

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

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Report title: Bicester Development Update	
Author: Jenny Barker (Eco Bicester Project Team)	
Tel: 01295 221828 Email: Jenny.Barker@cherwell-dc.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks to provide an update for Board Members on current proposals which are likely to be of relevance to the Board. The report is divided into the following sections to cover the wide range of activity currently taking place in the town;
- Policy Development
 - Development Proposals
 - Other matters

2. Policy Development

2.1 Local Policy

- 2.1.1 The planning act requires the determination of planning applications to be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan is therefore a key document in guiding development within the area it covers. The development plan for Bicester currently comprises the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. The South East Plan has now been withdrawn. The adopted Local Plan is dated and therefore in accordance with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework, carries limited weight in some circumstances. Significantly, sites identified for development have now largely been developed. It is therefore important that a replacement plan is progressed and adopted as soon as possible.
- 2.1.2 The Proposed Submission Draft Cherwell Local Plan, which will replace the current adopted plan, and the Bicester Master Plan have been subject to public consultation. Focused changes to the Local Plan have now also been out to consultation, which ended on the 23rd May 2013. These representations will now be reported to Cherwell's Executive and Full Council during June and July, prior to the plan being submitted for examination. These are therefore important steps towards securing an up to date adopted plan.

3. Development Proposals

3.1 Current Development Proposals

- 3.1.1 This section of the report aims to provide the Board with an overview the current position on the most significant development proposals affecting the town. The attached appendix to the report identifies the major schemes that have planning permission, those where a planning

application has been submitted and finally those where there has been public consultation or screening or scoping for environmental impact assessment.

- 3.1.2 It is worth noting that development interest in Bicester remains strong, with considerable progress towards delivering sites in and around the town.
- 3.1.3 The town centre scheme is nearing completion with Sainsburys now fitting out their store and the cinema now also being fitted out. This town centre scheme will bring a significant increase in retail floor space as well as a cinema, which has long been sought for the town. The completion of a town centre scheme in the current climate is particularly welcome. The scheme will provide much needed expansion of the town centre offer for Bicester.
- 3.1.4 Kingsmere (SW Bicester) is one of the few major urban extensions making significant progress on delivery. The site currently has several major house builders building out parcels of land and it is anticipated that further parcels of land for development will be released shortly. This site is providing an important contribution to both market and affordable housing delivery in the District. In addition it has facilitated the provision of the sports village with will serve the town and will provide a significant expansion of the out door sports pitches available. The hotel site has been developed and is open and a public house has been provided adjacent. Discussions on the design of the primary school have commenced.
- 3.1.5 A further proposal with permission is Chiltern Railways' upgrading of the Oxford Bicester - London rail service. This includes the provision of a significantly upgraded Bicester Town Station. A series of submissions are now in the process of being made to Cherwell District Council to seek approvals for the detailed works associated with the scheme such as the new rail chord, station and pedestrian bridges. These applications once permitted will enable the works on the upgraded route to commence, providing Bicester with improved rail links with Oxford and London.
- 3.1.6 A number of significant sites also now have resolutions to grant planning permission, which will enable them to proceed on completion of legal agreements and the issuing of planning permission.
- 3.1.7 The application for development at Graven Hill is now the subject of a resolution to grant planning permission subject to final agreement of the S106 Agreement and conditions. Work has therefore commenced on the drafting of the legal agreement but, as a large and complex site, the drafting is likely to take some time.
- 3.1.8 Other significant sites with resolutions to grant planning permission are the proposed extension to Bicester Village and new Tesco Store adjacent to the A41. The drafting of legal agreements with regard to these sites continues.
- 3.1.9 Land to the North of Skimmingdish Lane, which has had a planning permission for some time for B1 commercial use is now the subject of an application for a care home. Whilst this is not the employment development that had been sought for the site, the site permission has been around for some time without being taken up and the current proposed use, if permitted, will provide some local employment. This highlights the greater difficulty in securing development of business premises as opposed to residential development.
- 3.1.10 New proposals for development continue to be put forward. Not all are in accordance with emerging policies for the town and as such are likely to be resisted. However there are some such as the development of the park and ride site to the south of Kingsmere that has recently

been the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment scoping opinion that could be part of the long term strategy to develop the town and provide important infrastructure.

- 3.1.11 The level of development activity and interest in developing in the town, demonstrated by the large number of proposals coming forward, is an encouraging sign of progress in the development of the town.

4 Other Matters

- 4.1 Town centre access works are being carried out in connection with the town centre redevelopment by Oxfordshire County Council. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of May 2013 providing improved access to the town centre and facilitating the relocation of town centre bus stops to Manorsfield Road.
- 4.2 M40 J9 improvements are to be funded by Department of Transport with additional funding through Oxfordshire County Council. This work is currently programmed for start March 14 and completion by March 2015. This improvement is important as without it, growth of the town will be restricted by the capacity of the motorway junction to cope with increased traffic. This has been recognised on the allocation of funding to the improvement which will ensure this potential restriction to the development of the town can be removed.
- 4.3 Bicester's rail connections continue to be an important factor in its future growth. The Chiltern Rail improvements between Oxford and London are progressing to implementation whilst the proposals for East West Rail continue to develop.
- 4.4 The MOD has now sold the RAF Bicester technical site to a group known as Bicester Heritage Ltd. They have indicated that the company plans to establish a 'national vintage motoring and aviation facility' on the site. Once proposals have progressed, further details can be provided to the Board.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The level of growth and the proposals taking shape in Bicester are attracting national attention. This is demonstrated by the number of groups and individuals that are now visiting the town to hear about the work that is being done. For instance there continues to be government interest regarding Bicester, as well as proposed visits by the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the BOB MK Urban Design Group. Two groups of visitors from Europe have been accommodated in the last month, a group from Trondheim in Norway and a group of students from Nuertingen Germany. This interest from outside the town reflects the increasingly high profile nature of the Town and development within it.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Board is recommended to note the report