

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 10 April 2014	AGENDA ITEM NO: 5
Report title: NW Bicester Update	
Author: Jenny Barker (Eco Bicester Project Team)	
Tel: 01295 221828 Email: jenny.barker@cherwell-dc.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The update the Board on the progress towards the delivery of the Exemplar planning permission and master planning for the NW Bicester site.

2. Background

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

3. Progress to Date - Exemplar

- 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 does achieve an exemplary sustainable development which is attracting considerable attention both nationally and internationally.
- 3.2 To ensure the benefits secured through the planning application are delivered there are 90 planning conditions and a complex legal agreement containing 26 schedules. Work has been on going to clear the planning conditions and obligations required before the start on site and for the infrastructure works that will be the first works undertaken on the site. All the pre commencement and infrastructure phase conditions have now been submitted and are in the process of being cleared. Considerable work has been involved in ensuring the details of the scheme meet the high sustainability and design criteria required for the development.
- 3.3 The completion of S278 and S38 (highway) agreements had to await the completion of the site purchase. The S278 agreement was completed on 31 March 2014 and this is an important step in allowing work on site to commence as the access from the Banbury Road will be the

first works to take place. The completion of the S38 has delayed start on site but this is now identified for the 28th April 2014. Work to complete the S38 legal agreement to cover the highway works on site is now being pursued to ensure that there is no delay once works commence.

- 3.4 A mini competition has now also been held to select the designer for the proposed primary school on the site. White Design, the architects appointed are progressing the design. A competition is also being held to select an operator. The school will be delivered by OCC and there is good progress now being made towards delivery of the school.
- 3.5 Public consultation has also taken place on naming the roads on the first phase and these will be named with a fruit and vegetable theme.
- 3.6 The site is to be developed out in four stages starting from the Banbury Road entrance. The first works will be to construct the entrance road into the site from the Banbury Road (B4100) and then ground works to create the levels required to construct the spine road and for the development. The spine road will be provided, including the bridge, as far as the school site. The construction of the energy centre will follow together with the start of housing.
- 3.7 Development will then progress from the southern section of the site to the northern section as the scheme is built out. The first parts of the local centre (convenience store and community hall) are required to be provided prior to the occupation of the 250th dwelling. A project team has been set up to monitor progress of this key deliverable.
- 3.8 The development will be unique in the sustainability that it incorporates and a national exemplar. A2Dominion have submitted the scheme for a national sustainability award and it has been shortlisted with the judges commenting that it was '*a really ambitious project*' with '*good carbon neutrality*' that would be '*very impressive if it delivers on its stated aims*'.
- 3.9 The work to date, and that on going on the detail of the scheme, can provide confidence that the scheme will meet the ambitious aims for the development.

4. Progress to Date - Masterplan

- 4.1 A framework masterplan was developed to accompany the exemplar application but it was acknowledged at the time that further work was required to complete the masterplan. A programme was therefore agreed to review and complete masterplan work to guide outline planning applications for the site. The programme set out a 12 month process to get to a completed masterplan, working collaboratively with stakeholders including the local authorities. The aim was to complete the masterplan for Spring 2014.

Consultation

- 4.2 Consultation on emerging proposals was undertaken through a series of stakeholder workshops and public consultation in December 2013. A report on the consultation has been prepared by A2Dominion and is available on their NW Bicester web site; <http://nwbicester.co.uk>.
- 4.3 Key issues considered through the stakeholder consultation included;
 - Number of dwellings, where it was agreed that it was appropriate to plan to the capacity of the site, without compromising standards, rather than a particular

number of dwellings. This has led to the identification of up to 6000 dwellings being accommodated on the site.

- Amount of employment generating development, where it was agreed that the approach needed to take account of the town wide proposals and as such it was not necessary to accommodate one job per dwelling on site.
- Arrangement of green space where it was agreed that the approach should be to seek large areas of open space
- Primary access arrangements where options were identified and considered for the site which led to the identification of the realigned Howes Lane as the approach that has been taken forward.
- Number and type of community hubs and school distribution. There was support for the co location of hubs and schools and a recognition of the importance of vibrant hubs where opportunities for antisocial behaviour were avoided.

- 4.4 Public consultation identified concerns re traffic and the impact of proposals to realign Howes Lane. There was high levels of support for a nature reserve (88%) and for a country park (77%). There was also support for lower density development at the rural edge of the site (78%). There was less clear cut views on the location of facilities such as schools on the site. Over all there was 54% support for the masterplan proposals whilst 22% had reservations and 16% objections. The full report and the response to the consultation can be viewed on the NW Bicester web site.

Masterplan

- 4.5 The masterplan is an important document in guiding future proposals for the site, ensuring the eco town standards for the site are met and development is co ordinated. To ensure that it carries weight in planning decisions the aim is to develop a supplementary planning document (SPD) that can be adopted following the adoption of the local plan. In the meantime it would provide informal guidance.
- 4.6 Good progress has been made on the masterplan and a plan and supporting documents were provided to the District Council on the 21st March 2014. This includes:
- Masterplan Vision and Objectives
 - NW Bicester Masterplan Vision
 - NW Bicester Masterplan plan
 - Statement of Community Involvement
 - Strategic Environmental Report
 - Transport
 - Access and Travel Strategy
 - Access and Travel Strategy Appendices 1 to 6
 - Water
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Surface Water Drainage Strategy
 - Detailed Water Cycle Study
 - Volume I – Strategic Environmental Report
 - Volume II – Drawings
 - Volume III – Appendices
 - Residential Strategy

- Green Infrastructure and Landscape Strategy; and Energy Strategy
- Economic Strategy Report and Baseline Report

The documents will be available on the [Eco Bicester website](#).

- 4.7 Although considerable work has been undertaken there are still some areas outstanding in particular there is on going transport work that is yet to be finalised as well as work on community governance and community infrastructure. Once complete this work will need to feed into the masterplan documents. It is anticipated that this on going work will be complete and available by the end of May.
- 4.8 The masterplan material is currently being reviewed by the project team and once all the information is available formal consultation will take place with stakeholders and the public. This consultation will be carried out by the District Council as part of the review of the plan and as part of the process of developing a supplementary planning document for the site. In addition design review by Design Council CABE is being arranged and BREEAM Sustainable Communities assessment to ensure the masterplan meets the high standards sought for this development. By the next Board meeting it is anticipated that some feedback from consultation, design review and sustainable communities assessment will be available and can be reported and considered.

Conclusion

- 4.9 Work is commencing on the exemplar site and this will move the project to the next phase. The masterplan is now well progressed and once complete will be subject to formal consultation, review and final revision before adoption.
- 4.10 Development at NW Bicester beyond the permitted exemplar application will need to be subject of further planning applications. Once the masterplan is complete the Board can anticipate that work will be focused on the submission of outline planning applications for development on the site. It is currently anticipated that outline planning applications will be submitted to the District Council in the summer of 2014.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The Board is asked to
- i) note the progress on the Exemplar at NW Bicester
 - ii) note the progress on the masterplan for NW Bicester