

# Chapter 2:

## Context & Character

Kingsmere is located to the south west of Bicester and is bounded to the east by the A41 Oxford Road, to the north by the B4030 Middleton Stoney Road and to the west by the A4095. The northern boundary and part of the eastern boundary abut the built-up edge of Bicester. The southern boundary of the site abuts the open fields that lead to Gagle Brook, north-east of Chesterton village.

The development site is gently undulating, contains three small copses and is crossed by two public footpaths. Pingle Brook runs through the north-east corner of the site.

2.0	CONTEXT & CHARACTER	
2.1	History of Bicester	
2.2	Bicester today	
2.3	The site	Opportunities
		Constraints
2.4	Character	
2.5	Urban hierarchy	Central core
		Main approaches
		Lesser routes & avenues
		Villages & urban edges

## 2.1 HISTORY OF BICESTER

The origins of Bicester go back to Saxon times. It grew up as a market town at the junction of the Banbury, London and Oxford roads. For much of the last 300 years, Bicester remained a small market town with little change in its size or scale. However, the town has experienced rapid growth over the last 50 years, without a commensurate increase in employment or facilities. The town centre is much the same size today as it was 300 years ago, yet the size of the settlement is much greater. The development of Kingsmere, while expanding the town further, is an opportunity to redress this balance and provide a range of facilities to benefit the whole town.



Figure 2.1 Bicester in 1885.

Figure 2.2 The red line shows the outline planning permission boundary.







All photos of Bicester

## 2.2 BICESTER TODAY

Bicester is an attractive market town, with a lively mixed-use centre, located in the heart of Oxfordshire, close to the M40 motorway around the midpoint between London and Birmingham.

### Healthcare

Bicester Community Hospital is located on the southern side of the town and the operating Primary Healthcare Trust is currently proposing to modernise and enhance the services available. Five surgeries, seven dentists, three opticians and four pharmacies are also located in Bicester.

As part of Kingsmere, a new healthcare campus is proposed, potentially comprising a number of different health uses.

### Employment & retail

The town has a series of small local neighbourhood centres that are evenly distributed across the town. The town centre has a variety of national high street stores, while Bicester Village outlet centre is a major draw, attracting visitors from far afield.

There are three major employment areas in the town, with the largest to the east, a smaller area close to Bicester town railway station and the other to the south of the town adjacent to Oxford Road.

Bicester has two hotels with a further four in the surrounding area. There are a range of leisure activities in Bicester and Cherwell District from leisure centres to museums. There is, however, considered to be a shortfall in formal outdoor sports provision in Bicester itself, an issue addressed at Kingsmere.

### Education

There are currently nine Primary Schools and two secondary schools in Bicester. Kingsmere includes provision of an additional Primary School to meet demand created by the development as well as an additional Education Campus to cover future demand.

### Housing

Housing forms the largest land use in Bicester. The inner urban area, around the town centre, dating up to the mid-Twentieth Century is generally well connected, with a mix of architectural styles creating a rich urban fabric. Later housing, from the second half of the Twentieth Century is less successful, often poorly connected and inward looking, although pockets of more recent housing on the edges of Bicester has created a higher quality townscape.

### Open spaces

A number of public and private open spaces contribute to the character of Bicester, and the facilities available within it. There are plentiful parklands and informal spaces, with Pingle Recreation Ground close to the site on Oxford Road.

A deficiency in formal recreation space has been identified, resulting in additional sports pitches in Kingsmere. Recreation facilities are available at Chesterton Golf and Country Club and the allotments and sports ground in Chesterton. The mature tree cover of Bignell Park, west of the town, provides a backdrop to the site, although the park itself has no public access.



2.2 continued:  
**Bicester today**

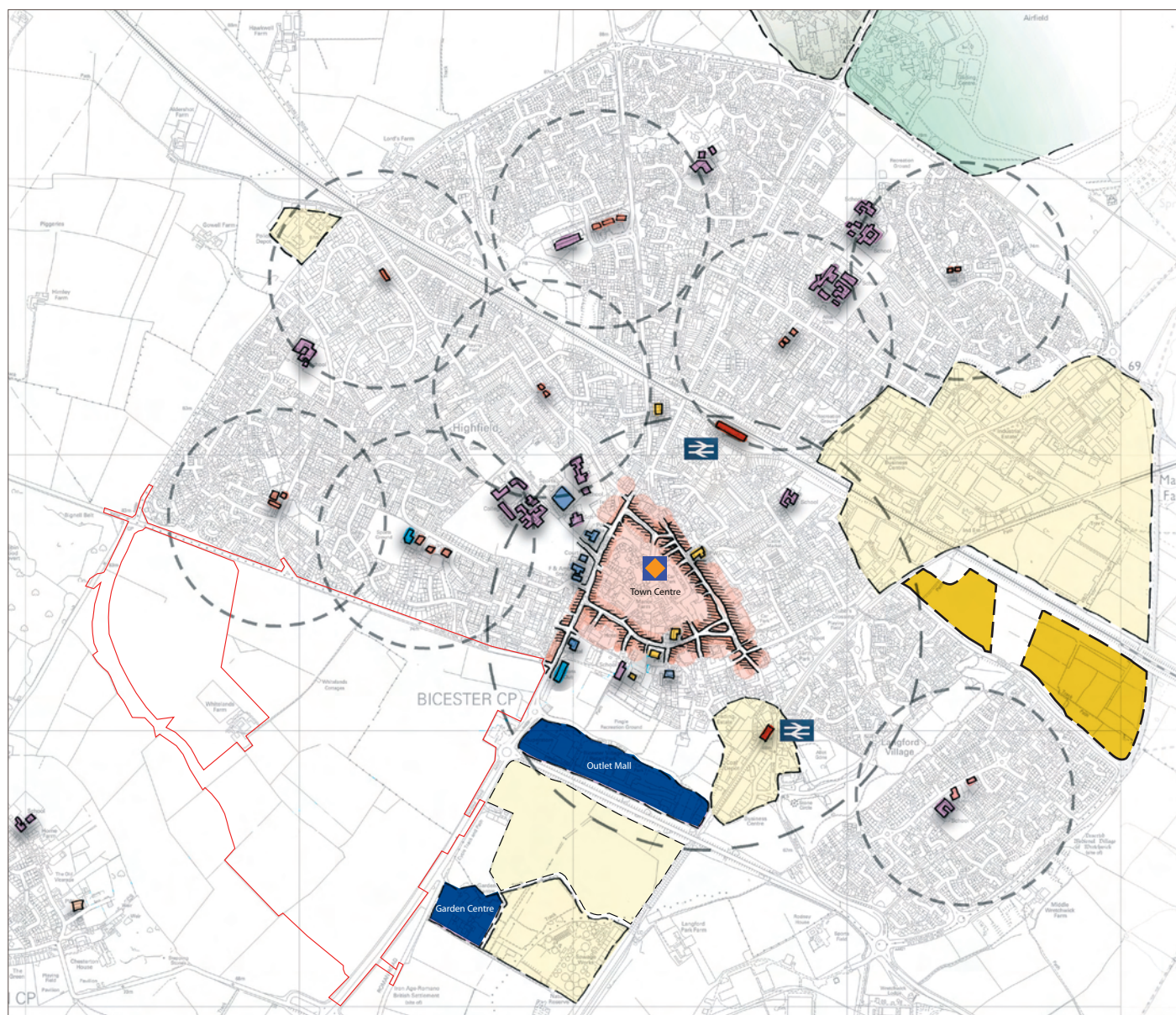


Figure 2.3 Principal services and facilities in Bicester.

- Education
- Public buildings
- Places of worship
- Retail centres
- Public transport stations
- Existing & proposed employment
- Retail destinations
- Housing (approved not built)
- 400m & 800m walk zones around local centre
- Bure Park Bus Interchange



## Access & movement

The A41 Oxford Road is the main route into and through Bicester, and has links to the A34 south, providing easy access to Kidlington and Oxford. Routes to the wider region can be accessed via the M40 with junction 9 two miles from the site. The A41 east provides links to Aylesbury and the A4421 provides a link north to Tingewick bypass.

Within Bicester there is a divide between the older and newer parts of the town. The older inner areas of the town have a series of well-connected streets providing a variety of movement choices. The newer outer areas are dominated by cul-de-sac developments with poor connections and limited movement choices.

Two public rights of way cross the site providing pedestrian links between Chesterton and Bicester. A number of footpaths radiate from the centre of Bicester, although several terminate where built development ends.



Figure 2.4 Strategic connections within and around Bicester.



Bicester today comprises walkable streets (Church Street – top), important local roads (Middleton Stoney Road – centre) and strategic main highways (A41 – bottom).