

Cherwell District Council

Executive

3 November 2014

<p>North West Bicester Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document</p>

Report of Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy

This report is public

Purpose of report

- a) To update the Executive on the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to support proposals for an Eco-town development of up to 6,000 homes on land at North West (NW) Bicester.
- b) To endorse the Draft document and seek approval for public consultation on the Draft NW Bicester SPD.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To endorse the Draft SPD for public consultation (a copy to be placed in the Members Room)
- 1.2 To authorise officers, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, to make any further non-substantive changes to the Draft SPD prior to public consultation

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Approximately 345 Hectares (800 acres) of land was identified by Cherwell District Council as having the potential to accommodate a 5,000 home eco-town at North West Bicester. The site was included in the Eco-towns Planning Policy Statement (PPS) Annex A in 2009 as a location with potential for an eco-town and subsequently proposed as a large scale development in Policy Bicester 1 of the Cherwell Local Plan.
- 2.2 The site underpins the strategic objectives for Bicester and has led to significant support from Government funding, the creation of the Eco Bicester Project Strategic Delivery Board, the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision (2010) and national recognition of the growth proposals for Bicester. More recently the eco-town development

proposals have informed the preparation of the Bicester Masterplan (Consultation Draft 2012) and continue to support the Council's policy position.

- 2.3 A hybrid application was submitted in November 2010 for the first phase of development (Planning Application Reference: 10/01780/HYBRID) and approved in July 2012. The planning application was supported by a masterplan.
- 2.4 In March 2014, the developers, A2Dominion submitted a Vision Document including a Draft Masterplan to Cherwell District Council (CDC) for comment. A revised document and supporting information was submitted to CDC in May 2014. The revised masterplan area covers approximately 400 hectares (1000 acres).
- 2.5 The Draft NW Bicester Masterplan was used as the basis for a five week public consultation on the Issues and Options between 18 June and 24 July 2014. The consultation exercise included an event in Bicester on 10 and 11 July 2014 which was attended by members of the public and local residents. The consultation has informed the preparation of the Draft SPD. A summary of the consultation is contained in the Appendices.
- 2.6 Construction began on the site in June 2014. Three outline planning applications have been submitted on the NW Bicester site as follows:
- 2.7 Application 1 (Planning application reference: 14/01384/OUT): This application was submitted in August 2014 and relates to approximately 155 hectares (374 acres) of land north of the A4095 Lords Lane between the railway line and Banbury Road (B4100). The proposals include up to 2,600 new homes (up to 250 extra care homes), green infrastructure, land for a new primary school and further land for an extension of the phase 1 exemplar primary school and possible extension to its playing fields. A new local centre will be provided to meet the needs of the community. The application provides for access arrangements and the partial realignment of Bucknell Road through the site.
- 2.8 Application 2 (Planning Application reference: 14/01641/OUT): This application was submitted in September 2014 and relates approximately to 51 hectares (123 acres) of land south of the railway line and north west of the A4095 Howes Lane, including Aldershot Farm and Gowell Farm in Bicester. The proposals include up to 900 new homes, open space, land for a primary school, secondary school and local centre. It also provides part of the realigned Howes Lane and site access arrangements.
- 2.9 Application 3 (Planning Application reference: 14/01675/OUT): This application was submitted in October 2014 and relates to approximately 14 hectares (34 acres) of land at the junction of Middleton Stoney Road and Howes Lane. The proposals include a 9.45 hectare (23 acre) employment zone together with 4.5 hectares (11 acres) of residential land as part of an employment-led mixed use development comprising up to 53,000 square metres (570,500 sq ft) general industrial uses (within Use Class B2 of the Use Classes Order) /storage or distribution (within Use Class B8) and ancillary business uses including offices (within Use Class B1). The application also provides parking and service areas to serve the employment areas, internal roads, paths and cycleways, a new access from Middleton Stoney Road (B4030), temporary access off Howes Lane pending the realigned Howes Lane

proposal, landscaping including strategic green infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) and associated utilities.

- 2.10 Two further applications are expected to be submitted as follows:
- 2.11 Application 4: This detailed planning application will include a proposal to construct a new link road to realign Howes Lane (A4095) in accordance with the Draft NW Bicester masterplan.
- 2.12 Application 5: This application is expected to include proposals for up to 1,700 homes on land east of Middleton Stoney Road and Himley Farm.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Plan) (England) Regulations 2012 provide the legislative framework for the preparation of supplementary planning documents setting out the form and content of such documents. Further guidance is set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 153 and National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 3.2 National Planning Policy Guidance states that SPDs should only be prepared where necessary and in line with paragraph 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It goes on to state that they should build upon policies in the adopted Local Plan. It states that in exceptional circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required when producing a supplementary planning document.
- 3.3 Policy Bicester 1 of the emerging Cherwell Local Plan sets out the development standards for NW Bicester. Further guidance on the approach to design and sustainable construction in Cherwell will be set out in a separate Sustainable Building in Cherwell SPD. Any policies in a SPD must not conflict with the adopted development plan.
- 3.4 The Eco-town development at NW Bicester is recognised as a locally and nationally important project delivering large scale development to high environmental standards. In order to assist in delivery of successful schemes through the planning process, the Council's Eco Bicester project team is preparing guidance for applicants, developers and landowners preparing proposals and submissions for planning applications. It will also set out a planning framework to develop proposals from the masterplanning stage to submission of detailed planning applications and implementation.
- 3.5 Proposed Modifications were reported to the Cherwell Full Council meeting on 20 October 2014 who approved for the final proposed modifications to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Plan Examination suspended in June 2014 will recommence. At the Local Plan Examination in June, the Inspector's conclusion was that the Local Plan did not make provision to meet the need for 22,800 new homes identified in the 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The proposed modifications include some minor changes to the wording of Policy Bicester 1 set

out in Part1 of the Schedule (Modifications Numbers 67 to 71). Consultation on the Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Modifications closed on 3 October 2014.

- 3.6 The SPD may be the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment. A SEA Screening Report has been prepared and a fee proposal obtained from consultants working on the Cherwell Local Plan. The report concludes that an SEA will be required given the significant effects arising from the masterplan SPD which are not covered by the Cherwell Local Plan SA.
- 3.7 In preparing the Draft masterplan SPD, officers have taken into account national planning guidance. The Draft masterplan SPD will take account of the national guidance and as such includes sections on masterplan framework and development principles before setting out an implementation/delivery strategy. The SPD sets out the vision for the eco-town masterplan and will be used as informal planning guidance in determining planning applications. Design guidance and character areas are included in the SPD as a guide to developers and reflecting the phasing of the masterplan.
- 3.8 The next step will be to finalise the SPD before publishing the document for a formal six week consultation following the Executive's decision at its meeting on 3 November 2014. The responses from the consultation will be considered before a final report is prepared and presented to the Executive for approval. The programme for preparing the document is attached in the Appendices. The SPD will be used as informal planning guidance as it cannot be adopted as CDC planning policy until the Cherwell Local Plan is adopted.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The NW Bicester Development Framework SPD will guide future eco-town developments and be used as informal guidance in determining planning applications that have been received and will be submitted as the proposals progress. It follows the standards set out in the Eco-towns PPS and emerging Cherwell Local Plan, providing further detail for consideration in planning applications, the development principles and character areas for the site. It is supported by a Sustainability Appraisal which considers the environmental effects of the masterplan proposals.
- 4.2 The Executive is recommended to note the contents of this report and endorse the vision and principles set out in the Draft masterplan as the basis of the Council's policy to be used as the basis for determining planning applications.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 An online five week (18 June 2014 to 24 July 2014) public consultation on the Issues and Options had a low response from the public despite efforts to publicise it widely. Respondents were encouraged to use the CDC consultation portal but could also use a paper copy of the questionnaire to complete the consultation. The consultation was open from and widely publicised in the local press, CDC website and social media. An exhibition displaying the issues and options took place in the Bicester pop-in centre in Manorsfield Road between 12.00 pm and 7.00 pm on 10

and 11 July 2014. Previously A2Dominion had organised a consultation on the masterplan in Bicester town centre. Comments were received from the general public and have been taken into account in preparing the Draft SPD. Comments made by individuals covered a range of issues including the suitability of the site and principle of development and the need for affordable homes.

Oxfordshire County Council Lisa Michelson, Locality Manager	Consultee response to follow
David Flavin, Senior Planning Officer	Requested further information on proposals
Natural England Olivia Euesden	Generally supportive
Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)	Applicants need to demonstrate that a net gain in Biodiversity will be delivered
Neil Rowntree	General comments
Sport England Raymond Cole	
Cherwell District Council Aboricultural Officer Anti Social Behaviour Manager	Detailed comments on tree pits Proposals accord with best practice
Middleton Stoney Parish Council	Concern about increase to 6,000 homes
Chesterton Parish Council	Concern about traffic impact

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To not prepare and SPD and rely on the Eco towns PPS Cherwell Local Plan policy 1 and submitted Draft masterplan – This option was rejected given the potential for the PPS to be revoked and delay to the Local Plan adoption

Option 2: To commission consultants to prepare the SPD – This option was rejected in favour of the Eco Bicester project team leading on its preparation

Option 3: To await the adoption of the Local Plan before preparing SPD – This option was rejected due to the timescales involved and the necessity to have some form of informal planning guidance when determining the first outline applications later in 2014.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The cost of producing the SPD can be met within existing budgets.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report. Supplementary Planning Documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions and will guide applicants in making suitable planning applications for development at NW Bicester.

Comments checked by:

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

Bicester Wards
Caversfield
Chesterton and Ambrosden
Launton
Bucknell
Middleton Stoney

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

This report directly links to all four of the corporate priorities and objectives set out in the Cherwell District Council Business Plan 2014-15 as follows:

Cherwell - A District of Opportunity
Cherwell – Safe, Clean and Green
Cherwell – Thriving Communities
Cherwell – Customer focussed Council

In addition it links to the strategic priorities for the Bicester projects.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Lead Member for Planning

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Draft SPD – to follow
Background Papers	
None	
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