

Figure 2.2 Site characteristics and context

The site's immediate surroundings

- 2.7 On the northern edge of the site, beyond Middleton Stoney Road, the land use is predominantly residential in nature with access off Shakespeare Drive. Many of the residential properties within this development back onto the B4030, therefore facing away from the site.
- 2.8 Bicester town centre is to the north east of the site, approximately 1km away, and provides a wide variety of facilities including, shops, offices, schools, businesses, restaurants, pubs, hotels, churches, leisure and culture. Immediately to the north east of the site off the A41 there is a petrol filling station and a roadside restaurant. Further to the east is a Tesco superstore and the Bicester Outlet Shopping Centre.
- 2.9 The eastern edge of the site is defined by the A41 Oxford Road. The section of this road running adjacent to the site is a dual-carriageway with a significant junction adjacent to the petrol filling station identified above.

- 2.10 To the west of the site is the A4095, a rural country road, with Bignell Park west of that. This privately-owned estate mainly comprises open woodland and parkland. There is limited public access to this land that provides the backdrop for the western edge of the site.
- 2.11 South of the site, beyond Gagle Brook, lies Chesterton village. The historic core of the village is designated as a conservation area, including the village church and public house. The spire of the Church is visible from Whitelands Farm and other places through the site. The northern edge of Chesterton, along Gagle Brook, is characterised by domestic gardens, trees and woodland belts, which block the majority of views into and from the village. Figure 2.2 shows an aerial photograph of the site and its surroundings.



3 The proposals

Introduction

- 3.1 As outlined in section 2, the site comprises land to the west of the A41, forming a large part of the site allocated at Policy H13 of the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan. The development of this site will provide a new, attractive, high quality and sustainable quarter of Bicester, with its own distinctive character and identity, based on a detailed assessment of the site and the surrounding area.
- 3.2 These proposals bring together a number of land uses that will help create a socially cohesive, inclusive, safe and healthy environment within which a new community can grow and flourish. The proposals will provide much needed mixed tenure housing to help deliver the Council's structure plan housing allocation. The new development will have its own identity, even though it will be well integrated with the existing settlement pattern of Bicester and forms a new quarter of the town. The development will also provide employment opportunities and services and facilities for the wider community at the new local centre. There will be an opportunity to provide development that is in keeping with the site's surroundings, incorporating both traditional and contemporary buildings.
- 3.3 The development will also provide a health and employment area, which will reserve a site for a community hospital. These uses together with the new local centre, schools, leisure and sports facilities will provide a variety of employment opportunities.
- 3.4 The development proposals seek to balance a variety of land uses, and reflect the latest government planning policy, the sustainable communities agenda, the policies in the unadopted Local Plan and the Design and Development Framework. The proposals combine different uses to reflect best practice in urban design and sustainable development. The development proposals are viable and can be delivered as soon as planning permission for the details (the reserved matters) is granted.
- 3.5 The master plan has been developed following detailed consideration of the constraints and opportunities on site, the relationship with Bicester to the north, Chesterton to the south, the land uses within the new development, the landscape of the site and the surrounding area and the ecology on site.
- 3.6 Whilst it is acknowledged that the council would prefer the whole of the area allocated under Policy H13 to be included within this planning application, this is not currently possible, as no agreement has been reached with the owners of the employment land to the east of A41. Notwithstanding this, the majority of the requirements specified under Policy H13 are to be provided on the land to the west of the A41, that is on land within the boundary of this planning application. These proposals have been developed, particularly in respect of transport, such that the employment land to the east of the A41 can be brought forward in due course.
- 3.7 The employment allocation to the east of the A41 represents a significant proportion of the employment provision in the unadopted Cherwell Local Plan for Bicester. The allocation of approximately 16.6 hectares of land for employment in such a location and configuration is considered to be a strategic allocation for the town, and not just a balance to the provision of housing to the west of the A41. In order to bring forward a progressive development that will create a sustainable new quarter and a balanced community for Bicester, Countryside has endeavoured to reflect government policy and the sustainable communities agenda. In this regard, Countryside has provided 2 hectares of employment to the west of the A41, where it can better relate to the new residential development, and can contribute to the variety of employment opportunities for the residents of the new quarter and existing local residents. This will help bring together economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life. It will not prejudice the employment allocation to the east of the A41 coming forward in the future, and fulfilling its more strategic need independently of the development of the new quarter.

3.8 Bicester has good accessibility to the motorway, but the employment image of the town is as a distribution centre. In order to achieve the type of strategic employment site that the council has in mind (a high quality business park/science park), the nature of the town will have to change in order to accommodate the market's requirements. The proposed improvements to the town centre regarding the retail and leisure offer will play an important role in upgrading the attractiveness of Bicester. In turn, the south west quarter will contribute to the quality of the town and will set the standard for its setting by providing a new southern gateway to Bicester. A range of good quality homes, together with mixed uses including new schools, will improve the perception of the town to new firms seeking to relocate or existing businesses seeking to grow. Countryside believes that its development proposals will contribute to creating the social and environmental conditions that will attract the quality companies and businesses to Bicester, as sought by the council. This will contribute to the long-term wider sustainability of southern Bicester by creating a place where people want to live, and which enables them to meet their aspirations and potential.

The master plan

3.9 The general location of development required by unadopted Policy H13 has been determined through a series of studies, including the Design and Development Framework, that have formed part of the EIA and other background work. Figure 3.1 shows the master plan, and provides a visual presentation of the proposed development. The remainder of this section provides further details on the elements to be provided by this proposal. The proposals are compared against unadopted Policy H13 in Section 5 (para 5.87 - 5.119)

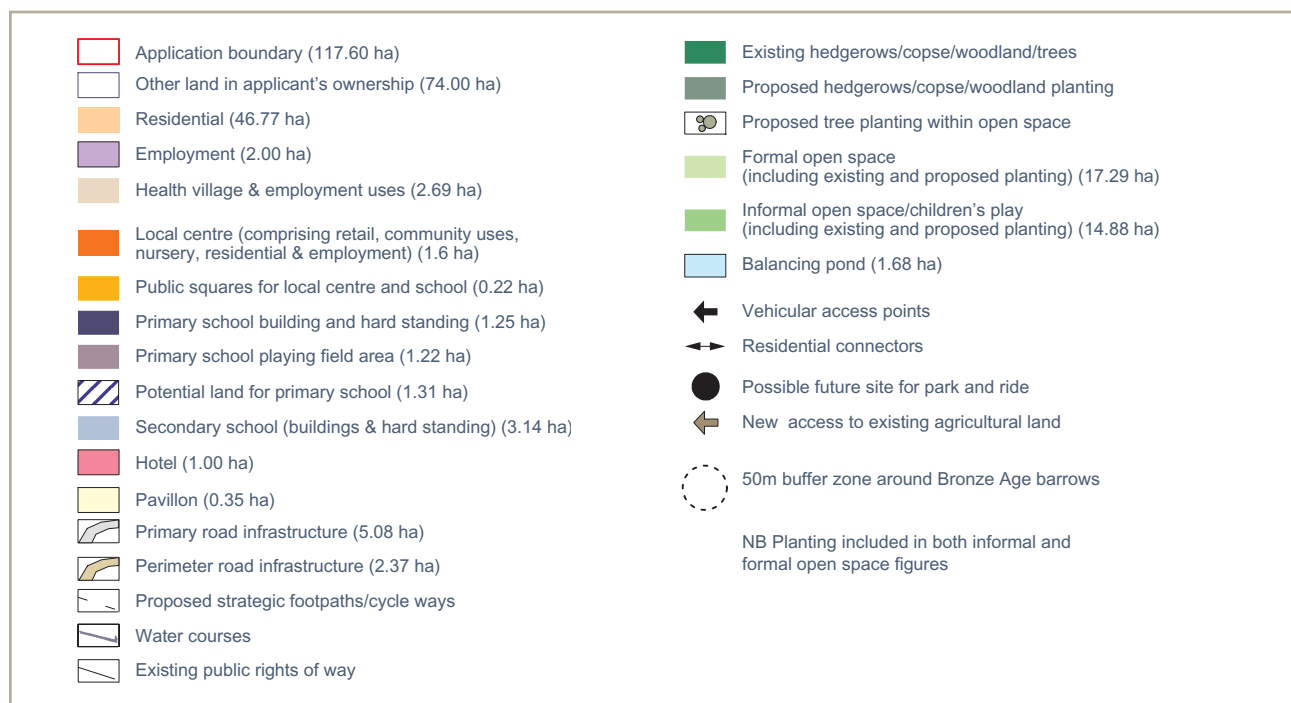


Figure 3.1 Master plan (key)

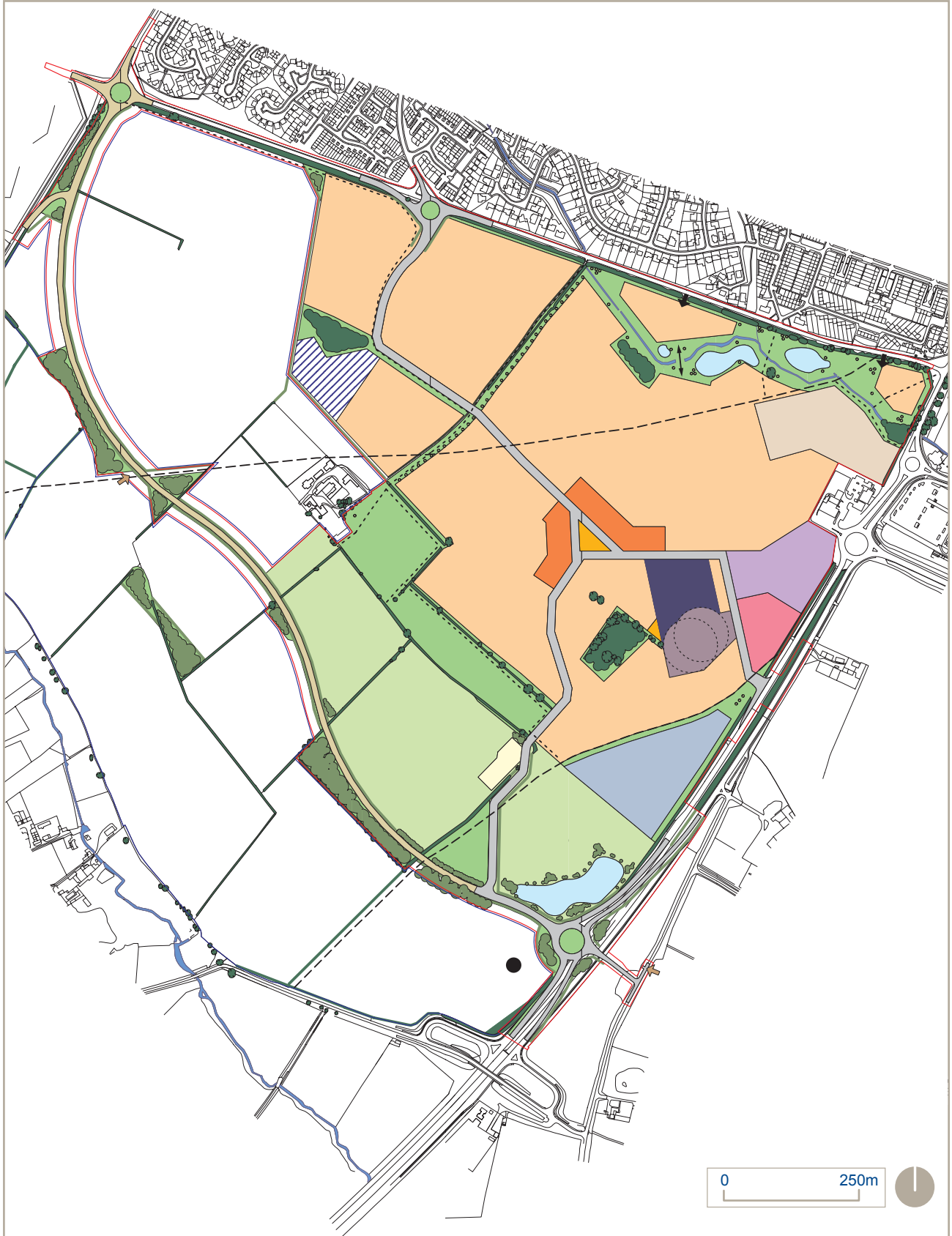


Figure 3.1 Master plan