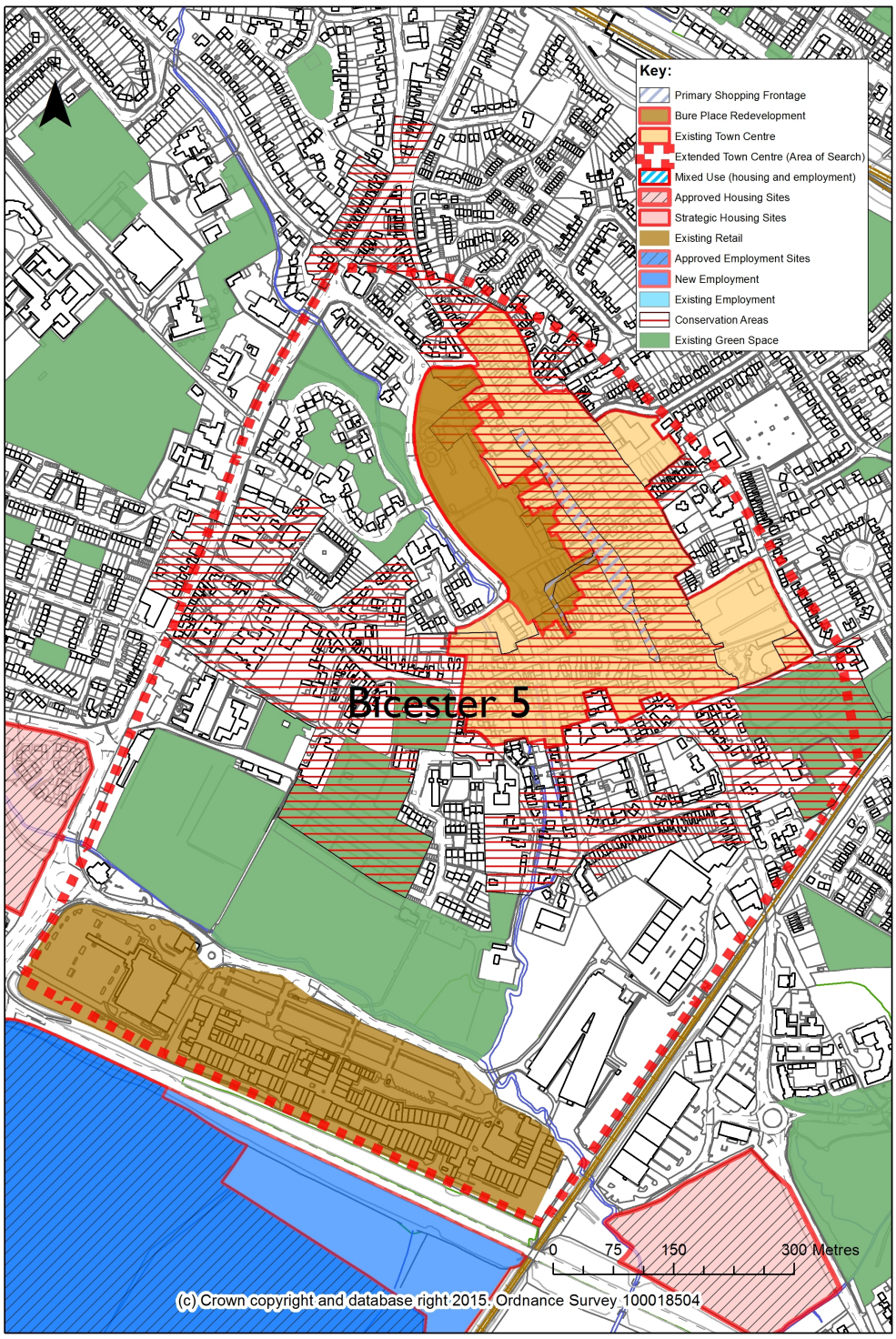
Figure 8 Local Plan Part 1 Map Bicester 5



Question 76

Bicester: Review of the Town Centre Boundary and the Primary Shopping Frontage

Within the parameters of the Area of Search established in the Local Plan Part 1, where should a new town centre boundary be defined? How should the Primary Shopping Frontage be defined?

Do you consider that further policy is required in the Local Plan Part 2 to provide guidance on determining planning applications in the defined Town Centre and the Primary Shopping Frontage?

Are there other specific sites within the Area of Search that you would like us to consider?

Please provide reasons for your comments.

Bicester: Transport infrastructure

5.19 The town is benefiting from recent improvements to transport infrastructure, including a new park and ride on land off Vendee Drive adjacent to the A41 at Kingsmere which opened at the end of November 2105, offering direct links between Bicester and Oxford. Improvements to the train service between Oxford and Bicester to allow connection between Oxford and London Marylebone has included improvements to Bicester Town railway station, now renamed Bicester Village, with further improvements planned as part of the East-West rail initiative. East-west rail is a major project to establish a strategic railway connection from Oxford via Bicester to Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich.

5.20 Oxfordshire County Council adopted a new Local Transport Plan, LTP4, in September 2015. LTP4 contains a Bicester Area Strategy, which seeks to:

- *"Increase highway capacity on the peripheral routes to make these attractive to employment and longer distance traffic and thereby reduce the strain on the town centre and central corridor.*
- *Implement a sustainable transport strategy within the town centre, reaching out to residential areas and key destinations.*
- *Accommodate proposed strategic rail initiatives, including East West Rail and plans for electrification and a possible future rail Freight Interchange, in order to strengthen Bicester's position on the national rail network and maximise access to regional economic centres, such as Milton Keynes, Oxford, Banbury, London and Birmingham."*

5.21 LTP4 sets out a number of measures to achieve these aims, some of which will be relevant to the preparation of Local Plan Part 2. The County Council has recently carried out consultation on options for a new south east perimeter road for the town. Once the County Council has fully assessed the options and decided upon a preferred route, the route will need to be included in Local Plan Part 2 to ensure the necessary land is reserved for the scheme. In addition the potential for a new motorway junction is to be examined, which may have implications for the south east relief road and Local Plan Part 2 policies and proposals as the Plan is progressed.

5.22 Work to achieve the aims of Eco Bicester One Shared Vision and to secure the North-West Bicester goal of at least 50%

of trips to be made by sustainable modes of transport and 40% of trips for the town as a whole, has included publication of a sustainable transport strategy for the town. The Bicester Sustainable Transport Strategy (October 2015)[25] is intended to help shape the town's transport network over the coming decades and focusses on walking and cycling networks and links to bus and rail services. The strategy identifies a comprehensive programme of infrastructure improvements to the existing transport network aimed at increasing the number of journeys made by sustainable modes (walking, cycling and public transport). It also sets out the potential for increased use of ultra-low emission vehicles including electric vehicles. The strategy will inform policies and proposals to be contained in Local Plan Part 2.

5.23 The Highways Agency has commissioned a study to explore options for an Oxford to Cambridge "expressway", to improve connectivity between towns and cities from Oxford to Cambridge, making use of existing roads where possible and considering the case for addressing "missing links". This could further improve transport connections between Bicester, Oxford and Cambridge.

5.24 The various transport initiatives being progressed by Highways England, Oxfordshire County Council and the District Council and other authorities and bodies highlight the need for joint working on transport matters.

Question 77

Bicester: Transport infrastructure

Do you have any views on transport issues in Bicester that you think should be addressed in Local Plan Part 2?

Bicester: Retaining Local Identity and Character whilst Accommodating Growth

5.25 Bicester is a market town with a long-standing military presence. Despite its rapid growth in the 20th Century Bicester's pre-18th Century core remains and forms part of the town's commercial centre. The Bicester conservation area covers the majority of the historic part of the town and covers many Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings. St Edburg's Church is grade 1 Listed and the oldest remaining building in the town. There are key views to the Church from within the conservation area, and external views from the A421 north east across the sports ground to its tower and surrounding buildings contribute to the setting of the conservation area. A second conservation area covers RAF Bicester to the north-east of the town, which contains the best preserved bomber airfield dating from the period up to 1945.

5.26 The River Bure and its tributaries flows north- west to south- east through the town towards the River Ray, with the Langford Brook in the south east of the town. Much of the River Bure is canalised through the centre of the town. The land is flat with Graven Hill being the only prominent feature in the landscape.

25 http://www.ecobicester.org.uk/cms/content/bicester-sustainable-transport-strategy-0

5.27 It is important that as the town develops further, its local identity and character is retained and enhanced.

Question 78

Bicester: Retaining Local Identity and Character whilst Accommodating Growth

Do you have any views on how we can ensure that Bicester's local identity and character are retained and enhanced as the town continues to grow?

Bicester: Green infrastructure

5.28 Securing a good green infrastructure network is an essential component of achieving sustainable development. The development of the eco-town at North West Bicester and Bicester's Garden Town status arguably adds to the importance of protecting and enhancing the green infrastructure network as well as developing new green infrastructure as part of the growth of the town.

5.29 Local Plan Part 1 Policy Bicester 7 continues previous planning strategies in seeking to secure an urban edge park around the town, by protecting the existing network of green spaces and securing new open space and linear route provision linked with public footpaths/cycleways, to create a circular route with connections to the town centre and to the countryside beyond. Core components of the existing open space network include Bure Park, Pingle Fields, Bicester Fields, and land in the town council's ownership adjacent to Skimmingdish Lane. Garth Park is the main town park providing a mix of recreation provision. There are number of areas in private ownership used informally for recreation purposes which contribute to the network, albeit with no secured public access.

5.30 Policy Bicester 7 seeks to establish community woodland between Vendee Drive and Chesterton, and indicates that proposals for the use of Stratton Audley (Elm Farm) quarry for informal outdoor recreation will be encouraged provided that they are compatible with the site's designation as a Local Wildlife Site and partial SSSI. The strategic site allocations contained in Local Plan Part 1 will result in new areas of open space and connecting footpath/cycleway links, which will contribute to the town's green infrastructure network. Some of the measures identified in the Bicester Sustainable Transport Strategy could also result in improvements to the green infrastructure network, such as enhancement of pedestrian routes/cycleways.

5.31 In preparing the masterplan and Local Plan Part 2 we need to consider what additional measures need to be included to protect and enhance Bicester's green infrastructure network. Some of the sites originally allocated for recreation use in previous local plans have been lost to housing, or the site has not been formally secured, and consideration needs to be given as to whether these sites should be retained as allocations for recreation use in Local Plan Part 2. As indicated earlier, we are updating our assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities to inform the preparation of Local Plan Part 2, and policies and proposals may need to be included in Local Plan Part 2 to address any identified deficiencies in provision.

5.32 Local Wildlife Sites at Gavray Drive, Graven Hill and Bicester Wetland Reserve also form part of the town's green infrastructure network. Further work will be undertaken on the cumulative effects of

development on the biodiversity resource, together with the formulation of a biodiversity mitigation and enhancement strategy, to inform Local Plan Part 2.

5.33 Early work on a draft Bicester masterplan raised the idea of a new town park being formed between the town centre and Bicester Village, located on Pingle Fields and part of the Bicester Sports Association site. The Inspector of Local Plan Part 1, in making his report, indicated that the potential for a new park should be assessed as part of the Masterplan and Local Plan Part 2 process, including in terms of economic viability and practical implementation. This area lies within the "area of search" for the review of the town centre boundary discussed above. In assessing the potential for alternative uses the potential for securing a suitable alternative site for the pitch provision that would be lost will need to be explored.

Question 79

Bicester: Green Infrastructure

How do you think the existing green infrastructure network in the town could be enhanced?

Bicester: Effecting a Town Wide Transition to a Low Carbon Environmentally Sustainable Community

5.34 In preparing Local Plan Part 2 we will need to consider how the growth of Bicester can be aligned with an environmental sustainability agenda. How will we create a vibrant Bicester where people choose to live, to work and spend their leisure time in sustainable ways? Can we attract inward investment to provide environmentally friendly jobs? How do we improve transport, health, education and leisure choices while emphasizing zero carbon and energy efficiency and how do we ensure green infrastructure and historic landscapes, biodiversity, water, flood and waste issues are managed in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way?

Question 80

Transition to a Low Carbon Environmentally Sustainable Community

Do you have any views on environmental issues in Bicester that you think should be addressed in Local Plan Part 2?

Bicester: Consideration of the Need to Allocate Non-Strategic Sites

5.35 In preparing Local Plan Part 2 we will need to consider whether non-strategic sites need to be allocated at Bicester, for employment, housing, open space or other land uses. Suggestions for non-strategic sites at Bicester that you consider to be suitable for development are requested elsewhere in this Issues Paper under the various topic headings. The Council will also need to consider whether any sites previously proposed for development in the 1996 Adopted Cherwell Local Plan and the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan which have not been implemented should continue to be allocated as part of Local Plan Part 2. The Call for Sites and updating of the SHLAA will inform this process.

5.3 Banbury

Introduction

5.36 Banbury is the District's largest settlement, with a population of nearly 47,000 recorded in the 2011 census. The town contains a range of retail developments, employment and cultural/leisure facilities serving a wide sub region. It has received significant growth in recent decades, firstly as a result of accommodating overspill growth from London and the Midlands, and more recently as part of the "country towns" strategy aimed at relieving development pressure from Oxford. The town is set to receive further growth as a result of policies and proposals in Local Plan Part 1. Topographical and historic landscape constraints are important to the setting of the town and have influenced its development. Banbury's economy is focussed on manufacturing, distribution, service industries, local government and health, with the town benefitting from its location adjacent to the M40 and with a good train service to London and Birmingham.

5.37 The spatial strategy contained in Local Plan Part 1 indicates that Banbury will continue to grow, albeit to a lesser extent than Bicester, in accordance with its status as a market town with a rural hinterland. Local Plan Part 1 identified a number of challenges for the town, as summarised in Appendix 3 'Local Plan Part 1 Challenges and Issues'. The policies and proposals in Local Plan Part 1 have addressed some of these challenges, with a number of strategic development sites being identified for residential and employment development, including a new employment site to the east of the M40. Policy Banbury 10 identifies a regeneration area in the west of the town. A relocation site is identified for Banbury United Football Club in Policy Banbury 12, and a new Cherwell Country Park is proposed in Policy Banbury 14. Provision is also made for additional secondary school facilities.

5.38 However some of the above challenges remain relevant for consideration in preparing Local Plan Part 2. Local Plan Part 1 also indicated that some issues would need progressing through Local Plan Part 2, as discussed under key issues below.

5.39 A masterplan for Banbury is in the early stages of preparation to develop the vision, objectives and policies for the town as contained in Local Plan Part 1, focussing on improving the town's economic performance and securing a better future for local people. Some elements of this work may be relevant to Local Plan Part 2 as it emerges.

Banbury - Key issues for Local Plan Part 2:

Banbury: Review of the Town Centre Boundary and Primary Shopping Frontage

5.40 Banbury's main retail areas are focussed in the town centre, along the Southam Road and Banbury Cross Retail Park to the north of the town, and at the recently completed Banbury Gateway development close to the M40 junction 11. The town has three main supermarkets: Morrison's located on the edge of the town centre, Tesco's in the north of the town, and Sainsbury's in the south of the town. The Council has recently resolved to grant planning permission for a Waitrose store on the Southam Road.

5.41 The town centre is the largest shopping and service centre in Cherwell District and is a regional centre, drawing visitors from south Warwickshire and south Northamptonshire as well as from a rural hinterland within Oxfordshire. The majority