

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 14 July 2016	AGENDA ITEM NO: 7
Report title: NW Bicester Report	
Author: Jenny Barker Eco Bicester Project Manager	
Tel: 01295 221828 Email: jenny.barker@cherwell-dc.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to set out progress on the development at NW Bicester (Cherwell Local Plan policy Bic 1). The report covers progress on the exemplar development which is now underway and planning applications relating to the 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 The PPS has now been withdrawn, although it was retained for Bicester. The land at NW Bicester is identified as a strategic allocation for development in the adopted Local Plan, policy Bicester 1.
- 2.2 Since the identification of the site at NW Bicester for an eco development, the Bicester Delivery Team has been working with developers to deliver an exemplary sustainable development that will function as part of the growing Bicester Town.

3. Exemplar Development

- 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 Work on the development commenced in May 2014 with construction starting on highway access work. Work on site on the construction of dwellings has followed. The show homes and sales centre opened on the 6th June 2015 and the properties on phase 1 (97 dwellings) are now largely complete and first occupations took place in Spring 2016. Feedback has indicated that sales rates were above industry averages and are going well. Development will progress on to the second phase immediately on completion of the first phase.

- 3.3 The construction process is being monitored through an innovate UK project (BEPIT) which is seeking to help improve the construction for homes that are of higher sustainability standards. The learning that comes through this project will be used to improve construction on the later phases and will be shared through the Eco Bicester Living Lab, <http://bicesterlivinglab.org/>.
- 3.4 In addition to residential development the planning permission for the exemplar also includes a local centre, eco business centre, primary school and open space. The first elements of the local centre, the convenience store and community hall, are required prior to the completion of 250 dwellings and a planning application needs to be submitted 12 months prior to the start of on site works or the occupation of 100 dwellings, whichever is the sooner. Marketing of the retail store is also required to commence to the same time line.
- 3.5 An application was submitted to Oxfordshire County Council for the primary school which has been granted planning permission. Work is on going on the site on the construction of the school and it is due to be completed in September 2016. The school was originally due to open in September but, due to low numbers of pupils, opening has been delayed until 2017. The White Horse Federation will be the academy provider and a Head has now been appointed. Interim uses of the building are being explored prior to the school formally opening subject to safe access being available.
- 3.6 An application has also been submitted for the local centre, application ref 15/00760/F. The application is for;
- Development of a new Local Centre comprising a Convenience Store (use class A1), Retail Units (flexible use class A1/A3/A5), Pub (use class A4), Community Hall (use class D1), Nursery (use class D1), Commercial Units (flexible use class A2/B1/D1) with associated Access, Servicing, Landscaping and Parking.
- This application, 15/00760/F, has a resolution to grant planning permission subject to the completion of the legal agreement.
- 3.7 A report on the proposed Eco Business Centre was considered by Cherwell District Council's Executive in July 2015 to agree authority to proceed to procure the building. A project board has been established to progress the project and soft market testing has been carried out. A design team has been appointed to produce a concept design and this together with the business case for the centre are due to be reported to Cherwell's Executive Committee in September 2016.

4. Master Plan for NW Bicester

- 4.1 A2Dominion have lead on masterplanning for the whole of the NW Bicester site. The Masterplan and supporting documents were submitted to Cherwell District Council in May 2014 with updated transport strategy on 24 June 2014. This masterplan was worked up in collaboration with the Council and key stakeholders.
- 4.2 The District Council has now produced a supplementary planning document (SPD) to guide development proposals for the site. The document was adopted as supplementary planning document by Cherwell's Executive on the 22nd March 2016. The SPD provides further detail to support the Local Plan policy for the site and guide development proposals.

5. Outline Planning Applications

- 5.1 A2Dominion have submitted 2 outline applications to Cherwell District Council for determination. The applications are for;

14/01384/OUT

Development comprising redevelopment to provide up to 2600 residential dwellings (Class C3), commercial floorspace (Class A1 - A5, B1 and B2), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre, land to accommodate one new primary school (Up to 2FE) (Class D1) and land to accommodate the extension of the primary school permitted pursuant to application (reference 10/01780/HYBRID). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure, ancillary engineering and other operations

Bicester Eco Town Exemplar Site, Banbury Road B4100, Caversfield

This application is subject to a resolution taken on the 19th March 2015 to grant planning permission subject to the completion of legal agreements. Work is progressing on the detailed drafting of legal agreements.

14/01641/OUT

Outline Application - To provide up to 900 residential dwellings (Class C3), commercial floor space (Class A1-A5, B1 and B2), leisure facilities (Class D2), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2 FE) (Class D1), secondary school up to 8 FE (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure, ancillary engineering and other operations

Land Adj To Bicester Road And South West Of Avonbury Business Park, Howes Lane, Bicester

This application is also subject to a resolution taken on the 29th October 2015 to grant planning permission subject to the completion of legal agreements.

- 5.2 Albion Land has submitted an application for;

14/01675/OUT

OUTLINE - Erection of up to 53,000 sqm of floor space to be for B8 and B2 with ancillary B1 (use classes) employment provision within two employment zones covering an area of 9.45ha; parking and service areas to serve the employment zones; a new access off the Middleton Stoney Road (B4030); temporary access of Howes Lane pending the delivery of the realigned Howes Lane; 4.5ha of residential land; internal roads, paths and cycleways; landscaping including strategic green infrastructure (G1); provision of sustainable urban systems (suds) incorporating landscaped areas with balancing ponds and swales. Associated utilities and infrastructure.

OS Parcel 4200 Adjoining And North East Of A4095 And Adjoining And South West Of Howes Lane, Bicester

This application was received 7 October 2014 and reported to the planning committee on 21st January 2016 and deferred. The application was reported back to committee on 9th June 2016 and refused.

- 5.3 A2Dominion have submitted a detailed application for the realignment of Howes Lane.

14/01968/F

Construction of new road from Middleton Stoney Road roundabout to join Lord's Lane, east of Purslane Drive, to include the construction of a new crossing under the existing railway line north of the existing Avonbury Business Park, a bus only link east of the railway line, a new road around Hawkwell Farm to join Bucknell Road, retention of part of Old Howes Lane and Lord's Lane to provide access to and from existing residential areas and Bucknell Road to the south and a one way route northbound from Shakespeare Drive where it joins with the existing Howes Lane with priority junction and associated infrastructure.

Twenty Ha Of Land Proposal Of New Highway Aligned With Howes Lane Bicester

This application has been validated (26 November14) and been the subject of consultation. This application is for full planning permission was reported to the planning committee on the 18th February 2016 and is subject to a resolution to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a legal agreement.

- 5.4 P3Eco have submitted an application for;

14/02121/OUT

OUTLINE - Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1 and C1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road)

Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester Middleton Stoney Road Bicester Oxfordshire

This application was validated 31 December 2014 and reported to the planning committee on the 18th February 2016 but deferred. It is anticipated that the application will be reported back to the Planning Committee later this year for determination.

- 5.5 The above proposals cover much, but not all, of the NW Bicester site. The way the site is coming forward as a series of individual large applications adds to the complexity of dealing with the proposals as it is necessary to ensure that they cumulatively deliver the masterplan proposals for the site and the delivery of infrastructure is co ordinated between proposals. Legal advice has been taken to support the drafting of agreements to ensure the high standards of development sought are delivered as well as the necessary delivery of infrastructure.
- 5.6 The most contentious element of the agreements has been the need to limit development until such time as the rail tunnel is in place to avoid congestion on the Howes Lane/Bucknell Road junction. OCC currently advise that no more than 900 dwellings (including 393 already permitted on the Exemplar phase (Elmsbrook)) and 40% of the commercial development, should be built and occupied prior to the rail tunnel being in place. All the applicants at NW Bicester are indicating that they would like to bring forward early development and those south

of the railway line have been putting forward the argument that development there would result in less traffic through the Howes Lane/Bucknell Road junction.

- 5.7 It has therefore been necessary to consider, based on OCCs current advice, how the initial capacity (507 further dwellings) should be permitted on the site. In doing this the Council has considered the following factors;
- How the capacity can support the delivery of the rail tunnel
 - How a small parcel of development can be policy compliant and provide the facilities needed to support the first residents
 - That the scheme is deliverable

To date only A2Dominion have identified a route through which to deliver the realigned Howes Lane and tunnel and have an offer of funding from the HCA to support the delivery of this infrastructure. It has therefore been proposed that they are permitted to develop the first 507 dwellings provided they pursue the build out of the tunnel during this period.

- 5.8 A2Dominion have now commenced work on the Network Rail GRIP process which is necessary to secure technical approval for the construction of tunnels under the railway. This process will run alongside the on going negotiations with regard to the ransom Network Rail are seeking.
- 5.9 In the meantime work continues with DCLG to resolve the position with Network Rail with regard to the shared value (ransom) Network Rail are seeking.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Good progress is being made with the delivery of the exemplar development on site. It is particularly encouraging that sales have demonstrated the appetite of house buyers for development to higher standards. The development taking place is a national exemplar and sets new standards for sustainable development.
- 6.2 Progress is being made with regard to applications for the wider masterplan site. However the completion of legal agreements is delayed and this is putting at risk delivery against the local plan housing delivery trajectory. The District Council continues to work closely with the County Council to progress the drafting of the legal agreements. The refusal of the Albion application leaves a significant gap in the proposed development of the site. The granting of planning permission would have secured the land for the realignment of Howes Lane through the site. Work is on going to seek to address this.
- 6.3 There remain challenges in ensuring such a large and complex project as NW Bicester comes forward in a timely manner and there remains work to be done around processing of planning applications and securing legal agreements to ensure comprehensive, sustainable development. This together with ensuring key infrastructure is available within the town to support its growth including a new tunnel under the railway remains the focus of work over the next quarter.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 The Board are asked to note the progress on the delivery of development at NW Bicester.