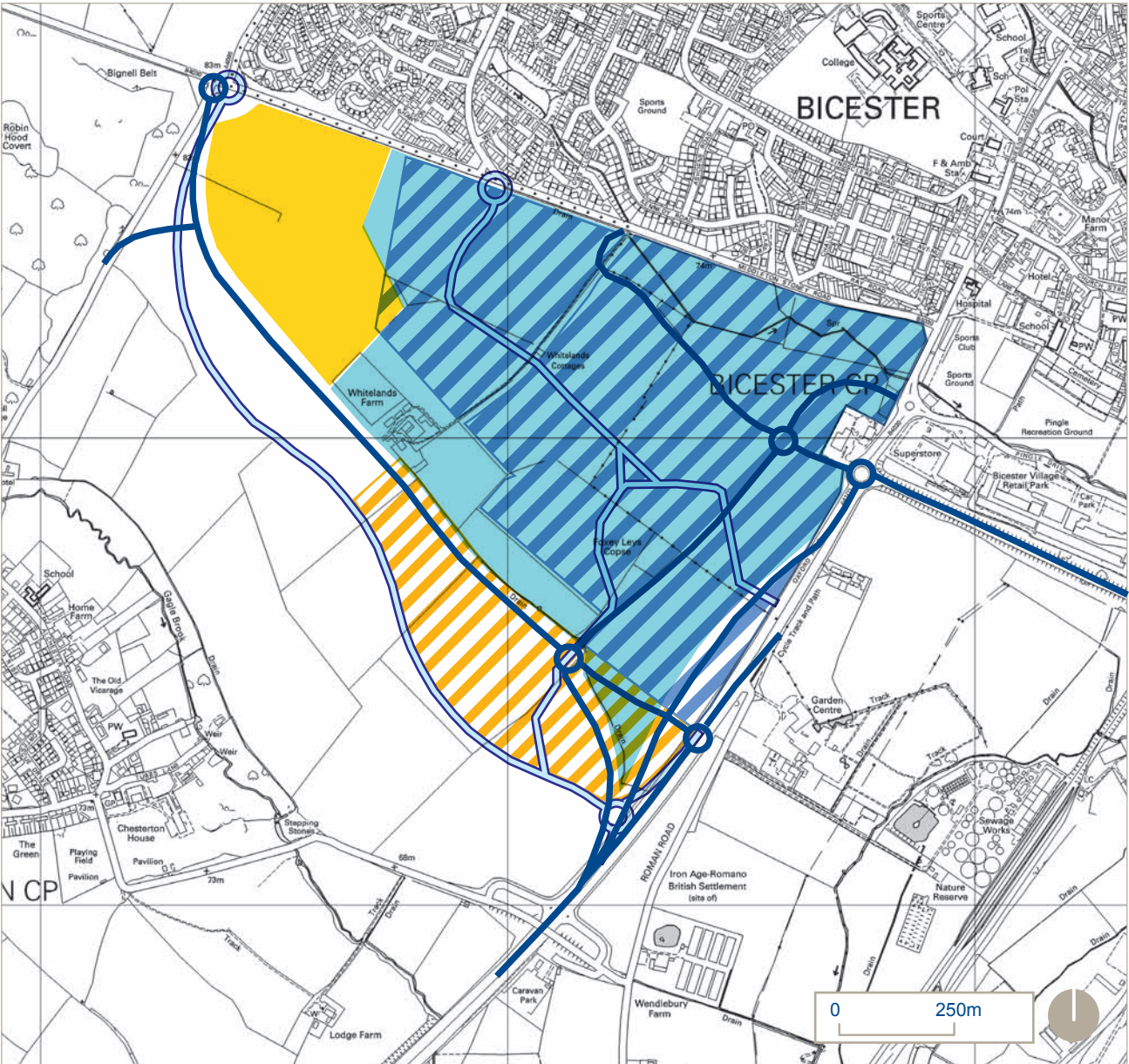
- 5.86 Before each of these phases is completed, Policy H2 identifies that the Council will consider the implications of the monitoring of housing completions. This is intended to determine the scale of any difference between housing provision identified in Policy H1b and actual delivery, such that adjustments can be made at the local or district level to the delivery. However, as there have been delays bringing forward the application, these figures will not be met (see phasing of housing development in Section 3 of this statement) which will ultimately affect the Council's housing delivery of the structure plan requirement.

Comparison of Planning Application and Unadopted Policy H13




- 5.87 The unadopted local plan includes at Policy H13 a specific allocation in respect of the South West Bicester urban extension. The proposals map is reproduced at figure 5.1. It sets out 21 criteria which proposals should be considered against. These are set out below, with Countryside's view on how the planning application meets each criterion. A plan showing a comparison between the local plan proposals map and this planning application as shown at Figure 5.2.

- (i) **Provide a comprehensive scheme for the whole site, comprising the range of land uses referred to in this policy and the general distribution of development shown on the proposals map.**

- 5.88 Countryside has attempted over a long period to engage the landowners to the east of the A41 to come forward with a comprehensive scheme as shown on the proposals map of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan, but this has not been possible.
- 5.89 As a consequence, Countryside has sought to provide a sustainable form of development within its land ownership in order to fulfil Cherwell District's ambition for a sustainable and comprehensive development, as well as the government's planning policies and sustainable communities agenda.
- 5.90 The transport assessment accompanying the planning application provides two alternative road junction layouts to accommodate access into the employment allocation to the east of the A41, showing that the road layout proposed as part of this planning application can be modified, in the future, to allow access to the employment land. This planning application therefore allows for the future development of land east of the A41, and will not frustrate or jeopardise that land coming forward when the landowners chose to do so.
- 5.91 The land to the east of the A41 comprises in excess of 16 hectares of land allocated for employment use. The size and location of this allocation indicates that this is a strategic employment site for Bicester as a whole, and it forms a large proportion of the town's allocated employment land. As such, Countryside does not consider it necessary to bring forward the whole of the allocation in order to make the new quarter west of the A41 sustainable. Countryside has introduced 2 hectares of employment provision on land to the west of the A41, in addition to that proposed in the local centre. Countryside has also re-introduced the concept of health uses on the site, reserving 2.69 hectares of land for such uses as a community hospital. These uses, together with the local centre, the schools, the hotel and the construction of the site, will generate a large and varied number of employment opportunities for new and existing residents.



From Cherwell Urban Extension Plan

-  Proposed mixed use development
-  Formal sports provision
-  Proposed and new improved roads

From proposed TOR Master Plan




-  Proposed mixed use development
-  Proposed formal sports provision
-  Proposed and new improved roads

Figure 5.2 Comparison of the Countryside proposal and the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan proposal

5.92 Countryside is providing the opportunity for new and existing residents to live and work in the same area, where access to employment opportunities will be easy by foot, bicycle and/or bus. The detailed design of this area will make it easy for users to access the site and it will be only five minutes' walk from the proposed local centre, so users can easily access the shops, nursery and community facilities.

5.93 Figure 5.2 opposite compares the Countryside proposed master plan and that on the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan proposal map.

(ii) Provide a perimeter road from A41 to B4030 at its junction with B4095 and associated connections and improvements to the road network, including a new alignment of A41 and an improvement of Howes Lane and the improvement of the Howes Lane/Bucknell Road/Lords Lane junction incorporating the provision of a new railway bridge, all of which shall be open to traffic in accordance with a phased programme of implementation first agreed by the local highway authority.

5.94 The planning application includes the provision of a perimeter road between the A41 and A4095 and new junction arrangements on A41 and at its junction with Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane. Although the community engagement events that took place in summer 2005 did not consider this road was required, the County Council as highway authority has subsequently insisted that it is. Great care has been given to its location and design to limit the impact on residents of Chesterton and the residents of this proposal. This is explained in more detail in the Design and Access Statement, accompanying this application. The road fulfils the criteria set out in paragraph 7.6 of the Cherwell's adopted Design and Development Framework document, as follows:

- it avoids long straight sections of road that could encourage overtaking
- it closely follows the topography of the site to help assimilate with the landform

- it takes account of sensitive views in and around Chesterton, Whitelands Farm and the new development
- it aligns with existing hedgerows, copses and trees to fit in within the landscape
- it minimises potential noise and visual impacts associated with the road.

5.95 The majority of the road will be planted with hedgerows, but tree planting along it will be limited so as not to accentuate the road in the landscape. Instead the existing hedgerow network will be enhanced with new copse and tree planting, which when combined provides a strong landscape structure on both sides of the road.

5.96 It also allows the farm to remain viable by having agricultural land immediately around the farmhouse, and providing good sized fields either side of the road. The road has been designed as a single carriageway, with a country road character, with maximum speeds of 50 mph. It will not be lit along its length, only at the roundabout junctions at either end. This will mean that noise and light pollution are minimised for both residents of Chesterton and the new quarter.

5.97 Countryside does not believe the Council's suggested road alignment shown on the proposals map, and reproduced in the Design and Development Framework document, meets the criteria set out in the Framework document, as set out above. However, although requested, Cherwell has provided no information to Countryside to explain the road design and alignment. In Countryside's opinion that alignment would create a fast and dangerous road that will not be assimilated into the landscape as well as that proposed. Road speeds would be higher, as would noise and light pollution. The Council's suggested alignment does not take into account the impact of these matters on the residents of the proposed development, as can be seen by residential development being shown right up to the boundary of the road.

5.98 The phasing of the provision of this road is yet to be discussed and will be negotiated with the relevant authorities along with the other provisions of a legal agreement.

5.99 The re-alignment of the A41, improvements to Howes Lane and the provision of a new railway bridge do not form part of the transport assessment provided by WSP, and do not form part of these proposals. Policy H13 provides for a strategic employment site, as part of the urban extension. Cherwell District Council's ambitions for this employment site are set out in paragraphs 4.58 to 4.60 of the unadopted local plan, which is to provide a "B1 business park". This use, at the scale in the local plan, will generate more traffic than the proposed 1585 dwellings. Despite this, Countryside is providing the majority of the road infrastructure and other planning obligations set out in H13. Under Circular 05/2005 Countryside considers that these particular works should be borne by the remainder of the urban extension.

(iii) Provide suitable access to the site from the Perimeter Road, the Tesco roundabout, A41 and B4030 in a manner that discourages through traffic.

5.100 The access strategy set out in the transport assessment provides adequate access to the site whilst discouraging traffic through Bicester centre and Chesterton.

(iv) Provide land for hotel development on a commercial basis.

5.101 Up to 1 hectare of land is being reserved for an hotel as part of this application and is located north of the main A41 access.

(v) Provide land for employment generating development to the east of A41.

5.102 As stated in Section 3 of this statement, Countryside has attempted without success to negotiate with the landowners of the land to the east of the A41 to bring the land forward. The access strategy and the provision of the majority of the planning obligations expected under this policy will allow this site to come forward independently in the future.

(vi) Provide land for a fine grain mix of uses adjacent to the local centre.

5.103 The local centre will provide a variety of different uses, as set out in Section 3.

(vii) Reserve a site, to be first agreed with the Oxford and Cherwell College, for a college of further education.

5.104 Provision for the FE College has not been specifically included in the master plan; however, provision will be considered in the legal agreement, as part of the overall education provision of this site, in negotiation with the Education Authority, taking into account the requirements of circular 05/2005.

(viii) Provide primary school and land for a secondary school in locations to be first agreed with the education authority and provide contributions towards the provision of education and library facilities commensurate with the need arising from the development.

5.105 A primary school will be provided as part of the local centre, and land will be reserved for a secondary school and a second primary school to the west of the site, and made available if it is proven to be required.

5.106 Financial contributions for education and library facilities will be considered within the negotiations on the legal agreement.

(ix) Provide for an average net residential density in accordance with policy H3, to achieve no more than 1585 residential units within the plan period.

5.107 As set out in Section 3, average densities will accord with Policy H3. The application is for 1585 dwellings.

(x) Provide affordable housing and appropriate special needs housing in accordance with policies H5 and H7.

5.108 Thirty percent of the dwellings will be affordable. The breakdown of tenure has been agreed with Bromford and Paradigm Housing Associations. Bids for early funding of these units has already been sought by the housing associations.

5.109 An element of older and disabled person housing will be provided on site, in accordance with unadopted Policy H5. This will be considered as part of the negotiations on the legal agreement.

(xi) Provide 16 hectares of land for formal sports provision in the location shown on the proposals map.

5.110 Countryside has provided 17.29 hectares of formal open space and a large amount of informal space within this application. The provision has been moved to the south eastern part of the site primarily to limit the noise and light impact of multi-use games areas on existing and new residents; to allow the secondary school to share the facilities and to provide the one site solution required by Cherwell that could be used to provide a 'sports village'.

(xii) Provide appropriate social and recreation facilities for community use including a community centre and general amenity and play areas in accordance with the policies in chapter seven.

5.111 Countryside will provide a community centre, a sports pavilion and children's play areas as part of this application, in accordance with the relevant unadopted policies.

(xiii) Provide the opportunity for appropriate medical facilities to be provided in accordance with NHS requirements on a commercial basis.

5.112 A health village forms part of these proposals. Within this area, land will be reserved for a community hospital and GP surgery.

(xiv) Provide the opportunity for an appropriate range of local shopping facilities, including a public house, to be provided on a commercial basis.

5.113 The local centre will provide the opportunity for a number of local shops and a pub/restaurant.

(xv) Incorporate measures to encourage walking and cycling as the preferred modes of transport rather than the private car.

5.114 The master plan has been designed to discourage short journeys by car and provides many different opportunities for walking and cycling throughout the site.

(xvi) Provide a transport interchange facility adjacent to and with access from A41.

5.115 This application does not include a transport interchange facility. Oxfordshire County Council has indicated that it would prefer to see a park and ride facility to serve Oxford, however, such a facility is not required for the development of this quarter. Countryside will provide a site within its ownership, through the legal agreement, if the County Council can justify the need for the facility. It will then be the responsibility of the County Council to apply for planning permission.

5.116 It should be noted that unadopted Policy TR7 states that Cherwell will not permit further Oxford-based park and ride sites in the district.

**(xvii) Incorporate proposals to minimise the impact of traffic associated with the development.
(xviii) Provide safe vehicular access between the site and the adjacent public roads.**

5.117 Section 7 of this statement sets out the traffic and access strategies, which minimise the impacts associated with the development and provide safe vehicular accesses.

(xix) Incorporate structural planting and landscape proposals within the site and in the area to the south west of the perimeter road to mitigate the visual impact of the development, particularly from the south and west.

5.118 The structural planting and landscape proposals are shown on the master plan, and are explained in more detail in the Design and Access Statement and ES. Mitigating the impact of the development from the south, west and from the new quarter has been a fundamental consideration in the master plan's evolution from the community events, and through the Design and Development Framework document.

(xx) Provide high quality imaginative development that is locally distinctive in its form, materials and architecture.

5.119 The master plan allows for a locally distinctive place to be developed, whilst taking into account the layout, style and layout of Bicester and local villages. This is explained in more detail in the Design and Access Statement, and will be taken forward to the more detailed planning stages.

(xxi) Incorporate energy efficient designs and technology throughout the development.

5.120 As set out in Section 4 of this statement, Countryside will use the EcoHomes ratings to set out its energy efficiency targets. Countryside will achieve at least a 'good' rating, with an aspiration to achieve 'very good' over the life of building the development.

5.121 The other unadopted local plan policies considered in this application are as follows: H3, H4, H5, H7, TR1, TR3, TR5, TR6, TR7, TR9, TR11, TR19, TR26, TR27, R3, R4, R6, R11, R12, EN1, EN5, EN6, EN7, EN11, EN12, EN13, EN14, EN15, EN16, EN17, EN22, EN27, EN32, EN34, EN35, EN36, EN37, EN47, D1, D2, D3, D5, D9, D12, OA1, OA2 and OA6.

Supplementary planning guidance and documents

Affordable housing - code of practice, April 2004

5.122 The SPG explains how the council intends to apply policies in the NSCLP in respect of the provision of affordable housing. It reiterates that an element of affordable housing will be sought on sites in Bicester that provide more than 25 dwellings or are greater than 1 hectare. On such sites 30% affordable housing will be sought, with densities greater than 30 dwellings per hectare achieved.

5.123 Affordable housing provided is expected to be primarily for rent, although the SPG identifies that the council may accept some in other forms of tenure, where this would meet affordable housing needs and would provide appropriate standards of design, etc. It should be designed to be an integral part of the development and be dispersed across the site in small groups. The SPG also provides details of standards which the council wishes to see achieved, where possible.

5.124 Countryside has agreed with Bromford and Paradigm Housing Associations to provide 30% affordable housing, split equally between the two housing associations. This will be on the basis that 70% will be for rent, 20% for shared ownership and 10% for intermediate ownership.

Recreation and amenity open space provision- the provision of open space in new residential development: guidance note, July 2004

5.125 The guidance note supports requirements set out within Policy R8 and R9 of the non-statutory local plan. It sets out the council's requirements for the provision of children's play space, outdoor sports and amenity areas to support residential development.

- 5.126 The note advises that new residential developments will not normally be required to provide additional open space to remedy any existing deficiencies in provision, only that necessary to meet the needs of occupants of dwellings proposed. The guide does note, however, that PPG17 advises that planning obligations can be used to reduce or prevent deficiencies in provision, once local provision standards have been developed.
- 5.127 The guide identifies that calculations of children's play space, formal sports and amenity areas required will be based on the achievement of 2.4 hectares of sports and play space per 1000 population and appropriate amenity areas for informal recreation. One person is identified as requiring 8 sqm of play space and 16 sqm of formal outdoor sports provision. Informal amenity areas will be assessed on a site-by-site basis taking into account features of the site, the nature of development and the accessibility of other provision within the locality.
- 5.128 The council is seeking the provision of a number of distinct types of play space, including LAPS (local areas of play – for children up to 6 years), LEAPS (local equipped areas of play – for children 4-8 years) and NEAPS (neighbourhood areas of play – for children 8+). On larger developments provision for teenagers is required as part of the NEAP. The guide suggests that this could be in the form of a multi-use games area. The location of these areas should be based in terms of time and ease of access. The exact form, location and type of facility will be considered through negotiations on the legal agreement.
- 5.129 The provision of amenity areas is recognised by the Guide as contributing to the quality of the environment and is valued for many purposes, such as dog walking and areas that support wildlife. Such areas can take advantage of features of the site and serve more than one purpose.
- 5.130 The SPG states that provision of open space in a development will normally be secured through a legal agreement or a condition requiring accordance with Policies R8 and R9, where the former is not possible. The guidance also sets out the council's requirements in respect of maintenance of open space areas and their transfer to the council or the appropriate town or parish council. This is to be accompanied by appropriate contributions towards maintenance after adoption. This will normally be in the form of a commuted sum secured through a legal agreement.
- 5.131 The council has decided that it wants to create a 'sports village' on the formal open space that forms part of this application. It has yet to decide what this will comprise, and will be undertaking public consultation later in 2006.
- Building in harmony with the environment, March 2000***
- 5.132 This guide complies with both local and county level development plans promoting the development of groups of buildings which are in harmony with the environment.
- 5.133 In addition to finding the most sustainable locations for development, the guide notes the importance of effective road layouts and pedestrian and cycle routes. Both aspects are designed to promote the reduction in usage of the private car and increase in safe and attractive public transport and pedestrian routes to encourage walking, cycling and riding the bus.
- 5.134 The South West Bicester proposals encourage the use of public transport though the location of the majority of dwellings within 400 metres walking distance of a public transport route and the implementation of pedestrian and cycle ways. The sites proximity to the town centre, together with the provision of a range of services on site, will further encourage this process.

5.135 The guidance states that landscaping should be an integral part of the overall design, not an afterthought. Landscaping has been a central consideration within the development of proposals for the South West Bicester site and will be used to both complement the development, and to protect sensitive areas such as Pingle Brook and the views from Chesterton.

5.136 Guidance is included specifying the possibility of using site layout and building form to save energy.

5.137 Further advice is given regarding active solar energy designs, insulation, windows, heating and lights. All of these elements can be developed in a manner that would be more energy efficient for the development.

Oxfordshire County Council: residential road design

5.138 This guide sets out the principles for good design in residential road layouts, putting people before cars. It seeks to encourage more sustainable travel by minimising the need to use cars, particularly for shorter trips to local facilities. For longer distance trips, housing layouts are expected to provide the option of using public transport.

5.139 The guide sets out a series of objectives which have been taken into account in developing these proposals. This has enabled the development of a movement framework that provides for travel by foot, bicycle and public transport as a priority, whilst enabling a link to be provided from the A41 to the B4030 as required by the council.

5.140 The guide goes on to set out more detailed requirements for aspects such as footways/ footpaths and types of roads, which will be taken into account at the reserved matters stage.

Infrastructure and service requirements for new development, OCC

5.141 This information guide is aimed at developers and landowners. It relates to policies G3, H4 and R2 of the superseded structure plan, however, it is still an active document linking into the five district development plans.

5.142 The information document recommends seeking advice from the local authorities who can then liaise with other statutory consultees to coordinate opinion on the proposals. This process has been pursued through the development of proposals for the South West Bicester development where contact with the district and county council has been continued since the project commenced with, amongst other things, monthly project meetings.

5.143 The document deals with the following subjects in brief: affordable housing; community facilities; community sport and leisure facilities; education; environmental mitigation and enhancement; fire service; social services; transport; and waste and resource management.

5.144 Although no detailed guidance is offered within this document, the principles and aims are reflected within the proposals.



6 Community involvement

Introduction

- 6.1 Community engagement, consultation and pre-application discussions have been important to the development of these proposals.
- 6.2 During pre-application discussions with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council the need for consultation with key stakeholders was identified. Countryside acknowledges the importance of stakeholder involvement and agreed to work with the councils to achieve meaningful involvement of interested parties.
- 6.3 Countryside and the Cherwell agreed a programme of events and a brief for independent facilitators to undertake the consultation. The brief set out a two stage process:
 - (i) to engage with the public to formulate a Design and Development Framework for the site and a draft master plan
 - (ii) Countryside to test the draft master plan, through environmental impact assessment and negotiations with the various statutory authorities, and submit an outline planning application.
- 6.4 A series of stakeholder workshops were held during summer 2005 to explore issues arising from the growth of Bicester to date and potential options for further growth, focusing in particular on the implications of and planning for growth south west of the town. The workshops were organised and run by independent facilitators, Kevin Murray Associates.
- 6.5 The 'Report of Collaborative Workshops and Open Public Sessions' details the consultation undertaken in respect of the development of Bicester, including land south west of Bicester. This has fed into the Design and Development Framework for South West Bicester, and has informed the preparation of this planning application. Below is a description of the outcomes from the five events.

Community engagement sessions

29 June 2005 (daytime) -

"Growth of Bicester" - part one

- 6.6 A workshop with local authority officers, members and representatives of local interest groups was held in June 2005. This comprised a short discussion about the growth of Bicester so far and its consequences. Officers from Cherwell District Council advised stakeholders of the process by which South West Bicester had been identified as the preferred area for future development. The advantages and disadvantages of each of the potential sites considered for development was outlined.
- 6.7 There followed a site visit, a scenario planning exercise and a design session examining the strengths and weakness of various aspects of the town – environment and open space, access and movement, neighbourhood and community facilities, employment, education, health and leisure and housing.

29 June 2005 (evening) -

"Growth of Bicester" - part two

- 6.8 An open door event was also held in June 2005 at which attendees could view the outputs from earlier in the day and add their comments and ideas. This session was an ideal opportunity for the community to identify positives and negatives about Bicester, what should be retained and/or enhanced and what is missing and/or needs to be improved. Discussion topics were centred around those discussed earlier in the day.

- 6.9 The key issues to arise during the day were that, for any development on this site to take place, the following needed to be addressed:
- infrastructure, including access to the site and the M40 and improved transport links to Oxford
 - implications for the town if development takes place outside of it
 - an ecological assessment of the site
 - green infrastructure for multi-functional green spaces and a responsive strategy for flooding (and drainage) issues
 - the potential of the site should be maximised
 - look to the long-term, what might future needs be
 - ensure adequate provision of health, education, social and recreational services
 - be responsive to flooding and drainage issues;
 - the need to have holistic and strategic policy towards development rather than a piecemeal approach
 - ensure affordability of housing, so people can live, work and play in Bicester
 - more local rather than commuter employment.

18 July – Bicester Chamber of Commerce Workshop

- 6.10 A further workshop was held with representatives from the Bicester Chamber of Commerce in July 2005. Four key issues of concern were identified
- business life and traffic
 - identity and image
 - location and strategic importance
 - Bicester's expansion.
- 6.11 Discussions identified the characteristics of Bicester which included its commuter town reputation leading to congestion problems, its lack of identity following the largely ruined 'market town' image, its apparent inability to capitalise on its major locational assets and the recent failure of housing growth to coincide with a growth in services and public facilities.
- 6.12 The council's decision to develop the South West Bicester site was generally accepted by those at the workshop. However, concerns were raised regarding the danger of Chesterton becoming a suburb. In order to retain Chesterton's character a buffer zone was suggested between the new development and village, thus allowing residents to benefit from the development without it detracting from the character of Chesterton. It was also suggested that care needs to be taken to ensure a range of house types, good connection to the existing development and to the motorway and a niche business/retail market are all established on the site.

**19 July 2005 (daytime) - “Growing Bicester”
- part one**

- 6.13 A second follow-up design workshop was held in July 2005 to enable participants to help bring together a draft master plan for the South West Bicester site. Attendees were split into four groups developing design principles for the following topics: movement structure; housing density, tenure and layout; community and employment uses; open space, leisure, wildlife, water and drainage. The groups working within the morning session outlined key issues and objectives before working on possible design solution.
- 6.14 The key outcomes from both sessions were as follows:
- a preferred road option, through from A4095/ Middleton Stoney Road to Oxford Road, although more work was thought to be needed on this
 - the benefits of a mixed use development, especially with regards to community facilities and working close to home
 - the importance of a buffer zone between the development and Chesterton, possibly suitable for a country park, soft landscaping and/or sports provision
 - the importance of achieving an appropriate organisation of space to reduce travelling, create a vibrant community encouraging interaction and create an attractive living and working environment.
- 6.15 However, at the end of the workshop there were a number of unresolved issues from all groups. These were those of road alignment and the location of schools and green spaces. This left a set of critical choices/decisions which need to be made including: finding the appropriate road options and assessing the appropriateness of a park and ride; live-work relationships and the possibility of varying densities to create a high quality edge; use of the buffer zone and whether floodlighting is appropriate; and the size and location of the secondary school and how the farm will be used.

**19 July 2005 (evening) - “Growing Bicester”
- part two**

- 6.16 A further open evening workshop was held in July 2005 at which attendees could view the outputs from earlier in the day and add their comments and ideas. Queries and concerns were predominantly raised around the issues of transport, location and development of the site, housing, community facilities and wildlife.
- 6.17 The session was generally positive and although there was some opposition to the location, most saw the development as acceptable if it coincides with the provision of appropriate community facilities and protection of wildlife and Chesterton. There was no firm consensus regarding the road alignment which was seen as the most pressing issue to be resolved.

Key outcomes

- 6.18 The key outputs of these five events, taken to represent the balanced views of those in attendance, have been taken into account not only in producing the Design and Development Framework for South West Bicester, but also this planning application. The consideration of the views of stakeholders and community is fundamental if these proposals are to be viewed as being credible by those most likely to be affected by them. The summary report, with a record of each event, is available from Cherwell District Council.
- 6.19 The design team has given considerable thought to a number of issues raised during the workshops including:
- the alignment and treatment of the perimeter road
 - the treatment of land between the mixed-use development and the village of Chesterton
 - the provision of adequate community facilities
 - the provision of adequate affordable housing
 - the layout of development on the site to provide an integrated, vibrant and sensitive mixed-use development.
- 6.20 The results of this consideration are shown on the master plan contained in Section 3 of this statement.

The Design and Development Framework document

- 6.21 The draft Design and Development Brief was published for a further round of public consultation in December 2005. Comments on the draft document, and suggested changes, were presented to Cherwell Executive on 6 March 2006. The document was approved subject to some further minor changes. These changes have now been agreed and the document finalised in April 2006. The document is available from Cherwell District Council and is on its website.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 6.22 Under the new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Cherwell District Council is required to produce an LDF to replace the existing adopted local plan. Under these new procedures, it is required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that identifies how and when people can be involved in the preparation of the LDF and when the council considers planning applications.
- 6.23 The draft SCI was published for consultation in October 2005. Paragraphs 7.32 to 7.36 specifically set out procedures for planning applications. It states that certain major developments must undertake community involvement and produce a Consultation Statement.
- 6.24 Paragraph 7.35 of the draft SCI identifies a 3-stage process for a Consultation Statement:
- Stage 1**
- Scoping the community involvement exercises with the council to agree the nature and extent of the consultations
- Stage 2**
- Undertaking the community involvement activities
- Stage 3**
- Completing the Consultation Statement and submitting it with the application.
- 6.25 Despite the fact that the SCI is an early draft document, and the community involvement agreed with Cherwell preceded its publication, Countryside has complied with the requirements as set out in the draft SCI. Consequently, this section of the planning statement should be considered as the Consultation Statement, as required by Stage 3 of paragraph 7.35 of the draft SCI.



Community engagement event



7 Transport

Introduction

- 7.1 WSP Development and Transportation Ltd has produced a Transport Assessment (TA) on behalf of Countryside that considers in detail all the transport aspects associated with the proposed development at South West Bicester. This section sets out the transport measures proposed in conjunction with the development proposals.

Committed transport schemes

- 7.2 To support growth of the Bicester area and provide better transport services, there are a number of schemes that affect all the transport modes in the area.

Pedestrian and cycle schemes

- 7.3 The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) supports the improvement of pedestrian and cycle schemes. Notably its cycle plan for Bicester identifies a number of future schemes along the corridors into the town centre, including the A41 Oxford Road and Pingle Drive. Future off-carriageway cycle tracks along the B4030 Middleton Stoney Road and along the A4095 Howes Lane are also proposed. The Bicester Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan (BITLUP) also identifies further improvements in the local area.

Public transport schemes

- 7.4 Policy LT2 of the LTP, together with the BITLUP, identify future public transport proposals for Bicester. These include initiatives for a premier bus route between Bicester and Oxford, a remote park and ride site in Bicester, and in the longer term, the east-west railway scheme. The latter proposal aims to link Bristol, Oxford, Bedford and Cambridge to Bicester, with the potential for interchange improvements at both Bicester Town and Bicester North stations.

- 7.5 In respect of the park and ride site, the Design and Development Framework document identifies potential sites associated with this proposal. However, Countryside considers land to the south of the perimeter road, next to the A41 to be the most appropriate location. Such a site is not an appropriate use within an urban area and is better located on the edge of the town, and next to main roads. Oxfordshire County Council has yet to justify the requirement for a site, and confirm its size. Countryside does not wish to frustrate the county's ambition for a site and has identified a potential site capable of accommodating up to 500 car parking spaces outside the application boundary, on land within Countryside's control. This site will be available for a park and ride facility should Oxfordshire County justify the need. The County can then seek planning permission for it, and assess its impact, when more details are known, although the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan Policy TR7 states Oxford-based park and ride facilities will not be permitted.

Highways schemes

- 7.6 The need for a perimeter road linking the A41 to the A4095 Howes Lane is identified both within the unadopted local plan and the BITLUP, and a suggested alignment is identified on the proposals map. A package of improvements to Junction 9 of the M40 has also been identified within the LTP, which are intended to accommodate the predicted increase in household numbers in Cherwell, including South West Bicester.

Transport strategy/proposals

- 7.7 To facilitate the development of the land uses set out in Section 3, the following transport principles, strategies and proposals will be implemented on the site.

Travel by foot and cycle

- 7.8 The majority of Bicester town is located within a radius of approximately 2 km from the centre of the site, a distance identified by PPG13 as being a reasonable journey by foot and on bicycle. A number of existing routes within the area of the site provide access to the town centre, the Tesco superstore and Bicester Village. Additionally, route 51 of the national cycle network links Old Place Yard with the garden centre on the A41 Oxford Road via Roman Road.
- 7.9 The layout of the development has been designed to facilitate easy movement by foot and cycle. A principal network of segregated footways and cycleways will be developed, some of which will be alongside roads or shared with vehicles. Traffic speeds within the development will be controlled accordingly in order to provide a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.10 The routes for the strategic pedestrian and cycle network have been carefully considered in response to the disposition of land uses and identification of the key desire lines for movements within the proposed development. The resulting proposals ensure that foot and cycle journeys to the major destinations within the new quarter, such as the local centre and schools, can be undertaken directly and comfortably. Design of the pedestrian and cycle routes will generally be in accordance with national design guidance ensuring that good quality routes are provided which are both conspicuous and convenient.

- 7.11 In addition to the principal routes, the development will be designed to be permeable for pedestrians and cyclists allowing them to travel conveniently and safely to access the principal routes or other destinations. Secure cycle parking and storage facilities will be incorporated into the residential areas, local centre and employment areas in accordance with unadopted Policy TR9.

- 7.12 Within the site existing rights of way networks will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced, in accordance with unadopted Policy R4. These, and the further high quality pedestrian and cycle routes proposed, will link into the wider pedestrian/cycle networks. As a result the quality of journeys by non-car modes will be upgraded providing improved accessibility and encouraging increased use of these modes by local residents. New and improved routes will be designed to link to the existing and proposed facilities along these corridors.

- 7.13 High quality cycle and pedestrian networks are considered of the greatest importance within the proposed development and have been an important consideration from the early stages of the development of proposals. This has aided in achieving the most effective and integrated routes both with the development and linking to the wider area.

Public transport strategy

- 7.14 In determining the public transport strategy for the proposed development, a review has been undertaken of the potential opportunities for bus penetration to the site. Currently bus services principally operate along the A41 Oxford Road along the eastern side of the proposed development site. Further services operate within the Highfield residential estate to the north and along the A4095 Middleton Stoney Road following the northern boundary of the site.

- 7.15 The proposed strategy has been developed through close liaison with both Oxfordshire County Council officers and Stagecoach. It is proposed to divert an existing local bus service through the proposed development that would provide a 30-minute frequency towards Bicester and Oxford throughout the day. In addition, a stand alone shuttle bus between the site and central Bicester is proposed which would also operate at a 30 minute service frequency. Therefore, new residents would be served by a total of four buses an hour in each direction between the development and Bicester.
- 7.16 Bus access to the proposed development would be from Middleton Stoney Road and the A41 Oxford Road, through the site via the local centre. The development proposals will seek to ensure that there will be convenient access to the existing bus services that operate along the A41 Oxford Road corridor. In addition, the access strategy has been designed to facilitate diversion of the existing express services off the A41 through the site.
- 7.17 This proposed strategy would ensure that the majority of residents and occupiers at South West Bicester are located within a 400m walk distance of frequent, high quality bus services. Bus stops will be provided in appropriate locations through the development, in particular at the local centre, to cater for the re-routed services.
- 7.18 Bus services may also link with the two railway stations in Bicester, both of which are less than 1km from South West Bicester.
- 7.19 Reducing the use of the private car through the site's sustainable location within the town and the provision of a comprehensive range of public transport and cycle/pedestrian routes has been a key consideration in developing these proposals. This is in line with local and national policy set out in Section 5.

Vehicular access strategy

- 7.20 The access strategy has been designed to ensure that it does not prejudice future development in South West Bicester, but also to bring forward infrastructure that is needed to enable the comprehensive development of the area.
- 7.21 For the development of 1,585 homes it is appropriate that there are several road connections to the primary road network. This will reduce the need for people to rely on a limited point of access and avoid people needing to adopt overly circuitous routes to reach the external road network. A number of road links will therefore be spaced around the edge of the site.
- 7.22 The main vehicular access from the A41 Oxford Road to the proposed development will be provided by a new four-arm roundabout. This will provide a new access to Chesterton, and the existing slip roads will be closed. The provision of this new access, coupled with the transport strategy as a whole, is likely to reduce rat running through Chesterton.
- 7.23 The speed limit of the A41 Oxford Road is proposed to be 40 mph to the north of the proposed access roundabout to improve the safety of drivers using this corridor.
- 7.24 A secondary access will be provided off the A41 Oxford Road. This will provide access into the South West Bicester site. Two new priority junctions and a new roundabout on Middleton Stoney Road, coupled with a further priority junction onto the proposed perimeter road will also provide access into the site. These proposed new points of access as all demonstrated on Figure 7.1.

Internal network and layout

- 7.25 The layout of the proposed development has been carefully designed to accommodate, but not encourage, the use of the private car. The proposed main internal road network, coupled with the access points onto the local highway network, are illustrated on Figure 7.1.
- 7.26 The proposed internal street network will consist of vehicle routes, designed to accommodate the main vehicle movements through and within the development. These 'spine streets' will not be designed to provide a high capacity route, as the intention is to create a conventional street pattern whereby motorists have a choice of routes which are shared with other users of the development. They should also be subject to conventional features including frontage accesses, traffic signals and pedestrian crossings. This should ensure that these roads do not dominate the area and become an obstruction to movement by other modes.
- 7.27 The 'spine streets' will also provide appropriate vehicle access to the local centre and employment use. They will be able to accommodate buses and heavy goods vehicles in order that buses can move with ease around the site and commercial uses can be serviced efficiently.
- 7.28 The 'spine streets' will be supported by a secondary level of streets that will link to the development areas. Within the residential areas, the remaining vehicular movements will be accommodated by a series of minor streets, which will generally be designed as narrow roads with footways or shared surfaces. Movement on foot and cycle will therefore be encouraged.
- 7.29 The 'spine streets' will be subject to speed limits of 30mph, with detailed alignment design aiming to reduce traffic speeds to 20mph, particularly in certain areas such as around the local centre and schools. The secondary routes are likely to have 20mph speed limits. The minor streets and shared surfaces will be designed to accommodate vehicle speeds of between 10 and 20mph.

Perimeter road

- 7.30 A major feature of the new internal road layout is the proposed perimeter road. This will comprise a new single carriageway link between the A41

Oxford Road and the Middleton Stoney Road/Howes Lane junction. The requirement for this road, as outlined in Section 3, arises primarily from the need to reduce the level of through traffic travelling through the centre of Bicester. It will also provide access into the development site.

- 7.31 The alignment of the perimeter road has been considered on the basis of a design speed of 50mph with the objectives of:
- connecting to the proposed A41 roundabout which has been carefully located at a safe distance from the Chesterton/Wendlebury junction and proposed and existing junctions further north on the A41
 - Providing adequate land to the west of the A41 that could be utilised as a future park and ride
 - closely following the topography of the site to help assimilate with the landform
 - taking account of sensitive views in and around Chesterton and Whitelands Farm
 - aligning with existing hedgerows, copses and trees to fit within the landscape
 - minimising potential noise and light pollution
 - providing access for public transport
 - providing pedestrian and cycle access along this strategic route, linking into adjacent development.
 - enabling a conventional T-junction to be constructed between the realigned A4095 and the perimeter road
 - connecting to Howes Lane with a straight alignment to enable a new roundabout junction with Middleton Stoney Road to be constructed.
- 7.32 The perimeter road will have no lighting, except at significant junctions, so as to minimise the impact on adjoining residents of the new quarter and on existing residents at Chesterton. This will also assist with maintaining lower speeds on the road.

Parking strategy

- 7.33 The provision of parking within the development will ensure a vibrant and commercially successful development is achieved, without excessive parking provision. This will discourage car use. Maximum parking standards will be applied.

- 7.34 Where possible residential parking will be allocated either within the curtilage or as close as possible to each group of dwellings. In order to ensure that parking does not become an overly dominant feature of the development, consideration will be given to providing on-street parking where the proposed internal road layout allows.
- 7.35 There may be cases where reduced parking provision may be promoted. This may be appropriate in areas of affordable housing within the development or for dwellings that lie closer to the bus route that runs through the site or along the A41 Oxford Road corridor in order to reflect the higher accessibility to public transport.
- 7.36 The local centre and employment area will enjoy a high level of public accessibility. It is therefore important to balance the need for parking spaces with the promotion of non-car trips. Appropriate reductions to Cherwell District parking standards will help to achieve the aspiration of reduced car use, although it is important that the attractiveness of commercial opportunities to potential businesses is not inhibited, thereby helping to ensure the local centre flourishes from the outset. Parking for the commercial uses located within the local centre will be allocated to each respective business wherever possible.

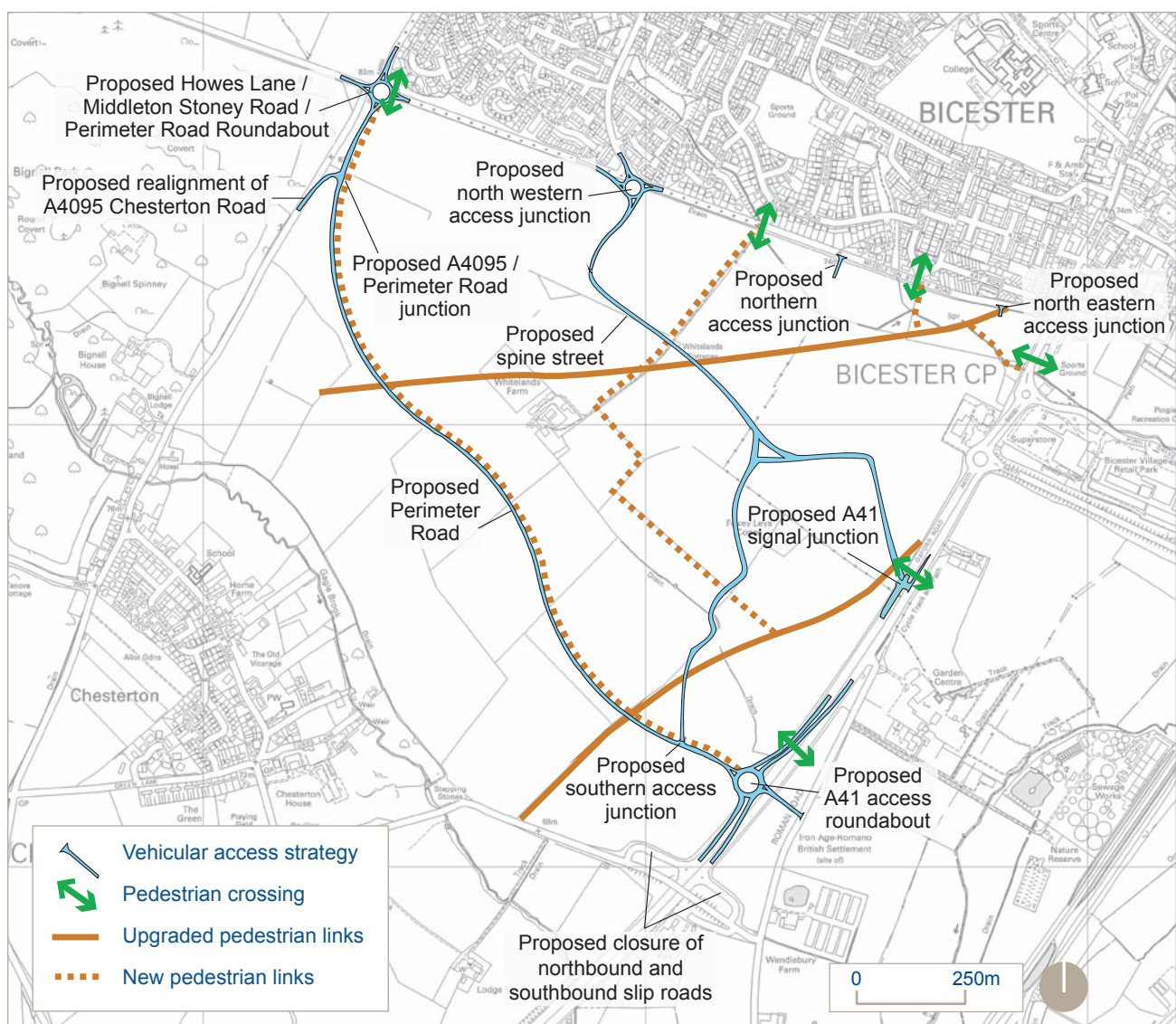


Figure 7.1 Access strategy



8 Services

Introduction

- 8.1 A services report has been prepared by WSP to cover the existing utility services within and in close proximity to the site, together with a review of necessary service diversions and proposals for provision of services to the developed site. This report is based on enquiries and investigations carried out between April and August 2005 for an area of development land approximately 95 hectares.
- 8.2 Initial inquiries were made to the following service providers:
- electricity - Scottish and Southern Energy plc
 - foul and surface water drainage, potable water - Thames Water Utilities (TWU)
 - gas supply – Transco
 - telecommunications – BT and Telewest Broadband
 - highway drainage - Oxford County Council
- 8.3 Additionally the following service providers have confirmed that they do not have apparatus within the site:
- high voltage electricity – National Grid
 - pipelines – NPL
- 8.4 The service providers were requested to indicate the potential for their existing infrastructure to support the development proposals together with an indication of any upgrade required to existing infrastructure.

Foul water drainage

- 8.5 Records received from TWU indicate that there are no adopted foul water sewers located on the site, with Whitelands Farm having septic tanks to serve the farm complex and the cottages. The main Bicester sewage treatment works is located approximately 500m east of the site on the east side of the A41 Oxford Road.
- 8.6 There are three foul water sewers within the vicinity of the site: on the north side of Middleton Stoney Road, in the southern verge of Middleton Stoney Road and in the northern verge of Chesterton Road.
- 8.7 Thames Water advised at a meeting of 9th November 2005 that their STW has capacity for the proposed development. Details of the connections from the site to adjacent foul sewers and the STW are under assessment by Thames Water.

Electricity

- 8.8 Information obtained from Scottish and Southern Energy confirms that there is existing electrical equipment both on and off-site. There are no high voltage strategic overhead cables in the vicinity of the site.
- 8.9 Development of the site will require a number of sub-stations and possibly a primary sub-station (if gas heating is not used). The location of these will be determined having regard to the layout of development proposed at the detailed design stage and the provision of adequate access for maintenance. A maximum of 12 sub-stations will be required, equally distributed through the site, needing approximately 6m x 4m together with unimpeded vehicular access. If required, the primary sub-station will require a larger building and compound.

Gas

- 8.10 Southern Gas Networks Ltd records indicate the presence of a medium pressure trunk main in the public highway to the north and east of the site. These are located in the eastern footway of the A41 Oxford Road and the carriageway of Middleton Stoney Road. Whitelands Farm and the cottages do not have a gas supply.
- 8.11 Southern Gas Networks has advised that the existing trunk main in Middleton Stoney Road is capable of supporting the additional demand arising from this development. In providing residential pressure connections, a small pressure reduction station will be required.
- 8.12 Although no diversion of gas apparatus is envisaged on site, this will be reviewed when final road access points have been determined.

Potable water

- 8.13 Thames Water's service record plans indicate water mains within all the roads surrounding the site boundary. There are 350mm diameter water mains located within the carriageways of Middleton Stoney Road and Oxford Road. The water supply for Whitelands Farm is extracted from a borehole located within the site. The farm has a large water tower for potable water storage.
- 8.14 Water supply constraint in the Bicester area is being resolved by laying a new trunk water main to bring new supplies to the area from Farmoor reservoir, west of Oxford. This will provide sufficient strategic supplies for Bicester, thereby avoiding impacts on existing supply in the area. Local reinforcements and connections to the site will be required.

Telecommunications

- 8.15 There are existing cable routes along the A41 Oxford Road serving various developments along the road. The Highfields estate is served from a main route along the north footway of Middleton Stoney Road that connects to the Oxford Road services.
- 8.16 Whiteland's Farm has a dedicated over ground service which spurs off the Oxford Road trunk route and passes up the south verge of Middleton Stoney Road before following the farm road through to the cottages and farm.
- 8.17 Telewest Broadband has confirmed that the proposed development will have no effect on their existing network and that no strategic additions are envisaged as a result. As elements of their network are built in response to customer orders, the situation is flexible.

Buried pipelines

- 8.18 There are no other pipelines crossing the site from recognised pipeline operators.

