

2.2 continued:  
**Bicester today**

**Landscape setting and ecology**

The site primarily consists of arable fields, divided by native hedgerows. The site falls gently from 82m AOD in the north-west to 65m AOD in the south-east. The southern section of the site falls more noticeably down to Gagle Brook. Following the profile of the brook, a shoulder of land prevents views across the site from the valley bottom. The north-western part of the site is particularly open, the absence of vegetation allowing expansive views across the farmland.

The setting of Chesterton and its conservation area has been an important consideration in the design of the proposals. Much of the conservation area is inward looking and its setting to the north is primarily defined by the woodland north of

Chesterton Lodge and along Gagle Brook. However, the conservation area has recently been extended to the north-west where intervisibility between the site and Chesterton is greater and more open. The landscape setting to the village is influenced by a combination of topography, built form and vegetation.

Between the perimeter road and the rest of the site, Whitelands Farm is a prominent and positive landmark in the landscape. The setting of the farmhouse is important, in particular in views from the south and east where there is a fine vista to the front of the farmhouse. The combination of the view to the farmhouse, a localised valley and the hedgerow patterns make the fields immediately east of the farmhouse more intimate and attractive.

The southern edge of the site is also enclosed in character, with pleasant views of Gagle Brook. For the most part, hedgerows are of poor quality, containing a limited number of species and often including large sections of dead elm. The combined effect of the hedgerows and the four copses is to defuse views across the site and the network of hedgerows, trees and copses positively contribute to the landscape character of the site. The most significant copse is Foxey Leys Copse.

The majority of the site is used for arable farming and as a consequence its ecological interest is limited. Pingle Brook to the north is a positive landscape feature and of ecological interest and has potential to be a significant asset for the new quarter.

**Archaeology**

The site has been subject to several archaeological surveys with eight archaeological sites / findspots within the site boundary. Of most interest are the remnants of Bronze Age ring barrow monuments that are in an excellent state of preservation and considered to be of national importance. The Primary School playing fields have been positioned to overlie these monuments offering a 50m buffer zone where no infrastructure or building works will occur.

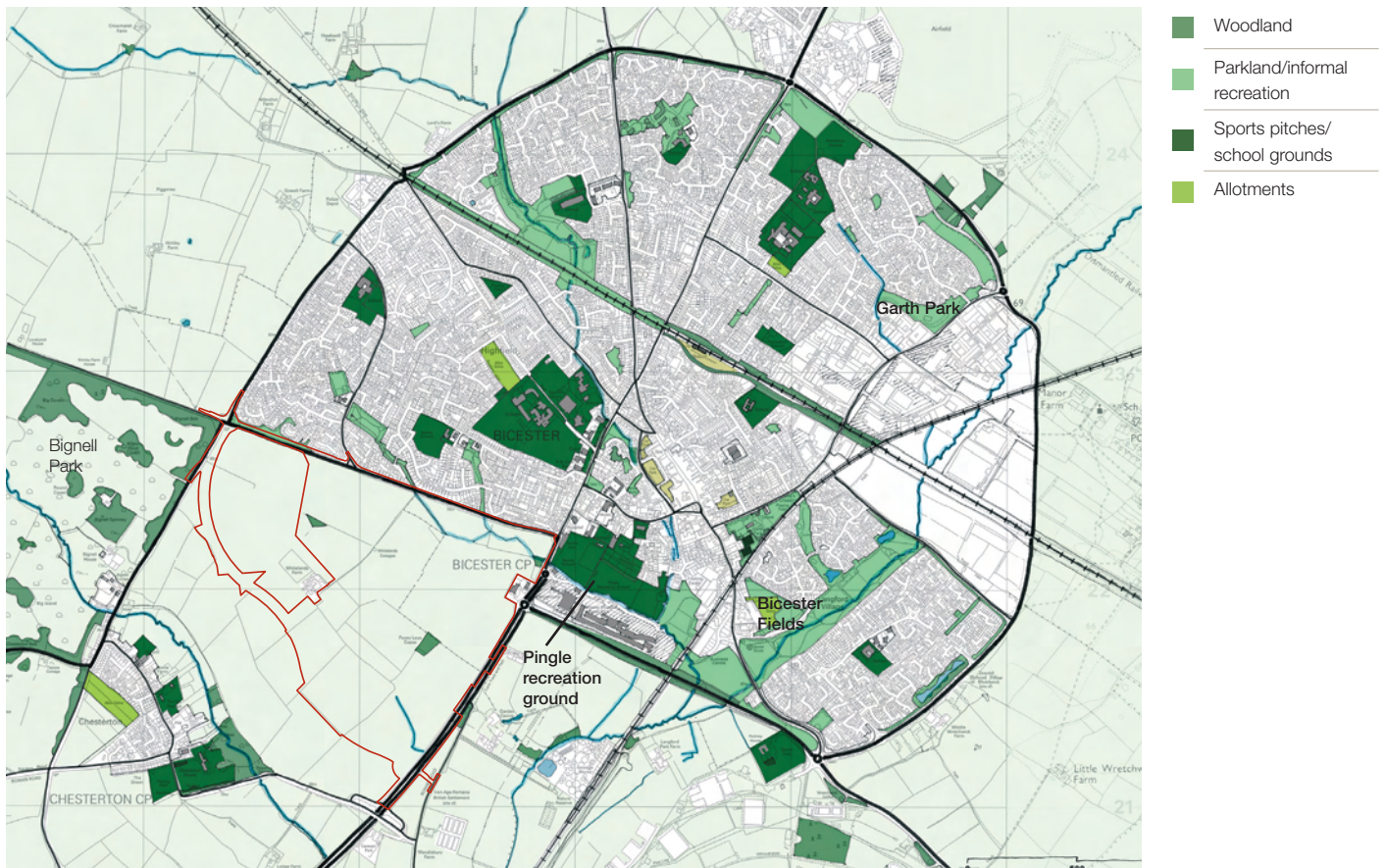


Figure 2.5 Principal green space in and around Bicester.

## 2.3 THE SITE

The following is a brief summary of key opportunities and constraints / issues, which will influence design proposals for the site. A more detailed appraisal of the site and its wider context can be found within the Amended Design & Access Statement (November 2006).

The south and west boundaries overlook countryside beyond on which lie Bignell Park and Chesterton. The northern and eastern boundaries are both flanked by important roads. Oxford Road on the north-eastern boundary is a busy, active route leading to the centre of Bicester.

Figure 2.6 on page 16 illustrates key site features.

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- The site occupies a strategically important position close to Bicester town centre, the A41 and Bicester Village Retail Outlet Centre at a key gateway to the town.
- Its location makes it ideal for an urban extension naturally integrated with the existing urban core where it can inject new life into the town centre and enhance Bicester in terms of its economic vitality and desirability as a place to live.
- The site has good linkages to the A41, the Middleton Stoney Road and a network of pedestrian rights of way connecting to the heart of Bicester town centre.
- The site's location also offers the potential to improve connections to Chesterton, the Bicester Village Retail Outlet Centre and to local public transport services.
- Bicester has an established, attractive historic core with a strong character and historic features that can be drawn upon in the design of the proposed new development.
- The gently undulating site benefits from its attractive landscape setting.

### CONSTRAINTS:

- The setting to Chesterton, its conservation area and listed buildings has been an important consideration in the design proposal. The impact on the village's setting is limited by a buffer area combining topography, vegetation, open space and existing agricultural land.
- Whitelands Farmhouse is prominent and a positive landmark. The most attractive aspect of the farmhouse has been protected in views from the south and east where fine vistas can be found.
- The subtle variation in the topography of the site helps to provide subtle changes in the character and should be acknowledged in the layout of the development.
- Two public rights of way cross the site from east to west. These have been embraced within the design proposals.
- Two Bronze Age ring barrows, located within the Primary School, require 50m buffer zones.
- Hedgerows and the four copses have been retained in the layout and should be viewed as positive features in the development.
- Pingle Brook and Whitelands Farm ditch are positive landscape features and should be protected and enhanced.
- The small area of predicted flood plain risk on Pingle Brook is eliminated by the proposed works.



Figure 2.6 Constraints and opportunities

- Main tree & hedgerow blocks

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- Brook

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- Landmark building

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- Direction of topography

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- Public rights of way

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- Key roads

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- Key strategic link

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- Potential vehicular access

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- Pedestrian access

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- Pedestrian route to town centre

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- Archaeological buffer zone

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- Setting to Chesterton

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- Setting to Whitelands Farm

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- Noise from A41

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- Conservation area boundary (extended February 2008)

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- Views

## 2.4 CHARACTER

To help inform the Code, an extensive character study of Bicester, Chesterton and certain outlying villages was undertaken. The location of the settlements visited is shown on figure 2.7. As part of these studies, key aspects of the urban framework and landscape structure were analysed. This Code has drawn upon the findings in this section.

### Bicester

Bicester's development has mainly been focused along the principal historic routes, which join at the town's market square. Along these main routes, the urban form has primarily consisted of terraced buildings, rich in detail and using a wide range of materials including render, brick and stone. The continuity of building form creates a strong sense of enclosure along these main routes.

Bicester has a network of secondary routes radiating from the main routes. These develop into a complex and irregular pattern of narrow lanes, often fronted by semi-detached buildings, which lead out to green open spaces.

Outside of the core central area are a series of suburbs with local centres that provide residents with a variety of services and facilities. The majority of these have been developed around culs-de-sac and are typical of late twentieth century development. These suburbs are contained by a perimeter road which successfully defines the rural edge for most of the town.



Figure 2.7 Site location and context analysis areas.

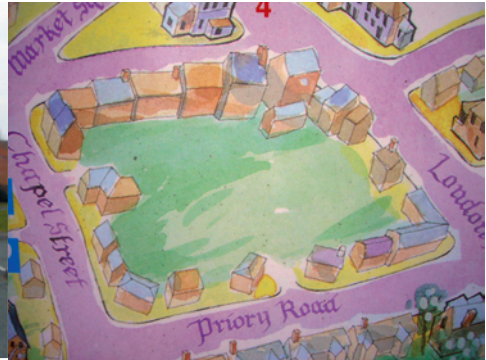


A classic stone building in central Bicester.

2.4 continued:  
**Character**

**Street pattern**

The majority of Bicester has been developed in a series of suburban expansions through the last thirty years, most of which are dominated by roads rather than public realm. The perimeter road around the town is a prominent feature providing the boundary for development in the town but with little positive frontage.



Above Robust perimeter blocks form much of Bicester's central area as represented on this town centre sign.

Left Highway dominated estates of the late 20th century form much of Bicester's periphery. These are not environments that Kingsmere should replicate.

**2.5 URBAN HIERARCHY**

This section considers the hierarchy of urban form. It draws on the analysis of Bicester's historic core and the immediate surrounding routes, and elements of surrounding villages particularly in respect to urban edges. A hierarchy of urban form can be found that broadly fits into the linear model below:



**CENTRAL CORE**

**MAIN APPROACHES**

