

## 4 Vision for South West Bicester

### 4.1 Vision

- 4.1.1 The lessons from the first parts of the design process (assessment, evaluation and consultation) informed the evolution of the overall vision for the development. This vision has acted as a guidance tool for the remainder of the design process. The vision provides a target towards which all the design principles should aim.

### 4.2 Design principles

- 4.2.1 In order to meet this vision, the master plan is based on a series of design principles:

*“The development must be fully integrated into the life of Bicester, harmonise with the best characteristics of the town and the wider area, and provide a sustainable and enjoyable place for living, working, learning and playing”*

The vision for South West Bicester

#### **1 Integrated**

New housing, shops, schools, sport and recreational facilities successfully integrated with one another and with the town of Bicester.

#### **2 Robust**

A community that is planned and designed in a way that accommodates both present and future needs.

#### **3 Diverse**

A development that delivers a mix of house types and a range of activities to meet the needs of a variety of social groups.

#### **4 Beneficial**

A development that adds value to the area through the delivery of new services and facilities for all the residents of Bicester to use.

#### **5 Harmonious**

A built form that reflects the character of Bicester and the surrounding villages creating a distinctive place that relates to its Oxfordshire location.

#### **6 Accessible**

A place that encourages walking and cycling through the design and layout of the buildings and streets, so reducing reliance on the private car.

#### **7 Connected**

Clear and direct physical links to the surrounding communities, allowing existing residents to benefit from the facilities in this new place.

#### **8 Inspiring**

A place that responds to its context, creating distinct areas of different character.

#### **9 Sensitive**

A place that respects its neighbours and its landscape setting.

#### **10 Legible**

A place that is easy to move around and is easily understood by those that live or work there or visit.

#### **11 Sustainable**

A place that embraces designs, processes and materials that are resource efficient and reduce pollution

#### **12 Public**

A series of attractive public streets and spaces that encourage positive social interaction.

#### **13 Vibrant**

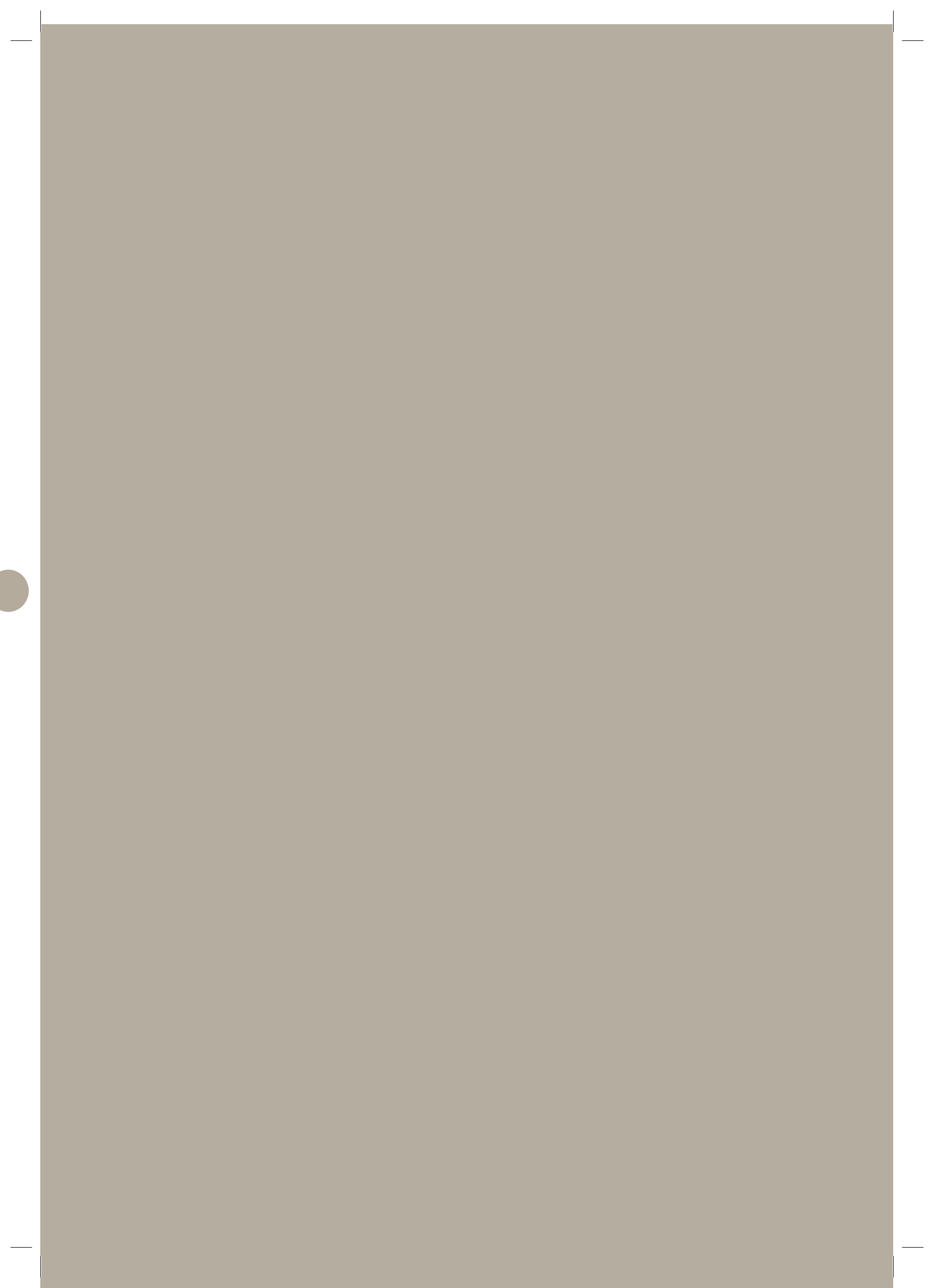
A local centre that is lively and vibrant, comprising a mixture of complementary uses which create a heart for the community and a focus for activity.

#### **14 Quiet**

Residential areas that are peaceful, safe and attractive for all.

#### **15 Safe & secure**

A clear distinction between public and private spaces and a local centre with residential uses above ground floor uses such as cafés, shops, offices and community uses.



## 5 The master plan

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The master plan is at the heart of this statement. In essence, it is the proposed development captured in plan form. The master plan for which planning permission is sought has been subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA).

The precise nature of the EIA master plan, while necessary for assessment purposes, often fails to convey a 'sense of place' or the tangible qualities of a new neighbourhood. The sketch master plan has therefore been prepared. When considered together, the EIA master plan and the sketch master plan perform the following functions within this statement:

- They show how the streets, squares and open spaces are to be connected
  - They set out suggested relationships between buildings and spaces
  - They determine the distribution of activities and uses
  - They identify the network of movement patterns for people moving by foot, bicycle, car or public transport
  - They set out the basis for infrastructure, such as services and utilities
  - They relate physical form to the socio-economic and cultural context and to stakeholder interests
  - They allow an understanding of how the development is integrated with the surrounding context and natural environment
- 5.1.2 The overall development proposal is explained further in the sequence of diagrams. These 'unpack' the master plan into its development components to demonstrate the responsiveness of the design strategy. The description and design rationale of the master plan are set out in terms of use, scale and quantum of development, landscape structure, access and movement and appearance.

### 5.2 Response to context

#### *Proximity to Bicester town centre*

- 5.2.1 The north-east corner of the site is around 500m (or a 5-6 minute walk) from Bicester's High Street, bus interchange and railway stations. This part of the site is physically closer to the town centre than many of the existing residential areas around the town.
- 5.2.2 It is therefore appropriate and reasonable for the development to exhibit some distinctly urban characteristics, particularly towards this corner of the site. This includes a tighter street pattern, a more continuous street frontage, a more enclosed form of streetscape and a greater density of development per hectare. However, this is balanced against the need to protect and retain Pingle Brook and the associated waterside environment. Open areas of green space are retained.
- 5.2.3 The proximity of the site to the town centre also means it is feasible to walk between the development and the town centre. The introduction of multiple crossing points over the brook for pedestrians and cyclists creates an environment that does not present a barrier to movement between the town centre and the new quarter.
- 5.2.4 It has also been possible to maintain or create visual links between the site and the town centre, thereby emphasising its proximity and reinforcing the connection. The church tower in Bicester town centre is a visible landmark which orientates the site with the town.



Figure 5.1 Distance from town centre

### ***Proximity to Chesterton***

- 5.2.5 The south-western boundary of the development is approximately 1km (two thirds of a mile) from the village street at the centre of Chesterton. The Gaggle Brook marks the outer limit of the village, but its setting extends into the site and has been considered as part of the master planning process.
- 5.2.6 Chesterton and its immediate surrounding area have a rural ambience. Maintaining this quality and outlook is important to preserving the village's integrity.

5.2.7 Views to and from Chesterton from the residential areas within the proposed development will be limited. This will preserve the separation of the two settlements and is achieved in part due to the existing landscape. A gentle undulation in the landform creates a shoulder of land between Chesterton and the new development that limits the number of visual connections that can be made. The design and layout of the new development makes the most of this natural feature, by placing the new development north of this shoulder of land. See the landscape section of this statement for further details.

There are some attractive landmark buildings, both on the site and close by. Together, these make a sequence of key buildings that help orientation and legibility. The proposed development will respect these landmarks and ensure that their status with the visual hierarchy of the area is not undermined.



**Figure 5.2 Key landmarks on the site and immediate surroundings**



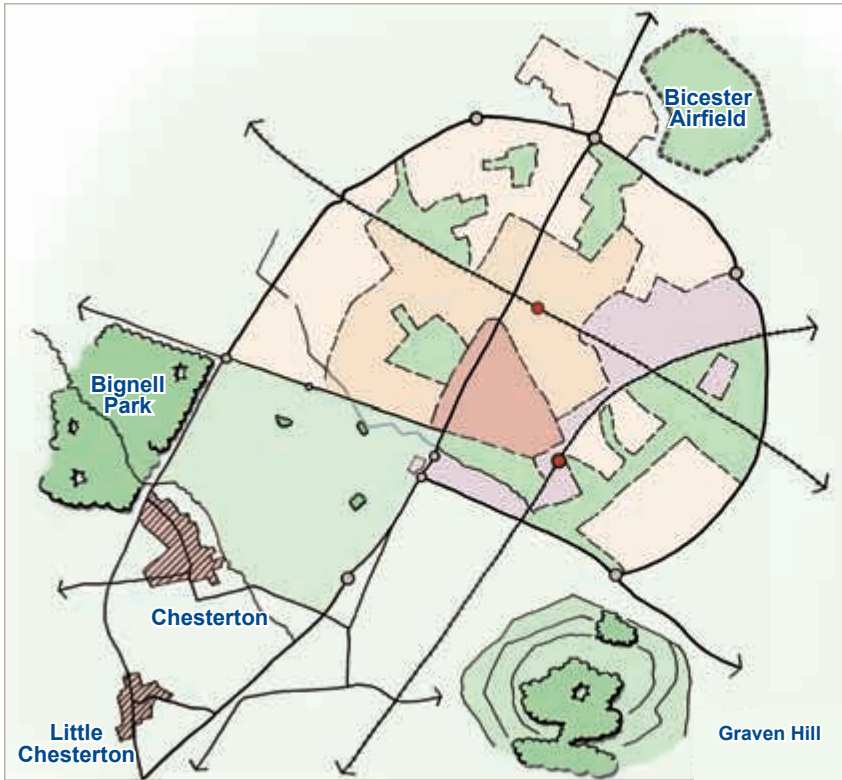


Figure 5.3 Existing context

The existing context, to which a response is required, is summarised by this diagram. The site lies close to the south west of the town centre, between two significant areas of landscape, Bignell Park and Graven Hill. While neither of these areas are publicly accessible, they are both important structural landscape elements in the wider area. The town consists of a variety of character areas, the more successful of which found in and around the centre. The attractive village of Chesterton lies to the south west of the site. The site contains a number of copses and is crossed in the north-east corner by Pingle Brook.

- Town centre
- Inner residential areas
- Outer residential
- Commercial/industrial uses
- Railway station



Figure 5.4 The proposed response

The proposal, which responds to the context, is summarised by this diagram. The proposal maximises the opportunity presented by the proximity to the town centre by 'pushing up' into the north east corner of the site rather than detaching itself from the site edges. This allows a green corridor to be established, linking Bignell Park and Graven Hill, within which a perimeter road with 'country lane' characteristics, sits. This green corridor also provides a landscape setting for Chesterton and allows the village to retain its identity. The master plan has adopted the design principles behind the more successful parts of Bicester and retains and integrates the copses and Pingle Brook.

### 5.3 Use, scale and quantum of development

5.3.1 The proposal makes a positive response to the social and economic context of Bicester. The development includes a diversity of house types for different household types and sizes, a range of sports and recreational facilities for the whole town to use and a complementary mix of uses (including employment, education, health and community uses). The layout and distribution of the uses ensures that the new quarter will not be in competition with other local centres and will support the town centre. The following pages describe in further detail the use, scale and quantum of development proposed.

#### *Residential development*

5.3.2 The master plan provides for the development of up to 1,585 dwellings on the site. In order to comply with the objectives of sustainable development and promote the efficient use of the land, an average density of approximately 34 dwellings per hectare is proposed across the site.

5.3.3 The density of development will vary across the site (as shown in figure 5.6), with higher densities provided in more sustainable locations, such as adjacent to the local centre, along main public transport spines and close to the town centre. Within these areas densities will average 35-45 dwellings per hectare. Medium and lower densities of development will be provided towards the open edges of the site. Within these locations average densities of 30-35 dwellings per hectare will be achieved.

5.3.4 A range of dwelling types and sizes will be provided across the site to ensure that a mixed community develops. This will include apartments of various sizes, houses ranging from two-bed to five-bed, and an element of housing for people with disabilities and older people. This will be a matter for the design code and consideration later in the planning process.

5.3.5 Affordable housing will be provided as an integral part of the residential development. For further details on affordable housing, please see the planning statement that accompanies the outline planning application.

#### *Local centre*

5.3.6 This centre will provide local facilities for the residents of south-west Bicester and will not be in competition with the retail and other facilities offered within the town centre.

	Application boundary (117.60 ha)
	Other land in applicant's ownership (74.00 ha)
	Residential (46.77 ha)
	Employment (2.00 ha)
	Health village & employment uses (2.69 ha)
	Local centre (comprising retail, community uses, nursery, residential & employment) (1.6 ha)
	Public squares for local centre and school (0.22 ha)
	Primary school building and hard standing (1.25 ha)
	Primary school playing field area (1.22 ha)
	Potential land for primary school (1.31 ha)
	Secondary school (buildings & hard standing) (3.14 ha)
	Hotel (1.00 ha)
	Pavillon (0.35 ha)
	Primary road infrastructure (5.08 ha)
	Perimeter road infrastructure (2.37 ha)
	Proposed strategic footpaths/cycle ways
	Water courses
	Existing public rights of way
	Existing hedgerows/copse/woodland/trees
	Proposed hedgerows/copse/woodland planting
	Proposed tree planting within open space
	Formal open space (including existing and proposed planting) (17.29 ha)
	Informal open space/children's play (including existing and proposed planting) (14.88 ha)
	Balancing pond
	Vehicular access points
	Residential connectors
	Possible future site for park and ride
	New access to existing agricultural land
	50m buffer zone around Bronze Age barrows
NB Planting included in both informal and formal open space figures	

5.3.7 A range of facilities will be provided to support the local neighbourhood, providing an opportunity to reduce residents' reliance on the private car by providing day-to-day facilities within easy walking distance. This centre will combine facilities such as shops, a community centre, a public house/ restaurant, children's day nursery and offices, parking and residential uses with be located on upper floors.

5.3.8 The community centre will be a multi-functional building, acting as a youth centre and a main community facility. This building will be within the local centre, thereby providing an accessible facility within the heart of the new development, within easy access to its residents. Land will be reserved for the other elements of the local centre, which will then be marketed. The arrangements for this will be the subject of negotiations on the legal agreement.



Figure 5.5 The EIA master plan