

## Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

<b>Date of meeting: 27 July 2017</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM NO:  6</b>
<b>Report title: Housing Task and Finish Group</b>	
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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The housing task and finish group was established to monitor housing delivery and seek opportunities to increase housing delivery on behalf of the Board.

### 2. Housing Delivery

- 2.1 Since the last meeting of the Strategic Delivery Board (SDB) the preliminary housing delivery figures for 2016/17 have become available. In 2016/17 the preliminary figures for housing delivery are 369, this compares with a housing trajectory figure of 321 dwellings for the period.
- 2.2 Whilst the delivery rate is currently ahead of the trajectory for Bicester, however this sets increasingly ambitious targets for delivery over the coming years. Never the less there is reason to be optimistic that housing delivery will increase to meet these targets.
- 2.3 Of the major residential sites Kingsmere to the South West of the town has been delivering housing over a number of years but is now being joined by Graven Hill and the first phase of NW Bicester. In addition an additional 670 homes have now got outline planning permission on phase 2 at Kingsmere and there are resolutions to grant 5,350 homes at North West Bicester, subject to completion of legal agreements. The remaining large scale residential housing site, South East Bicester is the subject of a planning application and a revised masterplan is due to be submitted. There is therefore a strong pipeline of developments to support housing delivery.
- 2.4 To explore further the potential to increase the rate of housing delivery on the major sites, a meeting with the major developers is planned to explore areas where there is potential to speed up housing delivery.

### 3. Windfall Sites

- 3.1 As well as major sites there are also smaller sites that arise within the town that will increase housing numbers. An example of one such site is the former Lear Building on Launton Road/Bessemer Close. Residential development on this site was resisted because of the impact on employment land and existing businesses on adjoining land. Never the less planning permission has been granted on appeal and the site will now deliver 70 new homes.
- 3.2 Other sites within the town arise from time to time, where a change of use or redevelopment is possible to deliver new housing. One such site was the former library and adjoin land where the District Council's Build! Team are developing specialist housing. Currently the Magistrate

Court has been notified as surplus and the Homes and Communities Agency are exploring the acquisition of the site for housing and the potential of adjoining land. Small opportunities also arise from subdivisions and small infill plots within the town (windfall sites), but Bicester does not have significant areas of unused or under used land and therefore the majority of housing delivery is on the allocated sites on the edge of the town.

#### **4. Infrastructure to Support Housing Delivery**

- 4.1 One of the challenges of the scale of growth in Bicester is the ability to deliver the infrastructure required to support development. Much infrastructure is secured through planning permissions and accompanying legal agreements, this includes new schools, highway works, open space, sports facilities, affordable housing and community facilities. This infrastructure is that necessary to mitigate the impacts of new development and care is taken to ensure that it does not make development unviable. In addition there are cumulative impacts of development and challenges such as the need for rail crossings. Work continues by the District and County to seek to secure funding for this infrastructure that is necessary to support the growth of the town.
- 4.2 Garden Town designation provides one potential route to funding. There is potential to bid to treasury for funding to support delivery of housing. This is being pursued with the potential for investment in highway infrastructure.
- 4.3 The Government has also announced the Housing Investment Fund (£2.3 billion) (HIF), which ‘will help fund vital physical infrastructure projects like the building of roads, bridges, energy networks and other utilities’.....’Funding will also be available to help build new schools, healthcare centres and digital infrastructure to accommodate growing communities and alleviate pressure on public services.’ Funding is to be awarded to local authorities on a competitive basis to unlock new homes and is focused on marginal viability funding and forward funding. It is evident from the prospectus that the funding is anticipated to top up or provide seed funding to attract other investment.
- 4.4 Opportunities such as these are being explored to see if they could support housing delivery in Bicester.

#### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The housing delivery figure for 2016/17 shows a solid delivery of housing. There is a large pipeline of development to support future housing delivery. The challenges to housing delivery remain the timely completion of legal agreements, the securing of commencements on site, the funding and delivery of infrastructure in a timely manner. The work on housing delivery can also not happen in isolation. It is important that the town remains an attractive area that people choose to locate in, that business growth supports housing growth and investment in the town centre and leisure facilities continues. These are the conditions that will support the delivery of the planned growth.