

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

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Report title: NW Bicester Steering Group Report	
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to set out progress on the development at NW Bicester, the largest strategic allocation within the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. The report covers progress on the exemplar development which is now under construction, planning applications relating to the site and the production of Supplementary Planning Document.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Eco Towns PPS identified NW Bicester as 1 of 4 eco towns to be developed nationally in 2009. The PPS has now been withdrawn, although it was retained for Bicester. The land at NW Bicester is identified as a strategic allocation for development in the adopted Local Plan.
- 2.2 Since the identification of the site at NW Bicester for an eco development, the Bicester project team has been working with developers to deliver an exemplary sustainable development that will function as part of the growing Bicester Town.

3. Elmsbrook (Exemplar) Development

- 3.1 In July 2012 planning permission was granted for an exemplar development of 393 dwellings, local centre, eco business centre and primary school (Application reference 10/01780/HYBRID). The proposed development is believed to be the largest Code for Sustainable Homes level 5 scheme and domestic PV array in the country. The proposal also includes rainwater harvesting and reduced water use, car club and sustainable travel incentives, high speed broadband, provision for electric vehicles, allotments, real time transport and community information to each home, net biodiversity gain, provision for a local management organisation and 30% affordable housing. The application therefore set out how it would achieve an exemplary sustainable development.
- 3.2 Work on the development commenced in May 2014 with construction starting on highway access work. Work on site on the construction of dwellings has followed. The show homes and sales centre opened on the 6th June 2015 and the properties on phase 1 (97 dwellings) are now largely complete and due to be occupied spring 2016. Feedback has indicated that sales are above industry averages and are going well. Development will progress on to the second phase immediately on completion of the first phase. Work is currently underway to clear conditions before construction starts on the second phase also in the spring. A2Dominion are planning for the completion of the first plots on the second phase at the end of 2016.

3.3 The development has attracted considerable interest both locally and nationally because of the innovative nature of the development. One element of this is that the construction process is being monitored through an innovate UK funded project (BEPIT) which is seeking to help improve the construction for homes that are designed to higher sustainability standards. The learning that comes through this project will be used to improve construction on the later phases and will be shared through the Eco Bicester Living Lab, <http://bicesterlivinglab.org/>. The project is starting to identify lessons from the first phase of development and these are being used to develop a tool kit that can be used to deliver better on site construction of new dwellings.

3.4 In addition to residential development the planning permission for the exemplar also includes a local centre, eco business centre, primary school and open space. The first elements of the local centre, the convenience store and community hall, are required prior to the completion of 250 dwellings and a planning application needed to be submitted 12 months from the start of on site works or the occupation of 100 dwellings, whichever is the sooner. Marketing of the retail store is also required to commence to the same time line.

3.5 An application has been submitted for the local centre, application ref 15/00760/F. The application is for;

Development of a new Local Centre comprising a Convenience Store (use class A1), Retail Units (flexible use class A1/A3/A5), Pub (use class A4), Community Hall (use class D1), Nursery (use class D1), Commercial Units (flexible use class A2/B1/D1) with associated Access, Servicing, Landscaping and Parking.

This application, 15/00760/F, has a resolution to grant planning permission subject to the completion of the legal agreement.

3.6 The site for the Eco Business Centre is located within the local centre area. A report on the proposed Eco Business Centre was considered by Cherwell District Council's Executive in July 2015 to agree authority to proceed to procure the building. A project board has been established to progress the project and soft market testing has been carried out. Procurement options are now being considered and are due to be reported to the Executive in March to progress the project.

3.7 An application was submitted to Oxfordshire County Council for the primary school, which now has been granted planning permission. Work has started on site on the construction of the school. The White Horse Federation will be the academy provider and a Head has now been appointed but is not yet in post. The school was originally being targeted for opening in 2016 but there has been insufficient pupils for this year and therefore OCC and the Department of Education have agreed that the school should open in September 2017.

4. **Supplementary Planning Document for NW Bicester**

4.1 A2Dominion have led on masterplanning for the whole of the NW Bicester site. The Masterplan and supporting documents were submitted to Cherwell District Council in May 2014 with updated transport strategy on 24 June 2014. This masterplan has been worked up in collaboration with the Council and key stakeholders.

4.2 The District Council has now produced a supplementary planning document (SPD) to guide development proposals for the site. The document was approved for Development Management purposes by Cherwell's Executive on the 1st June 2015. The document was

reviewed in the light of the Local Plan Inspector's report and reported back to the Executive 1st February 2016 and was reported to full Council on the 22nd March 2016 for formal adoption. The SPD provides further detail to support the Local Plan policy for the site and guide development proposals.

5. Outline Planning Applications

- 5.1 A2Dominion have submitted 2 outline applications to Cherwell District Council for determination. The applications are for;

14/01384/OUT

Development comprising redevelopment to provide up to 2600 residential dwellings (Class C3), commercial floorspace (Class A1 - A5, B1 and B2), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre, land to accommodate one new primary school (Up to 2FE) (Class D1) and land to accommodate the extension of the primary school permitted pursuant to application (reference 10/01780/HYBRID). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure, ancillary engineering and other operations

Bicester Eco Town Exemplar Site, Banbury Road B4100, Caversfield

This application is subject to a resolution taken on the 19th March 2015 to grant planning permission subject to the completion of legal agreements. Work is progressing on the detailed drafting of legal agreements.

14/01641/OUT

Outline Application - To provide up to 900 residential dwellings (Class C3), commercial floor space (Class A1-A5, B1 and B2), leisure facilities (Class D2), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2 FE) (Class D1), secondary school up to 8 FE (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure, ancillary engineering and other operations

Land Adj To Bicester Road And South West Of Avonbury Business Park, Howes Lane, Bicester

This application is also subject to a resolution taken on the 29th October 2015 to grant planning permission subject to the completion of legal agreements.

- 5.2 Albion Land has submitted an application for;

14/01675/OUT

OUTLINE - Erection of up to 53,000 sqm of floor space to be for B8 and B2 with ancillary B1 (use classes) employment provision within two employment zones covering an area of 9.45ha; parking and service areas to serve the employment zones; a new access off the Middleton Stoney Road (B4030); temporary access of Howes Lane pending the delivery of the realigned Howes Lane; 4.5ha of residential land; internal roads, paths and cycleways; landscaping including strategic green infrastructure (G1); provision of sustainable urban systems (suds) incorporating landscaped areas with balancing ponds and swales. Associated utilities and infrastructure.

OS Parcel 4200 Adjoining And North East Of A4095 And Adjoining And South West Of

Howes Lane, Bicester

This application was received 7 October 2014 and reported to the planning committee on 21st January 2016. The application was deferred to enable discussions with the applicants with regard to the nature of the uses to be accommodated on the site.

- 5.3 A2Dominion have submitted a detailed application for the realignment of Howes Lane.

14/01968/F

Construction of new road from Middleton Stoney Road roundabout to join Lord's Lane, east of Purslane Drive, to include the construction of a new crossing under the existing railway line north of the existing Avonbury Business Park, a bus only link east of the railway line, a new road around Hawkwell Farm to join Bucknell Road, retention of part of Old Howes Lane and Lord's Lane to provide access to and from existing residential areas and Bucknell Road to the south and a one way route northbound from Shakespeare Drive where it joins with the existing Howes Lane with priority junction and associated infrastructure.

Twenty Ha Of Land Proposal Of New Highway Aligned With Howes Lane Bicester

This application has been validated (26 November14) and been the subject of consultation. This application is for full planning permission and was reported to the planning committee on the 18th February 2016. It has been resolved to approve the application subject to completion of legal agreements.

- 5.4 P3Eco have submitted an application for;

14/02121/OUT

OUTLINE - Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1 and C1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road)

Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester Middleton Stoney Road Bicester Oxfordshire

This application was validated 31 December 2014 and was reported to the planning committee on the 18th February 2016. The application was deferred and is due to be reported back to the planning committee shortly.

- 5.5 The above proposals cover much, but not all, of the NW Bicester site. The way the site is coming forward as a series of individual large applications adds to the complexity of dealing with the proposals as it is necessary to ensure that they cumulatively deliver the masterplan proposals for the site and the delivery of infrastructure is co ordinated between proposals. Legal advice has been taken to support the drafting of agreements to ensure the high standards of development sought are delivered as well as the necessary delivery of infrastructure.

5.6 The most contentious element of the agreements is the need to limit development until such time as the rail tunnel is in place to avoid severe congestion on the Howes Lane/Bucknell Road junction. OCC currently advise that no more than 900 dwellings (including 393 already permitted on the Exemplar phase (Elmsbrook)) and 40% of the commercial development, should be built and occupied prior to the rail tunnel being in place. The applicant's for Himley Village are also exploring with the County Council the potential for an interim scheme to increase the capacity of the existing junction. All the applicants at NW Bicester are indicating that they would like to bring forward early development.

5.7 It has therefore been necessary to consider, based on OCCs current advice, how the initial capacity (507 further dwellings) should be permitted on the site. In doing this the Council has considered the following factors;

- How the capacity can support the delivery of the rail tunnel
- How a small parcel of development can be policy compliant and provide the facilities needed to support the first residents
- That the scheme is deliverable

To date only A2Dominion have identified a route through which to deliver the realigned Howes Lane and tunnel and have an offer of funding from the HCA to support the delivery of this infrastructure. It has therefore been proposed that they are permitted to develop the first 507 dwellings subject to requirements to pursue the build out of the tunnel during this period.

5.8 In the meantime work continues with DCLG to resolve the position with Network Rail with regard to the shared value (ransom) they are seeking.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Good progress is being made with the delivery of the Elmsbrook (exemplar) development on site. It is particularly encouraging that sales have demonstrated the appetite of house buyers for development to higher sustainability standards. The development taking place is a national exemplar and sets new standards for large scale sustainable development.

6.2 The NW Bicester SPD has progressed to adoption and, together with the adopted plan, means there is now local policy and guidance to facilitate the development of proposals and the determination of future applications and support the requirement to meet Eco Town standards.

6.3 Progress is being made with regard to applications for the wider site with all now having been before the planning committee. However the completion of legal agreements is on going. The District Council continues to work closely with the County Council to progress the drafting of the legal agreements.

6.4 Never the less there remain challenges in ensuring such a large and complex project comes forward in a timely manner. Work continues on processing the planning applications that are not yet subject to resolutions to grant planning permission and securing legal agreements to ensure comprehensive exemplar sustainable development. This together with ensuring key infrastructure is available within the town to support its growth including a new tunnel under the railway will be the focus of work over the next quarter.

7. Recommendation

7.1 The Board are asked to note the progress on the delivery of development at NW Bicester.

