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Eco Bicester – One Shared Vision

REVISED DRAFT

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Foreword from Cllr Barry Wood, Chairman

During August and September 2010 the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board consulted on a first draft of their proposed 'One Shared Vision for Eco Bicester'. This document is the resulting final version of the Vision which has benefited from many constructive comments from individuals, businesses, partnerships and public and voluntary organisations in Bicester and the surrounding area.

This Vision is about the whole of Bicester, not just about the 5,000 home eco development at NW Bicester. We want all residents in the town and the surrounding area to enjoy a higher quality of life while at the same time reducing their impact on the environment. The standards we set out in this Vision will apply to all future development in the town and we'll also be taking steps to reduce energy use in existing homes. This said, there are specific standards which currently will apply only to the eco development at NW Bicester as a result of its designation as just one of four eco towns nationally and its consequent role as a national exemplar.

This 'One Shared Vision' is the product of a fundamental rethink about how Bicester should develop in the future. Much of what it contains is not new thinking, but what is new is the way this document pulls together the thoughts and aspiration of public and private partnerships and organisations and overlays these with more recent aspirations for Bicester to be a truly low carbon community.

It will be adopted by Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council and Oxfordshire County Council as an important influence on policy- and decision-making in the town and surrounding areas. It will also become an integral part of the Cherwell Core Strategy in the Local Development Framework, gaining formal weight in future planning decisions from the point of adoption. But it is not detailed planning guidance for the town. Nor is it a detailed action plan for the implementation of this Vision.

One of the most important aspects of our plans for the future of Bicester are our plans to bring more and varied jobs to the town to remove the need for residents to travel out of Bicester to work. While we want to see new employers coming to the town the retention and expansion of our current employers is just as important.

All of us on the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board have been really encouraged by the response to the first draft of the 'One Shared Vision'. We hope those of you who responded think we have done justice to the body of comments we received. To those of you coming to this document for the first time we hope you think this is an inspiring Vision for Bicester. It's one the Board will work hard to ensure is delivered.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the shared vision of the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board (SDB). As such, it contains the aims, aspirations and aspirations for the town of Bicester as a whole as it continues to grow in the long term. The aerial view of Bicester on the front cover shows the area covered by the vision. A more detailed plan showing the major development sites in and around the town is included in the document.

The document looks at the town as a whole not just the proposed eco development at NW Bicester. The emphasis is on integrating the new development with the existing town by adopting a holistic approach to the development of the town. The work has already begun with major development underway in Bicester town centre, the completed refurbishment of the leisure centre and swimming pool, in addition to the eco town demonstration projects and housing development at SW Bicester. Bicester has been a garrison town for many years and the future of the military presence in the town is an important factor in developing the vision. Bicester's population is expected to grow and this will require further infrastructure to support the town. The aim is for all new development to be integrated with the existing town to ensure the development of a vibrant place.

The shared vision has been prepared to guide and inform the SDB's work and it is important that the document remains flexible reflecting the latest standards of eco development and changing circumstances. It does not seek to allocate land for development as this is the role of the Local Development Framework, which in time we anticipate will reflect the aspiration set out in the vision and incorporate the development standards it contains. It is ambitious and aspirational and focuses on four key themes: community, economy, transport and environmental sustainability. The future challenges facing the district and the town are recognised and include adapting to climate change, a growing population and significant housing growth. This will require the development of infrastructure to support the town as it grows.

The following sections set out the detailed vision statement, covering people and places, the economy, transport and movement, environmental sustainability and infrastructure and the standards for eco development. The final section sets out the local standards for the eco development at North West Bicester and is based on the eco town standards set out in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – Sustainable Development. The contents of the shared vision will be used to inform local standards for eco development in the emerging development plan.

As a result of the consultation, more emphasis on infrastructure and facilities has been included in the vision as part of the community first and environmental sustainability sections. The lack of facilities and the need for infrastructure requirements to keep pace with the growth of the town were common themes of the consultation responses. This is acknowledged in the shared vision and forms the starting point for the long term development of the town.

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1. THE VISION

1.1 To create a vibrant Bicester where people choose to live, to work and to spend their leisure time in sustainable ways, achieved by:

1.1.1 Effecting a town wide transition to a low carbon community triggered by the new eco development at North West Bicester;

1.1.2 Attracting inward investment to provide environmentally friendly jobs and commerce, especially in green technologies, whilst recognising the very important role of existing employers in the town;

1.1.3 Improving transport, health and leisure choices while emphasising zero carbon and energy efficiency; and

1.1.4 Ensuring green infrastructure and historic landscapes, biodiversity, water, flood and waste issues are managed in an environmentally sustainable way

2. COMMUNITY FIRST – PEOPLE AND PLACES

2.1 Local people will have a huge opportunity to influence the ongoing development of Bicester.

2.2 By Bicester for Bicester

2.2.1 Encouraging people to have a real say in the future of their town

2.2.2 Supporting local initiatives to improve the town and the community

2.2.3 Making opportunities for local communities to own and govern local community assets

2.2.4 Encouraging a growth in sustainability culture, awareness and knowledge about environmental issues by the people and businesses of Bicester

2.3 Community first

2.3.1 New development shall be designed to reduce the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime.

2.3.2 A mix of housing, including affordable housing, housing accessible to those with impaired mobility, high-end housing to attract managers from local companies to reside in the town will be sought in new developments to meet the needs of the whole community.

2.3.3 Support local communities to ensure that their area is safe and free from crime.

2.3.4 Support measures to enhance Bicester as a local service centre for the surrounding villages and rural area.

2.3.5 All new development must be integrated with the existing town to support the creation of a vibrant place

2.3.6 Opportunities will be sought to improve access to the countryside

2.3.7 Improvements to town centre retail facilities will be supported

2.4 Retrofitting for a Low Carbon Community

2.4.1 Supporting improved energy efficiency of homes to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

2.4.2 Supporting improved energy efficiency of business and commercial property to reduce carbon emissions

2.4.3 Increased water efficiency and reduced water use

2.4.4 Supporting high speed broadband and digital infrastructure provision for the town

2.5 Exacting Eco Standards for New Development (see also standards in section 6)

2.5.1 Ensure homes built to the highest design and environmental standards

2.5.2 Seek new buildings which incorporate high quality, contemporary design

- 2.5.3 Ensure that new buildings are designed and built to the highest standards in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable construction techniques for example Passiv Haus design based on the code for sustainable homes and British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM).
- 2.5.4 Ensure that new buildings have high speed broadband to facilitate information and smart management systems
- 2.5.5 New buildings with reduced water use
- 2.5.6 Zero or low carbon energy provision
- 2.5.7 Use of local and sustainably sourced materials

2.6 Community Infrastructure and facilities

- 2.6.1 Provision of high quality community facilities, making best use of the town centre, co location of services, shared use of facilities, public open space, play space for all, streets and gardens and encouraging maximum use of existing community facilities and assets
- 2.6.2 Promote local cultural facilities, including a venue with theatre auditorium and room to accommodate formal dining. It is recognised that The Garth could have the potential to fulfil this role
- 2.6.3 Promote a sports stadium to meet long term growth of the town
- 2.6.4 Provide a new burial site for the town with opportunity for green or woodland burials and quiet recreation.
- 2.6.5 Support local sports and leisure facilities
- 2.6.6 Provide accessible high quality health and social care to include a community hospital to meet the expanding population of the town
- 2.6.7 Support local sustainable food production
- 2.6.8 Provision of facilities for young people
- 2.6.9 All new development will need to provide or contribute to the provision of facilities to serve the increased population.

3. ECONOMY

- 3.1 Create a nationally recognised hub of the low carbon economy and the location of choice for business and inward investment. To provide local jobs for Eco Bicester residents.

3.2 Employment Opportunities

- 3.2.1 Provide new employment opportunities to complement the existing economic base to support the creation of a balanced economic base with opportunities requiring a broad spectrum of skills.
- 3.2.2 Promote Bicester as a significant location in the triangle between Oxford, Cambridge and London, for an increase in science and technology businesses, exploiting innovations and spin-outs from academic research growing from existing Oxfordshire base
- 3.2.3 Create a centre for innovation capitalising on the location within a world class sub region
- 3.3.4 Provide support for existing employers in the town to increase their levels of local employment.

3.3 Sustainable Travel to Work

- 3.3.1 Seek local jobs to reduce out commuting significantly
- 3.3.2 Walking and cycling will be promoted through working with new and existing businesses to prepare and implement green travel plans.

3.4 Education, Skills and Training

- 3.4.1 Creating a learning town with good quality educational opportunities for all ages with access to local quality educational facilities to learn and train
- 3.4.2 Provide education, skills and training focused on meeting the needs of business and allowing the local community to benefit from the emerging green economy.
- 3.4.3 Seek greater provision of higher education facilities within the town

3.5 Employment space

- 3.5.1 Provide employment opportunities for the eco development's population
- 3.5.2 Provide employment space/office stock suited to modern employment requirements, particularly those of low carbon businesses – BREEAM excellent and designed to reduce energy use
- 3.5.3 Seek employment creation as part of large residential development sites
- 3.5.4 Create a centre for service industries within this buoyant part of the country

4. TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

4.1 Encourage walking and cycling as the first choice for travel within the town to improve health, reduce carbon emissions and improve the quality of the environment.

4.2 A significant increase in travel by means other than the car across the town

4.2.1 Promote walking, cycling and public transport within the town

4.2.2 Work with employers and educational facilities to encourage sustainable travel

4.2.3 Support designs for new development which support walkable neighbourhoods, public transport and provide good access to day to day services locally

4.2.4 Improve non vehicular access links to town centre facilities and other important destinations from across the town

4.2.5 Give priority to walking, cycling and public transport where possible

4.2.6 Provide high quality cycle parking and storage

4.2.7 Provide improved bus service information

4.2.8 Encourage car clubs and car share schemes where occasional journeys by car are necessary

4.3 Travel Planning

4.3.1 Ensure schemes and initiatives to promote sustainable travel planning set out in the Department for Transport's Sustainable Travel Towns document developed in more detail for Bicester

4.3.2 Provide innovative approaches to personal travel, including reduced energy consumption, low emission vehicles

4.4 Improvements to the existing transport network

4.4.1 Ensure sustainable locations for development and highway improvement schemes as part of the 'Bicester Integrated Transport and Land Use Study' commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with Cherwell District Council

4.4.2 Provision of improvements to walking and cycling provision in the town

4.4.3 Support Chiltern Railways' improvements to the Bicester to Oxford line and services to London

4.4.4 A perimeter road at 'South West Bicester' to relieve congestion in Bicester and reduce 'rat running' through surrounding villages

4.4.5 Improvements to Junction 9 of the M40 to unlock the employment growth potential of the town (Phase 1 started in August 2010)

4.4.6 Encourage electric vehicles and supporting infrastructure

5. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1 In accordance with the community plan “Our District, Our Future” this shared vision aims to understand and adapt to environmental challenges as they arise and ensure that all infrastructure and other developments protect and enhance the environment and biodiversity. The provision of green infrastructure and biodiversity and habitat creation is fundamental to Eco Bicester and already an important component of the town.

5.2 Open Space and Green Infrastructure

5.2.1 Maximise ecological and biodiversity gains from open space compatible with its recreational role

5.2.2 Ensure the 40% green space at NW Bicester integrates with existing green space within the town

5.2.3 Seek a network of open spaces incorporating river corridors and linking not only to existing space within the town but also the wider countryside

5.2.4 Provide multi functional green infrastructure incorporating footpaths and cycle paths, sports and recreational space, play, ecological enhancement, adopted sustainable urban drainage systems and flood alleviation

5.2.5 Seek opportunities for new wetland areas and creation of local priority habitats

5.2.6 Use of the new cemetery as a quiet and sensitive green space

5.2.7 The character of the countryside shall be protected and where new development has been identified as necessary it should be designed to be assimilated within the landscape without altering the character of the surrounding countryside.

5.3 Biodiversity

5.3.1 To protect existing habitats

5.3.2 To enhance biodiversity in the town and habitat creation

5.3.3 Include features in buildings such as green walls and roofs, bat tubes and swift boxes to support priority species

5.3.4 Seek shelter belts to enhance the range of habitats and provide for micro climates

5.4 Water Use

5.4.1 To develop a sustainable water management approach to new development

5.4.2 Seek water neutrality and more efficient water usage across town

5.4.3 Promote grey water recycling

5.4.4 Provide sustainable urban drainage to ensure that existing water courses are maintained and contaminants treated within surface water

5.5 Flood Risk

5.5.1 Provide measures to ensure that run off created from development does not introduce flood risk elsewhere.

5.5.2 Take opportunities to address flood risk downstream within the town

5.6 Waste and energy

5.6.1 Seek zero or low carbon energy generation

5.6.2 Explore sewerage and waste providing bio gas for energy centre.

5.6.3 Provide storage for recyclable materials included in new buildings

5.6.4 Provide measures to reduce all waste including that from construction

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6. ECO BICESTER DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, BUILDING ON ECO TOWN STANDARDS

6.1 This section provides further detail on the development standards to be used in delivery of the Shared Vision through eco development and particularly the proposals for North West Bicester. As described earlier in the document, the vision for Eco Bicester sets out an holistic approach to future development integrating the proposed development at North West Bicester with the existing town. The following standards are taken and adapted from extracts from the PFS and will be required to be met for development at NW Bicester and other new developments. However it is recognised that for some smaller sites it may not be possible to meet all the criteria on site and in these circumstances off site provision should be investigated.

6.2 Zero carbon

The definition of zero carbon follows that set out in the Eco towns PPS and is that over a year the net carbon dioxide emissions from all energy use within the buildings are zero or below¹. Proposals for the development of NW Bicester should demonstrate how this will be achieved taking into account the health and social care needs of residents, and the resulting energy demand. Other large developments will also be expected to meet the zero carbon requirement.

The definition excludes embodied carbon² and emissions from transport but includes all buildings – not just houses but also commercial and public sector buildings which are built as part of Eco Bicester. The calculation of net emissions will take account of locally produced energy; production of energy imported from centralised energy networks, emissions displaced by exports of locally produced energy to centralised energy networks where that energy is produced from a plant (1) whose primary purpose is to support the needs of the Eco Bicester and (2) has a production capacity reasonably related to the overall energy requirement of the Eco Bicester.

6.3 Climate change adaptation

NW Bicester is to be a sustainable community that is resilient and well-adapted to future climate change. It should be planned to minimise future vulnerability in a changing climate, and with both mitigation and adaptation in mind. All new developments should be designed to take account of the climate they are likely to experience. New development is to deliver a high quality local environment and meet the standards on water, flooding, green infrastructure and biodiversity set out in this Vision, taking into account a changing climate for these, as well incorporating wider best practice on tackling overheating and impacts of a changing climate for the natural and built environment.

¹ This definition of zero carbon applies solely in the context of eco-towns, and applies to the whole development rather than to individual buildings.

² i.e. carbon emissions resulting from the construction process.

6.4 Homes

As well as being zero carbon, proposals for new homes should:

- (a) Achieve high standards of sustainability, for example, Building for Life³ Silver Standard and Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes⁴ as a minimum (or any higher standards in the development plan)
- (b) Meet lifetime homes standards and space standards⁵
- (c) Have real time energy monitoring systems; real time public transport information and high speed broadband access, including next generation broadband where possible. Consideration should also be given to the potential use of digital access to support assisted living and smart energy management systems
- (d) demonstrate high levels of energy efficiency in the fabric of the building, having regard to proposals for standards to be incorporated into changes to the Building Regulations between now and 2016 (including the consultation on planned changes for 2010 issued in June 2009 and future announcements on the definition of zero carbon homes), and
- (e) Achieve, through a combination of energy efficiency and low and zero carbon energy generation, carbon reductions (from space heating, ventilation, hot water and fixed lighting).
The intent of the energy efficiency and carbon reduction targets is to ensure that reasonable opportunities for energy efficiency and on-site carbon mitigation (including directly connected heat systems) are utilised.

6.5 Employment

It is important to ensure that NW Bicester is a genuine mixed-use community and that unsustainable commuter trips are kept to a minimum. A similar approach will be sought for all suitable development sites. Facilities to support job creation on the site and in the town should be available and as a minimum there should be access to one new employment opportunity per new dwelling that is easily reached by walking, cycling and/or public transport.

6.6 Transport

Travel should support people's desire for mobility whilst achieving the

³ Building for Life – www.buildingforlife.org/

⁴ Code Level 4 contains within it standards to be achieved for: household waste recycling, construction waste, composting facilities, water efficiency measures, surface water management, use of materials, energy & CO₂, pollution, health & well-being, ecology & ongoing management of the development.

⁵ Space standards refer to the Space Standards published by English Partnerships which are now encapsulated in the HCA's Design Quality Standards.

goal of low carbon living. Options such as walking, cycling, public transport and other sustainable options should be prioritised, thereby reducing residents' reliance on private cars, including techniques such as filtered permeability. To achieve this, homes should be within ten minutes' walk of (a) frequent public transport and (b) neighbourhood services⁶. The provision of services may be co-located to reduce the need for individuals to travel by private car and encourage the efficient use of the sustainable transport options available.

The following criteria should be considered in terms of travel planning:

- (a) How the town's growth will enable at least 50 per cent of trips originating in NW Bicester or on any other large mixed use development, to be made by non-car means, with the potential for this to increase over time to at least 60 per cent
- (b) Good design principles, drawing from Manual for Streets⁷, Building for Life⁸, and community travel planning principles⁹
- (c) How transport choice messages, infrastructure and services will be provided from 'day one' of residential occupation, and
- (d) How the carbon impact of transport in the eco-town will be monitored, as part of embedding a long term low-carbon approach to travel within plans for community governance.
- (e) Options for ensuring that key connections around Bicester do not become congested as a result of the development, for example by extending some aspects of the travel plan beyond the immediate boundaries of the site, and
- (f) Ultra low carbon vehicle options, including electric car schemes should be considered to help achieve a sustainable transport system.
- (g) Bicester should grow in a way that supports children walking or cycling to school safely and easily. A maximum walking distance of 800m from home to the nearest school for children under 11 will be sought.

6.7 Healthy lifestyles

Bicester shall be designed to support healthy and sustainable

⁶ Specific proposals for the location of health and social care services should reflect the particular local circumstances and be made following discussions with the Primary Care Trust.

⁷ Manual for Streets – Department of Transport – <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/>

⁸ Building for Life – <http://www.buildingforlife.org/>

⁹ See Building Sustainable Transport into New Developments (DfT 2008) and Good Practice Guidelines: Delivering Travel Plans through the Planning Process (DfT/CLG 2009)

environments and enable residents to make healthy choices easily.

6.8 Local services

A good level of provision of services within new development in Bicester proportionate to the size of the development and to complement those in the town will be sought. This should include leisure, health and social care, education, retail, arts and culture, library services, sport and play facilities and community and voluntary sector facilities.

6.9 Green infrastructure

40% of the total area of land at NW Bicester is to be allocated to green space of which at least half should be public. For other developments the LDF will identify the standards of provision required. A network of well managed, high quality green/open spaces which are linked to the wider countryside should be provided including a range of types of green space, for example community forests, wetland areas and public parks. Green space should be multifunctional, e.g. accessible for play and recreation, walking or cycling safely, and support wildlife, urban cooling and flood management.

Particular attention should be given to land to allow the local production of food from community, allotment and/or commercial gardens.

6.10 Landscape and historic environment

Development should complement and enhance the existing landscape character. Proposals should set out measures to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance heritage both assets and their settings.

6.11 Biodiversity

NW Bicester will need to demonstrate a net gain in local biodiversity. All new development should seek to achieve this. A strategy for preserving and enhancing local biodiversity is required to accompany any planning applications. This will need to be based on up to date information about the biodiversity of the area including proposals for the management of local eco systems and where appropriate, the restoration of degraded habitats or the creation of replacement habitats. It should set out priority actions in line with the England Biodiversity Strategy and local biodiversity action plans, including appropriate mitigation and/or mitigation measures, required to minimise adverse effects on individual species and habitats of principle importance and to enhance local bio diversity over all. Developers should seek the advice of Natural England and other relevant statutory advisers when developing their strategies. Delivery bodies should be identified in the strategy and its implementation should proceed in parallel with the development.

6.12 Water

Bicester should be ambitious in terms of water efficiency, particularly as it is in an area of water stress.

NW Bicester and other large development should:

(a) incorporate measures in the water cycle strategy for improving water quality and managing surface water, groundwater and local watercourses to prevent surface water flooding from those sources; and

(b) Incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and, except where this is not feasible, as identified within a relevant Surface Water Management Plan, avoid connection of surface water run-off into sewers.

(c) A strategy for the long term maintenance, management and adoption of the SUDS will be required. Eco-Bicester should aspire to water neutrality, i.e. achieving development without increasing overall water use across a wider area. In particular, the water cycle strategy should set out how:

(d) development would be designed and delivered to limit the impact of the new development on water use, and any plans for additional measures, e.g. within the existing building stock of the wider designated area, that would contribute towards water neutrality

(e) new homes will be equipped to meet the water consumption requirement of Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes; and

(f) New non-domestic buildings will be equipped to meet similar high standards of water efficiency with respect to their domestic water use.

6.13 Flood risk management

Development should not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and should use opportunities to address and reduce existing flooding problems. At NW Bicester all of the built-up areas (including housing, other public buildings and infrastructure) will be fully within Flood Zone 1 – the lowest risk. Flood Zone 2 (medium risk) should, as far as possible, be used for open spaces and informal recreational areas that can serve as multi-functional spaces, for example, those used for flood storage. There should be no built-up development in Flood Zone 3, with the exception of water-compatible development and, where absolutely necessary, essential infrastructure as defined in Table D.2 of PPS25: Development and Flood Risk.

6.14 Waste

A sustainable waste and resources plan should be developed for NW Bicester and other large developments, covering both domestic and non-domestic waste, which:

(a) sets targets for residual waste levels, recycling levels and landfill diversion, all of which should be substantially more ambitious than the

2007 national Waste Strategy targets for 2020; it should be demonstrated how these targets will be achieved, monitored and maintained

- (b) Establishes how all development will be designed so as to facilitate the achievement of these targets, including the provision of waste storage arrangements which allow for the separate collection of each of the seven priority waste materials as identified in the Waste Strategy for England 2007
- (c) Provides evidence that consideration has been given to the use of locally generated waste as a fuel source for combined heat and power (CHP) generation for the eco-town, and
- (d) Sets out how developers will ensure that no construction, demolition and excavation waste is sent to landfill, except for those types of waste where landfill is the least environmentally damaging option.

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