

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 30 March 2017	AGENDA ITEM NO: 7
Report title: Eco Business Centre	
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is brought to provide the Board with an update on the work to progress the eco business centre to be provided at NW Bicester.

2. Background

- 2.1 The development at NW Bicester is being designed to Eco Town standards which include a requirement 'within a minimum there should be access to one employment opportunity per new dwelling that is easily reached by walking, cycling and/or public transport.'
- 2.2 As part of the first phase (now known as Elmsbrook) of the NW Bicester development the opportunity for an eco business centre was identified as one of the ways to provide employment on the site. The opportunity was identified to nurture businesses particularly in low carbon and sustainable construction, which would be attracted to the eco development as well as to support home working undertaken by occupiers on the site. The planning application 10/01780/HYBRID included outline planning permission for the eco business centre.
- 2.3 Although the eco business centre formed part of the planning permission for the first phase it became apparent that the returns from the proposed centre would not be sufficient to attract a commercial developer to undertake the development. Cherwell District Council therefore undertook to support the delivery of the Eco Business Centre and secured the transfer of land at NW Bicester for it.
- 2.4 The Council commissioned Basepoint to undertake a feasibility study of the eco business centre and this was completed in 2013 and reported to this Board. The report showed that the development of the eco business centre would fulfil a niche in the market and that there was demand and that it could provide a return on investment, all be it too modest to be likely to attract a commercial developer. On the basis of the report funding was identified within the Eco Town Budget to undertake the development.

3. Eco Business Centre Design and Programme

- 3.1 Further work on developing the proposals for the eco business centre has been timed to tie in with the availability of the site at Elmsbrook, which forms part of the local centre. With the occupation of the first houses in 2016 work has been progressed on the eco business centre. This has included further investigation of other similar facilities which has led to the design for the building having a greater emphasis on co working space than originally envisaged. This has also led to the

potential opportunity to provide co working space in a vacant ground floor unit at Franklins House to be explored and this too is now being progressed for a temporary period of 3 years.

- 3.2 The appointment of architects and identification of a contractor to undertake the work has resulted in the development of the design of the eco business centre to RIBA stage 4 and a planning application has been submitted. The design seeks to deliver a low carbon, energy efficient building that achieves BREEAM excellent and meets the Eco Town definition of zero carbon development, whilst still achieving a cost effective design. Consultation was undertaken prior to the submission of the application but the planning application provides the opportunity for further input into the design of the proposal.
- 3.3 The programme is to let a contract over the summer and commence work on site in 2017 completing the building in 2018. The programme remains tight but achievable.

4. Recommendation

The Board are asked to note the report and the progress on delivering the eco business centre.