

### *General*

114. Fulfilling its role in the overall strategy as one of the two most sustainable locations in the district, the plan focusses over 10,000 new homes on 5 strategic sites in and on the edge of Bicester by 2031. This will not only enhance its status as an economic centre but also help to attract new jobs, services and facilities to the town. It should also help to reduce growth pressures on Oxford city, to a degree, due to its location in the Oxford - Cambridge corridor with good and improving transport links, notably by rail.
115. The various iterations of the SA process, including the final submission report (SUB 04) and addendum (SUB 04A) confirm that the most sustainable options for new housing at Bicester have been identified in the plan and nothing that I have read, heard or seen during the examination process indicates otherwise. This includes in respect of the potential effects of development on each of the strategic sites in terms of landscape/visual impact, access/accessibility, biodiversity/ecological and cultural/heritage assets, coalescence with outlying villages/settlements, as well as flood risk and service provision.
116. The Council's evidence also demonstrates that all of the selected strategic sites for new housing in Bicester are viable and deliverable over the plan period (albeit Bic 1 may well continue to be developed beyond the plan period due to its overall size). Again, there is no firm evidence available that contradicts this conclusion. Accordingly, it is not necessary to consider in any detail any alternative or additional strategic scale site allocations to those identified in the plan, whilst those of a non-strategic scale are a matter for consideration in the Part 2 LP, should any further sites be necessary to meet needs over the plan period.

### *Policy Bicester 1 – North West Bicester Eco-Town*

117. This scheme is well established as a major mixed use, zero carbon, development, including now for about 6,000 homes, on around 390 ha on the north western edge of the existing built up area of Bicester, having been previously identified as an eco-town location in the former national addendum to PPS 1. This presumably formed part of the justification for the recent government announcement of Bicester as a "Garden City", with potential public funding to assist with the delivery of new infrastructure, subject to value for money. Although progress since 2009 has been slow, work has recently commenced on site in respect of a phase 1 "exemplar" project.
118. Policy Bic 1 appropriately sets out detailed requirements to be met in respect of employment provision of mainly B1 uses, with limited B2 and B8, housing, including extra care and 30% affordable provision, as well as infrastructure needs and specific design principles. In particular, the height of new buildings, especially for any B2 and B8 uses, will also need to be carefully considered. However, in order to respond to market signals and provide some flexibility to encourage new investment and implementation, it would not be reasonable or appropriate to seek to restrict all employment development to B1 uses only.
119. Despite the inevitable loss of green fields and good agricultural land, around 40% of the site would be provided as open space, with small groups of woodland and existing hedges/trees retained if at all possible. It is essentially

common ground that these policy provisions are necessary to achieve the form and standard of development expected under the former eco-town concept. Furthermore, the viability evidence available is sufficient to demonstrate that they should be deliverable in practice, with sufficient "critical mass" to support the provision of necessary infrastructure and community facilities/services.

120. Since the plan's submission and with improving national and local economic conditions, the Council has acknowledged that the rate of new housing delivery on this important site is capable of proceeding more swiftly than envisaged earlier, enabling it to achieve a larger contribution to new housing needs in the town and district by 2031. Whilst challenging, this should prove possible once a number of house builders are operating on site. Consequently, a modification is required to increase the number of new homes expected during the plan period from 5,000 to 6,000 (**MM 67**).
121. Also, in the light of further work towards implementation, including in the context of specific planning applications for the first phases of the scheme, a number of other modifications are required to the policy for clarity, consistency with the NPPF and PPG and to better address understandable local concerns about the potential impacts of this major development on the town, notably in respect of traffic and transport.
122. These relate to a requirement for a Masterplan, as well as a minimum of 10ha of employment land, with a business park at the south east corner of the site, at least 3,000 new jobs from all sources over the plan period and a Carbon Management Plan for all employment developments (**MM 70**). Regarding new housing, in addition to the increased numbers, it is appropriate that Building for Life 12 and Lifetime Homes standards are met, as well as superfast broadband provided.
123. For infrastructure, the policy wording needs to be clarified in seeking primary and secondary school provision on site, a GP surgery, a 4 ha burial ground, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, plus an Energy Strategy and a Water Cycle Study, in addition to those requirements set out in the submitted policy. Concerning design, policy amendments/additions are also necessary relating to flood risk assessment, a programme of archaeological investigations, the maintenance of visual separation from outlying settlements (e.g. Bucknell and Caversfield), linkages with existing habitats and promoting the use of locally sourced building materials.
124. Importantly in the local context, as referred to above, a modification regarding the implementation of a Travel Plan, including to achieve a high level of public transport accessibility, as well as pedestrian and cycling facilities, is also essential. Subject to all of the above modifications (**MM 71**), the policy is sound and consistent with the NPPF and PPG. Moreover, it should materially assist in the delivery of a zero carbon scheme, as originally envisaged in the former eco-towns supplement to PPS 1.

#### *Policy Bicester 2 – Graven Hill*

125. 241 ha of predominantly brownfield former MOD land to the south of Bicester is allocated in the plan for mixed use re-development, including 2,100 homes and with around 2,000 jobs on 26 ha of the site, alongside the re-organisation