

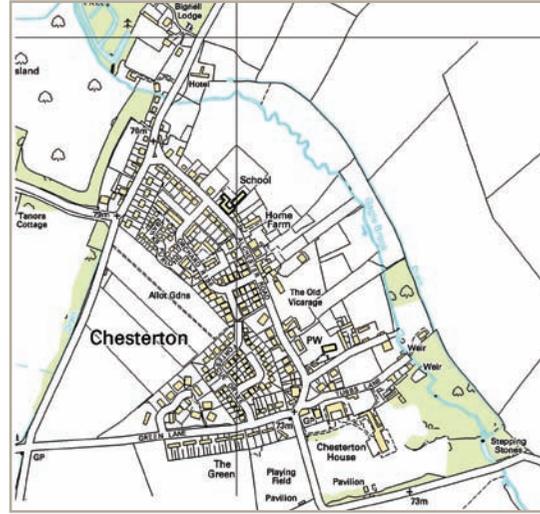


Chesterton



Open space analysis

- Woodland
- Parkland/ Informal recreation space
- Open space/ Formal recreation
- Built Form
- Block Form
- Water course



OS map extract



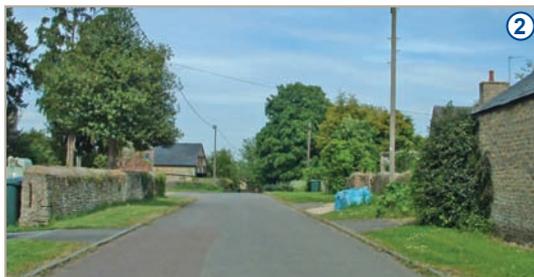
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View along Alchester Road. Enclosure is provided by landscape elements rather than built form.



Understanding the relationship between the landscape and the village.



View along private drives toward the site.



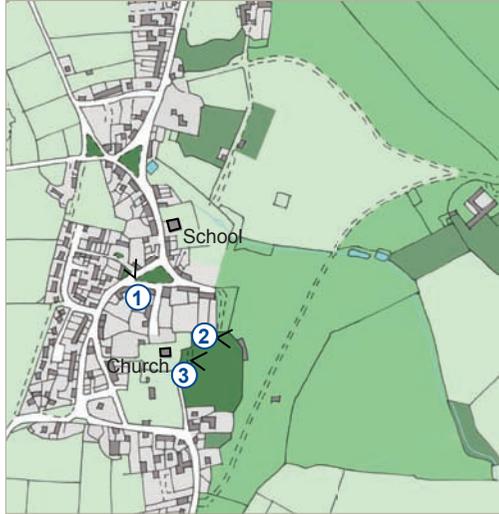
View of the north eastern edge of Chesterton. The primary school clearly visible.

Figure 2.17 Analysis of the village of Chesterton





Kirtlington

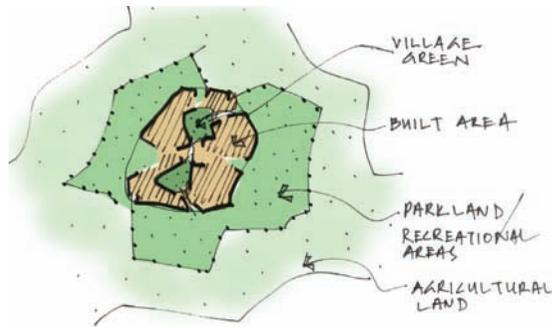


Open space analysis

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OS map extract



Understanding the relationship between the landscape and the village



Series of green spaces progressively becoming more intimate and private



Rustic play area overlooking parkland. Note appropriate materials and limited colour range



Formal recreation on edge of village

Figure 2.18 Analysis of the village of Kirtlington





2.2 Social and Economic situation

- 2.2.1 Local amenities and services in Bicester include nine primary and two secondary schools (all except one with capacity predicted for 2011), five general practice surgeries, seven dentists (only one accepting new NHS patients without restrictions), three opticians and four pharmacies.
- 2.2.2 The Bicester Community Hospital, located on the west of the town, is operated by the East Oxfordshire National Health Service Primary Health Care Trust (PCT). The PCT is currently proposing to modernise and enhance the services available, through the construction of a new hospital and the ability to rent health provision as and when necessary to better meet demand.
- 2.2.3 There are two main retail areas, Bicester town centre and the Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area to the south of the town centre. The town centre provides local services and amenities

including banks, a post office, supermarket, a variety of independent provisioning shops, some high street chain stores and a number of pubs and restaurants. There are no department stores or any of the larger chain stores in the town centre. The Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area has 90 retail stores (offering end of lines or previous season stock) and three restaurants.

- 2.2.4 Bicester has two hotels and there are a further four in the surrounding area. There are a range of leisure options for the residents of the Cherwell district, including nature conservation, countryside walks, a museum, a multimedia arts venue and three public leisure centres, however, there is a shortfall in formal outdoor sports provision in Bicester.



Figure 2.19 **Bicester High Street**





- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Site outline | Phased features: |
| Proposed link road layout | Early Bronze Age |
| Proposed archaeological evaluation area | Late Iron Age |
| Evaluation trench | Romano-British |
| Archaeological zone | Saxon |
| Geophysical anomalies (Stratascan 2006) | Medieval |
| Aerial Photo features (C.Cox 2005) | Post-medieval/modern |
| Ridge and furrow | Undated |
| | Small find |
| | Oxford Archaeology 2002 a/b |

Figure 2.20 Zones of archaeological interest





2.3 Cultural heritage

- 2.3.1 A detailed cultural heritage assessment was undertaken for the proposed development. This involved aerial photography analysis, a geophysical survey and targeted evaluation trenching.
- 2.3.2 There are no scheduled ancient monuments (SAMs), listed buildings or conservation areas within the site, but there are examples in close proximity. The largest concentration of listed buildings is in the village of Chesterton, which is a designated conservation area.
- 2.3.3 Certain areas along the eastern side of the site have been the subject of archaeological evaluation. There are eight archaeological sites/findspots listed within the boundary of the proposed development. Investigations in the north-eastern area uncovered evidence of a late Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead settlement of local or county importance. A settlement of similar date and size, which may be an extension of this farmstead, was uncovered immediately to the east during pre-construction investigations at Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area. The immediate area has a rich archaeological heritage, with the SAM of the Roman Town and Fort of Alchester situated 700m to the south-east of Whitelands Farm.
- 2.3.4 The geophysical survey highlighted evidence of ring ditches, which are the ploughed out below ground remnants of Bronze Age ring barrow monuments. Wessex Archaeology successfully uncovered the remains of both ring ditches, which as a consequence of their excellent state of preservation are considered worthy of preservation in situ. A 50m buffer around these two sites was proposed to ensure no infrastructure works take place that would damage these remains of national importance.
- 2.3.5 Based upon recommendations by Oxford County Council Archaeologist, the associated playing fields for the adjacent primary school are now proposed to overlie these burial monuments, thereby ensuring an extensive area of managed green space.

2.4 Policy context

In this section, the national and local policy context is considered.

National policy context & best practice

- 2.4.1 According to government best practice guidance as contained in 'Design Review', (CABE, London 2002) a well-designed place should:
 - Have its own identity
 - Be where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
 - Have attractive and successful outdoor areas valued by people who use them
 - Be easy to reach and move through
 - Have a clear image and be easy to understand
 - Easily change if required
 - Have variety and choice
 - Be where the users feel safe and are as safe as possible
 - Have an appropriate and high quality services infrastructure
- 2.4.2 The qualities of character, continuity and enclosure, quality of the public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability, diversity, security and services are the basis for all good places. They are reflected in numerous other national guidance documents, including *By Design, Urban design in the planning system : towards better practice* (CABE/DETR, London 1999). These principles are the starting point for the design of the south-west Bicester urban extension and this statement will explain how these qualities have been interpreted and applied within the local context particular to this site.
- 2.4.3 The key principles behind a master plan can be found in *Creating Successful Master plans* (CABE, London 2003) and in the Urban Task Force report, *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (ODPM, London 1999). These are set out below, together with brief examples of how these principles have been adopted in this application.





2.4.4 ***A master plan has an overall vision, captured in a combination of words and diagrams, plans and illustrations.*** How? This statement, with numerous illustrations and drawings, is evidence that this approach has been taken.

2.4.5 ***A master plan establishes the principles of development in three dimensions and sets down the different layers of proposed physical change – buildings, open spaces, streets, public transport and other infrastructure such as utilities, telecoms, drainage.*** How? While there is one overall master plan, it is a result of a layers of complementary data that all have a good 'fit' with one another. The series of diagrams in this statement separate the different elements of the master plan to show how these work together.

2.4.6 ***A master plan seeks to show how an area can exploit its distinctive features to give it a character of its own.*** How? Extensive analysis of the site and the wider locality, including the town of Bicester and other settlements, has informed the master plan to ensure it is locally distinctive.

2.4.7 ***A master plan explores, addresses and reconciles different requirements of key stakeholders and interest groups, which may have conflicting yet legitimate concerns.*** How? The engagement process encouraged concerns to be raised and potential design responses to be tested, all in a public forum.

2.4.8 ***A master plan should be visionary; it should raise aspirations and provide a vehicle for consensus building and implementation.*** How? The master planning process involved the extensive consideration of the character of Bicester and nearby villages, learning from the best parts and ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. Integral to the process have been various community engagement events.

2.4.9 ***A master plan should be flexible, providing the basis for negotiation and dispute resolution, and be the result of a participatory process, providing all the stakeholders with the means of expressing their needs and priorities.*** How? The master plan has been arrived at following consultation and engagement. It has been the vehicle for adjusting thinking and ideas in response to issues raised by both the local community and council officers.

2.4.10 ***A master plan should be fully integrated into the land use planning system, while allowing new uses and market opportunities to exploit the full development potential of a site.*** How? Working with the local authority, Countryside has produced a design & development framework (DDF) that has been endorsed as local planning guidance. This framework enshrines the principle of good design on this site within the local planning system, yet remains flexible enough to allow for the design and layout to evolve as the project moves towards the detailed design phase and implementation.

2.4.11 A master plan should be deliverable, it should take into account likely implementation and delivery routes. How? The layout and design of the master plan allows for a phased delivery and minimal disruption to the nearby communities during the construction phase.

2.4.12 In addition to this, the design and access statement has been prepared in accordance with current Government guidance, as set out in the ODPM's second consultation paper, 'Changes to the Planning System', March 2005, as well as more recent publications from the Department for Communities and Local Government, Circular 01/2006 and CABI's document: 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them'.



Local policy context

- 2.4.13 As this statement makes clear, the design of the master plan meets the aims of objectives set out in the Design and Development Framework for land south- west of Bicester, as endorsed by Cherwell District Council in March 2006. The framework is based upon policy H13 and other associated policies found within the unadopted Cherwell local plan. Countryside considers that the proposals submitted for outline planning permission are in accordance with both the framework document and local planning policy.
- 2.4.14 See the planning statement for further details on how the proposal meets national, regional and local planning policy.

2







3 Community engagement

3.1.1 Countryside believes that the engagement process has helped deliver a master plan that is responsive to the needs of the wider community. The master plan was prepared with the involvement and participation of the local community, members and officers of the local authorities and representatives of local interest groups. These various groups were engaged through a series of events organised and facilitated by Kevin Murray Associates:

3.2 29 June 2005 workshop 'Growth of Bicester'

3.2.1 This daytime workshop included a short discussion about the growth of Bicester so far and its consequences, a site visit, a town planning exercise and a design session examining the strengths and weaknesses of transport, housing, community facilities and open space provision in the town. A public meeting followed in the evening at which attendees could view the results from earlier in the day and add their comments and ideas.



Site visit to Whitelands Farm on 29 June 2005





3.3 18 July 2005 workshop with the Bicester Chamber of Commerce

3.3.1 Members of the Bicester Chamber of Commerce identified key issues of concern, including business life, traffic, the identity and image of Bicester, its location and strategic importance and growth and expansion.

3.4 19 July 2005 design workshop 'Growing Bicester'

3.4.1 At this design workshop, attendees were split into four groups to develop design principles for the movement structure, housing (density, tenure and layout), community and employment uses, open space, leisure, wildlife and water and drainage for the site. Key issues and objectives were outlined before possible design solutions were drawn up. As with the previous event, a public meeting followed in the evening at which attendees could view the results from earlier in the day and add their comments and ideas.

3.4.2 A summary report, produced by Kevin Murray Associates and available from Cherwell District Council, entitled 'Growing Bicester: Planning for a Sustainable Future' gives more details on the community engagement events. It sets out the concerns and the possible design responses that were discussed. The master plan draws on these ideas to ensure the proposal is responsive to the local community.

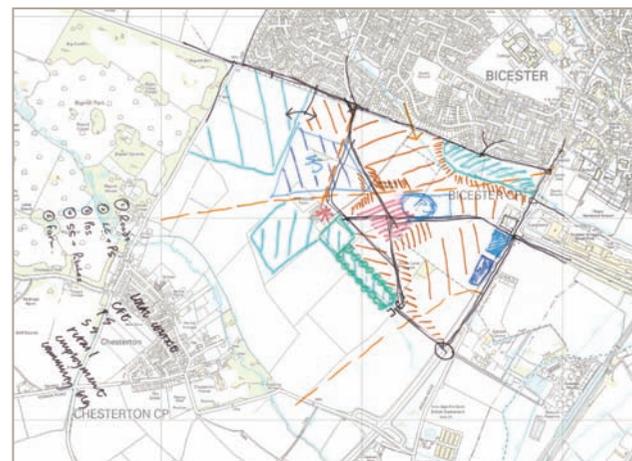
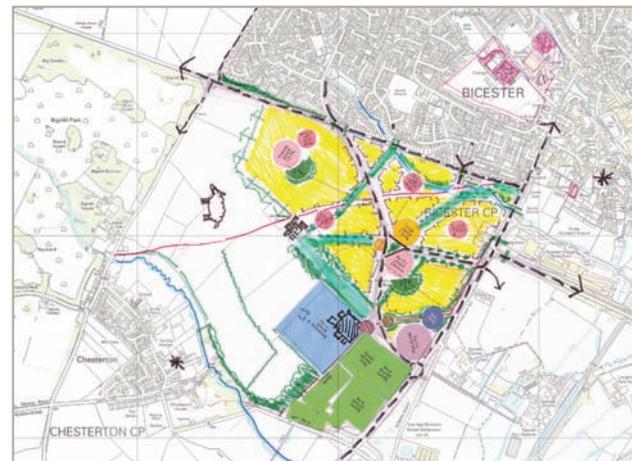
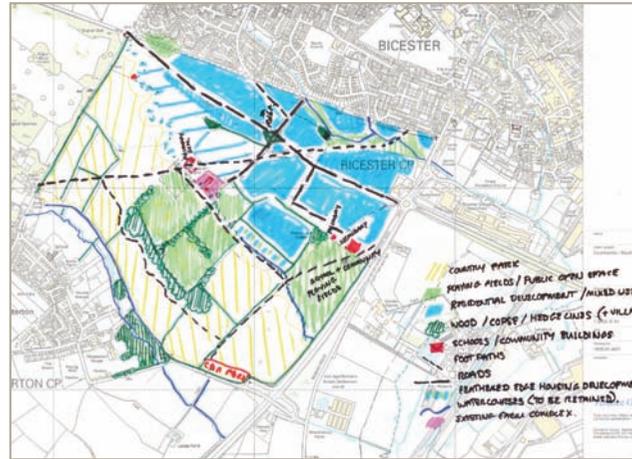


Figure 3.1 The options produced by the working groups at community events on 19 July 2005





Figure 3.2 Amalgamation of three options presented to final community event on the evening of 19 July 2005







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 Gagle 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

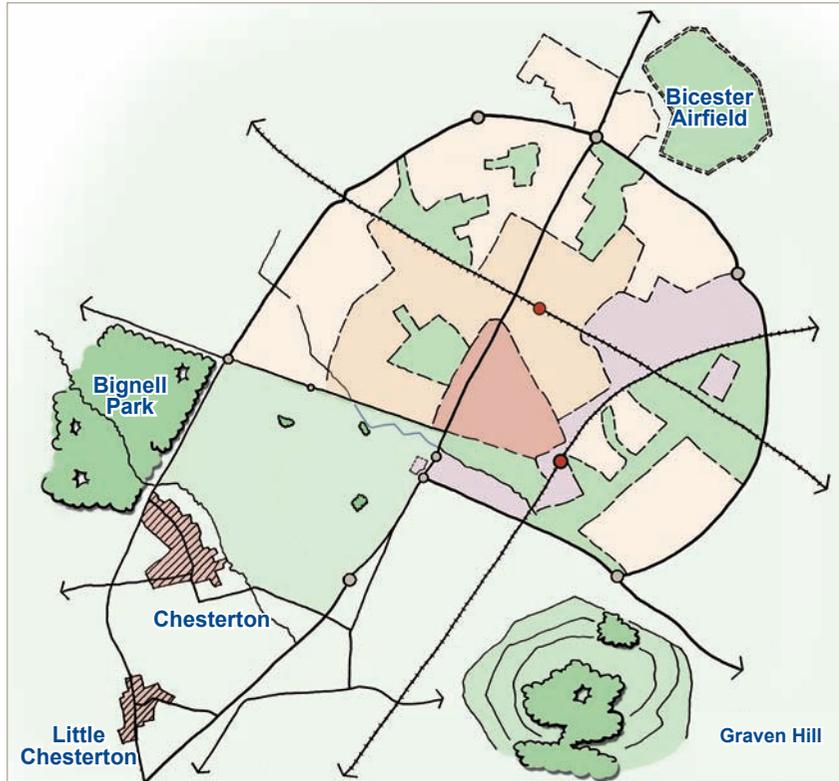


Figure 5.3 Existing context

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

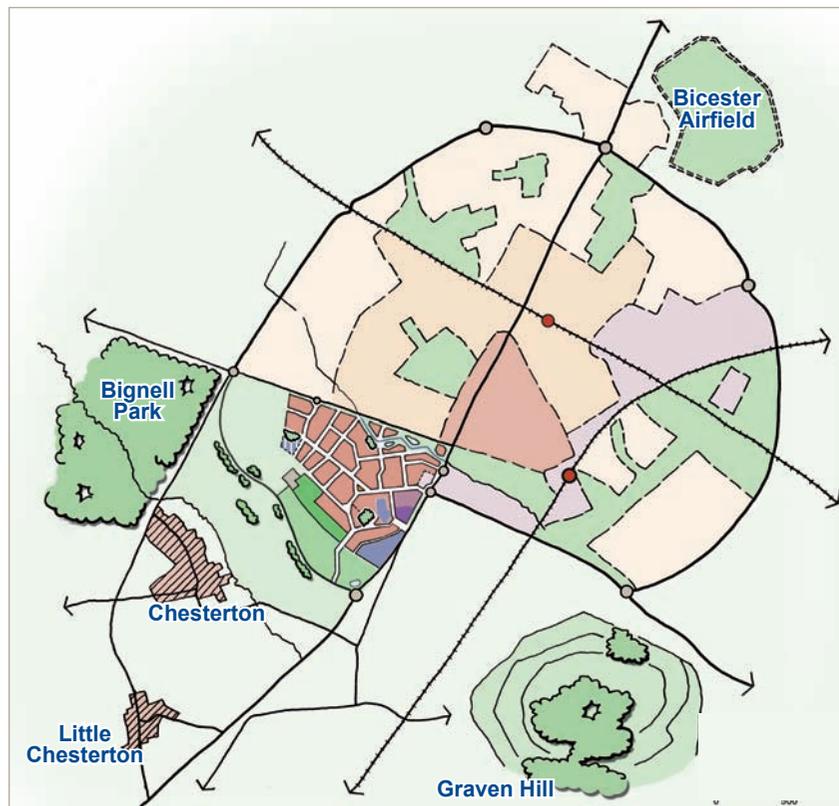


Figure 5.4 The proposed response

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

