

## **Paper for Bicester SDB 23 October 2014: NW Bicester Business Employment and Training Update.**

### **1. Introduction**

The A2Dominion Group is committed to promoting the economic benefits of the Exemplar to local businesses and individuals.

An Employment and Training Management Plan (ETMP), submitted by A2Dominion and approved by CDC prior to implementation of the Exemplar, sets out the developer's response to the Tenth Schedule: Employment, Skills and Training of the Section 106 Agreement between A2Dominion and Cherwell District Council (dated 9 July 2012).

The ETMP sets out how A2Dominion will work with its contractors, partners and local employment/training agencies to offer employment and training opportunities to existing local businesses and residents during the five year construction of the Exemplar; and simultaneously promote home working on site to the new residents of the development.

Although the use of local suppliers and sub-contractors is not a requirement of building to PPS1 standards for eco towns, A2Dominion has agreed to create opportunities for local businesses to be involved and is committed to delivering employment and training targets above and beyond any other local construction scheme of this nature in Bicester.

While the majority of this report will mainly be dealing with the employment and training initiatives arising out of the ETMP, section 3 also refers to some of the other complementary activities that A2Dominion has undertaken in the wider Bicester business and education sector.

### **2. Business, Employment and Training Initiatives**

The ETMP includes six elements as stipulated in the S106 agreement. For the purpose of this update to the SDB, the remainder of the paper will focus on those objectives that A2Dominion has started to date (five months into the construction of phase one). These are:

**Objective 1 – Work directly with local employment/ training agencies including Job Centre Plus and Bicester Job Club to identify employment opportunities relating to construction of the development and skills and training to assist local people;**

See combined update below.

**Objective 2 – Delivery of workshops in conjunction with Bicester Job Club to introduce opportunities relating to construction of development to local job seekers;**

A2Dominion and Willmott Dixon are working with Bicester Job Club and Job Centre Plus to introduce the variety of construction opportunities available on site and the prospects of a career in the construction industry using real-life case studies and the support of specialist sub-contractors.

We are committed to allocating £5,000 per annum and working with Bicester Job Club during the 5 year construction of the Exemplar. Willmott Dixon and A2Dominion are working with Bicester Job Club to add value and shape how this money is spent to achieve the best outcomes for local people.

Two ideas involve the coordination of on-site work taster sessions (in-line with the construction programme) to enable individuals from Bicester Job Club and/or local colleges to find out more about

the role of each trade on-site through demonstrations and questions and answers with sub-contractors, and support and guidance through CSCS card qualifications.

A2Dominion has set a target in conjunction with Willmott Dixon based on previous experience to give us a challenging but realistic goal to achieve 20% local labour on-site during construction (defined as those living within a 20mile radius of the development site). In order to enable local people to access the employment and training opportunities we have created a single access point via a registration form that can be completed on-line or submitted via post.

This was launched at a dedicated NW Bicester event in Bicester Town Centre to showcase all of the opportunities available and meet the team on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Over 80 people attended on the day and we are awaiting our first round of recruitment with the commencement of new homes in October. The current workforce on site is approx. 50 operatives, 23% of which are local.

The employment and training opportunities generated on the Exemplar go above the requirements of the ETMP, offering a range of opportunities for local people to get involved, from full time jobs and vocational apprenticeships to 6 month work placements and 2 week work experience opportunities.

**Objective 4 – Delivery of local supply chain events to promote opportunities for companies local to Bicester and how these opportunities will be made available during construction;**

A2Dominion is delivering supply chain events that enable local businesses to engage directly with A2Dominion and our main contractor Willmott Dixon.

The ETMP sets out our objective to deliver one event at the start of each of the four phases of the Exemplar. A2Dominion hosted such an event with a presentation and evening reception attended by MP for North Oxfordshire, Sir Tony Baldry, in April 2012 with over 100 local business representatives attending.

Willmott Dixon jointly hosted with A2Dominion a “meet the contractor” event at the JPII Centre Bicester in May 2014 and invited all registered companies along to discuss the remaining work packages on the first phase of the scheme. This event was once again very well attended by over 70 local business representatives.

In addition to dedicated NW Bicester business events, A2Dominion has attended and presented at a number of businesses and breakfast events in the district and is a three year member of the Bicester Vision Business Partnership.

**Objective 5 – Provision of a minimum of ten apprenticeships relating to construction of the Development to local persons residing in Bicester**

We will create a minimum of 10 apprenticeships throughout the build-out of the Exemplar. Having undertaken extensive research with local providers, Willmott Dixon will be using a shared apprenticeship scheme provider called Co-Train, in partnership with CITB and local training colleges to deliver the first apprenticeships on site.

With apprenticeship opportunities on the Exemplar only announced at a dedicated NW Bicester employment and training event in the Town Centre on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014, we are looking to recruit our first Carpentry Apprentice by the end of October, and a minimum of two more within our first year on site.

**Objective 6 – Setting up and maintenance of a website to attract local suppliers which allows them to compete for work on the construction of the Development.**

In April 2012 A2Dominion launched its business portal on the NW Bicester Project Website. By enabling local companies (defined as being within a 50mile radius of the development site) to register an interest in the scheme, the Business Portal gives the opportunity for more local suppliers and sub-contractors to tender for works packages than for any other large scale development in Oxfordshire.

Companies registered on the portal are contacted as and when appropriate opportunities arise to tender for work on the development, and are prioritised on their ability to provide a quality product or service at a competitive price and their ability to deliver to the Exemplar build program.

A2Dominion spent considerable time and resources setting up a Business Portal to try and engage with as many local businesses as possible in terms of giving the opportunity to tender for works on the Exemplar project. So far, over 198 businesses or individuals have registered an interest.

A2Dominion's Principal Contractor, Willmott Dixon Housing, manages the Business Portal on behalf of A2Dominion for the first phase. Some of the services or suppliers registered are not required during the initial stages of construction, but their details are being stored and passed onto relevant eco-town partners in order to be considered in later stages where required (e.g. commercial development).

To date 32 suppliers/sub-contractors have tendered for opportunities on site and Willmott Dixon has agreed work packages with the following.

**Sub-contractors:**

Contract	Company	Location	Appox. Distance from site
Road Sweeping	Bicester Sweepers	Fringford, Oxfordshire	4 miles
Civils/Groundworks	Breheny Contractors	Kingsgate, Bucks	8 miles
Road White Lining	Walker Construction	Bucks	14 miles
Screening, Crushing, groundworks materials	David Einig	Nr Thame, Oxfordshire	17 miles
Hedge relocation	Jenks	Wallingford Oxfordshire	22 miles
Timber Frame	Stewart Milne	Witney, Oxfordshire	22 miles
Data Connections/Cables	Fibre Options	Tring	23 miles
Toucan Lights	Siemens	Kings Heath, Northamptonshire	30 miles
Scaffolding	MPT Scaffolding	Stanbridge	31 miles
Street Lighting Contractors	R&M Lighting	Marlow, Bucks	36 miles
Brickwork	Bliss Brickwork	Earls Barton, Northamptonshire	38 miles
Cattle Fencing	Bradgate Fencing	East Huntingdon	60 miles

Tarmac	Tarways	Liverpool	154 miles
Block & Beam structural Floors	Treanor Pujol Ltd	Stourton, Leeds	155 miles
District Heating Supplies	Vital Energy	Blackburn	174 miles

Currently 15 work packages on phase one of the Exemplar have been let, 11 of these are with companies from within a 50 mile radius of the development site = 73%. The approximate value of this work to is £12m.

In addition, contracts are currently being placed with Electrical, Plumbing and Metalwork sub-contractors, all of which are with companies from within a 50 mile radius of the development site.

Ten work packages are awaiting order placement on phase one for: Plastering, Carpentry, Roof tiling, Wall tiling, Painting, landscaping, Metalwork, Fire protection, Floor Finishes, Mastic. Willmott Dixon is in talks with a number of local companies registered on the portal in regard to these opportunities. All of these packages will be let by Christmas 2014.

#### **Suppliers:**

Willmott Dixon are using 6 local businesses so far to supply materials, including the Lunchbox for on-site catering, and are using 2 local companies to recycle waste generated during construction.

<b>Company</b>	<b>Location</b>
Lunchbox Catering	Bicester
Wickes DIY	Bicester
Jewson	Bicester
Travis Perkins	Bicester
PRS Plumbing	Bicester
Buildbase	Bicester
Rationale Windows and Doors	Bicester
Oxford Wood Recycling	Oxford & Milton Keynes
Bucks Recycling	Westcott

In addition, A2Dominion continues to use a range of local Bicester suppliers for its community related activities including: commissioning artists via OYAP, using local printing companies in Bicester and Oxford (e.g. Seacourt, Multiflow and Dataprint), local photographers, face painters and caterers for both events and site workers all from within Bicester itself.

A2Dominion have worked hard with our main contractor, Willmott Dixon, to manage the expectations of local companies registered on the portal and provide improved communication by:

- Establishing an automated response once companies register their details on the system thanking them for their registration and updating them on the current project position. E.g. opportunities to register on phase one are now closed, however details will be stored and passed on for consideration on latter phases.
- Reviewing all registrations and issuing a series of categorised letters informing registered companies where they fit in relation to the overall project needs, opportunities and tender process.
- Developing a six-monthly e-shot to companies keeping them up to speed with the development, opportunities and local success stories as a result of signing up to the portal.
- Following up directly any concerns from specific companies brought to our attention with positive outcomes. E.g. Working in partnership with Zeta Lighting to get their products approved by Oxfordshire County Council.

### **3. Complementary activities that A2Dominion have undertaken in the wider Bicester business and education sector**

- Full and active members of the Bicester Vision Business Partnership (for last 3 years)
- Sponsor of 'New Business' Category in the 2015 Cherwell Business Awards
- Promoting Bicester as a destination to live and work through significant external exposure at regional and national conferences and by hosting international delegations.
- Recently awarded funding of just under £5000 to local charities Grassroots Bicester and Bicester Green to deliver sustainability and education themed projects that benefit the wider Town.
- Recently undertaken a corporate volunteer day involving the NW Bicester project team to refurbish Bucknell playing field through our corporate social responsibility activity.
- Won £100,000 TSB funding award in 2012 - for a smart demand project with Bicester lighting company, Zeta, Carnego, BioRegional and A2Dominion to research the use of a low energy DC lighting circuit within domestic homes.
- Won £683,000 TSB funding award in February 2013 – for an improvement toolkit to look at the build processes and how it can improve quality and build costs of building zero carbon schemes with BioRegional, A2Dominion and Loughborough University.
- Jointly funding with CDC and Bioregional a PHD student from Oxford Brookes University to work on the scheme for 2 years in a research and evaluation capacity.
- Supporting OCC and the MOD Bicester 23 Pioneers Regiment through its disbandment and redundancies – attending all employment events at the MOD Bicester with our main contractor (Willmott Dixon) to talk to the 150 effected personnel offering guidance about the construction industry, training opportunities & transferable skills in an effort to retain the skills of the Pioneers Regiment locally.
- Employment of Internships from Oxford Brookes University to support the NW Bicester Project (2 to date).
- Working with Oxford University Consultancy Project to provide Oxford University Students the Opportunity to experience a real work and consultancy environment.
- Engagement events and assemblies with Bicester Community College and Cooper School sixth Form
- Supporting Cooper School on the judging panel for Enterprise and Business Project.

- Co-ordinating and delivering three Annual Bicester Bike and Family Fun Days in partnership with local groups and organisations
- Support in planning, financial contribution and delivery of activities in The Bicester Big Lunch (Grassroots Bicester)
- Support and delivery of activities at Bicester Town Councils Teddy Bear's Picnic for last three years
- Working in partnership with Bure Park Primary School to deliver a 'Community Street Design Competition' and prizes

The A2Dominion Group has gone above and beyond the requirements of PPS1 standards and planning with regards to employment and training and is committed to ensuring that there is a economic benefit to Bicester from the development if the UK's first Eco-town.