

2 Site description and the proposals

Introduction

- 2.1 This chapter includes a brief description of the site and the development proposals submitted as part of the consented outline application, to which this section 73 application relates. The updated site description is set out where appropriate. The elements of the proposals that are updated by this application are then explained.

The location of the application site

- 2.2 The site is located to the south west of Bicester to the west of the A41 / Oxford Road. The application boundary is shown on figure 1.2.
- 2.3 The site is bordered by the A41 / Oxford Road to the east and Middleton Stoney Road to the north. The section of Middleton Stoney Road to the north of the site is classified as the A4095, this changes to the B4030 to the west of the junction with Howes Lane and the Chesterton road.
- 2.4 To the south of the site, beyond open agricultural land is the village of Chesterton. To the west of the proposed development area is the Whitelands Farm complex and retained agricultural land.

The characteristics of the site

- 2.5 The 117.6 ha site, which was farmland (arable and pasture) in 2006, is no longer in agricultural use, as the site is being developed in line with the consented outline scheme. Much of the site is now being managed as set aside (scarified once a year to control vegetation growth), until such time as it is built out as part of the consented outline scheme.
- 2.6 The site occupies an area of gently undulating topography that grades down from west to east. The western end of the site lies at about 80 m above ordnance datum (AOD), with the eastern end at around 65 m AOD. To the south of the site, the land falls noticeably down to Gagle Brook. This creates a 'shoulder' in the land limiting views north across the site from the south.
- 2.7 Within the site there are several copses, the most significant being Foxey Leys Copse east of Whitelands Farm. Numerous mature trees can be found within the hedgerows and in the area around Whitelands Farm. The majority of the trees are indigenous species.
- 2.8 Pingle Brook lies in the north east corner of the site and several drainage ditches cross the site along field boundaries. Construction of the residential land parcel to the north of Pingle Brook is largely complete and the balancing

ponds, informal open space and planting proposed along the route of the Brook is in place (figure 2.1).

- 2.9 Whitelands Cottages, two residential dwellings that were present to the north of the main farm complex in 2006, have been demolished. Whitelands Farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings are located west of the proposed mixed use development area, outside of the application site. These buildings will not be affected by the development proposals, although are they subject of a planning application submitted in December 2011 for redevelopment and change in use to residential dwellings.
- 2.10 The newly completed perimeter road forms the southern boundary of the site running from the A4095 / Middleton Stoney Road junction in the north west to the A41 Oxford Road in the south east (figure 2.1). Both of these junctions are new roundabouts. The roadside planting has also been undertaken.
- 2.11 The first section of the spine road from the new Middleton Stoney Road roundabout is complete, as is the route from the perimeter road northwards towards the local centre, although the central linking section of this is currently only provided as a work access and does not yet have a metalled surface. Whitelands Farmhouse and building complex is now accessed via the new spine road.
- 2.12 The signalised access junction on the A41 has been constructed and work has commenced on the hotel site to the north of this junction (figure 2.1). There is a site construction access from the A41 adjacent to a petrol filling station.
- 2.13 The new access point for the existing agricultural land to the south of the perimeter road has now been constructed.
- 2.14 The northern section of the primary road infrastructure is complete and main services (drainage, electricity, gas, water and sewage) are installed. The site access off the roundabout on Middleton Stoney Road and junction on to the perimeter road have also been built out, along with the vehicle access points to the north eastern section of the site (north of Pingle Brook).
- 2.15 Land allocated as the primary school's playing fields has been prepared (levelling, drainage, seeding / planting). Work on the formal sports provision, including the playing fields, sports pavilion and changing facilities in the south of the site has commenced (Cherwell District Council).
- 2.16 Two large balancing ponds to the south of the site have been constructed and elsewhere on the site elements of the sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) have been installed.
- 2.17 Two footpaths cross the site. One links the A4095 at Bignell House to the centre of Bicester and the other crosses the south eastern corner of the site.
- 2.18 A planting scheme has been implemented across the site to complement the wider landscape by using green links to connect adjacent green areas to the

east and west. Where possible existing hedges have been retained and enhanced. Much of the structural landscaping and landscaping for informal open spaces areas has now been planted.

- 2.19 The four copses within the site are retained and maintained. All the copses are to be maintained with under-storey species thinning to encourage biodiversity where agreed with the local planning authority. Where considered appropriate and viable, all mature trees will be retained and enhanced with new tree planting.
- 2.20 To date, a number of the residential land parcels are built out, under construction, or have been sold for construction (figure 2.1). This equates to a total of 566 dwellings, although only 58 dwellings in the north of the site have been occupied.

The immediate surroundings

- 2.21 North of Middleton Stoney Road are residential properties that comprise the southern edge of Bicester. This area is known as the Highfields Estate. Further to the north, within the residential area, there are a number of neighbourhood centres that provide local retail facilities for residents. Parts of the northern section of the site fall within 400 m of these centres.
- 2.22 Bicester town centre is located to the north east of the site, approximately 1 km away. Immediately north east of the site, there are a petrol station, a restaurant and a public house and, beyond the A41, a Tesco superstore. Further to the east is the Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Area.
- 2.23 To the west of the site there is agricultural land and the A4095. Further to the west is Bignell Park, which is a private estate mainly comprising open woodland and parkland. Agricultural land lies to the south and south west of the site and further to the south west is the Bignell Park Hotel.
- 2.24 Gagle Brook, which flows north west to south east, is located to the south of the site and further to the south is the village of Chesterton.

Future of the site in the absence of the section 73 proposals

- 2.25 In the absence of the proposals put forward under the section 73 application, the mixed-use scheme will be built out as per the original consent, with detailed designs and development proposals being carried out in accordance with reserved matters approvals.
- 2.26 Following confirmation from CDC and OCC that the second primary school was not required, the land identified as 'potential land for a primary school' was released for up to 46 additional dwellings, which achieved outline consent in 2011.

The proposals

- 2.27 Figure 2.2 shows the consented 2006 master plan. The 2006 proposals comprise:
- Up to 1,585 residential dwellings, 30% of which will be affordable
 - 2 ha of employment land to be located in the north east of the site, with up to a further 1000 m² within the local centre
 - Outdoor playing space including formal outdoor sports, sports pavilion and changing facilities, children's play areas and informal open space
 - A primary school and land for a second primary school
 - Land for a secondary school
 - A local centre including a community centre, and with the possibility of provision of a children's day nursery, pub and office space
 - 1 ha reserved for a hotel
 - A safeguarded site for a health village, which will include a nursing home and could include a community hospital, GP surgery and complementary uses, which will revert to employment uses if not taken up
 - A perimeter road and junction improvements
 - Provision of a site for park and ride (site outside application boundary; land transferred to OCC)
- 2.28 The development will generally be two, three or four storeys. The maximum height of the consented development is shown in figure 2.3.
- 2.29 The following section of this chapter sets out those elements of the proposals that are subject to change through this application and changes that have occurred through any applications consented subsequent to the 2006 outline application. Full details of the consented scheme are provided in technical appendix B, which includes the proposals chapter of the 2006 ES.

Residential development

- 2.30 The site will deliver up to 1,585 residential dwellings. A variety of house types and tenures across the site is proposed, which will help to ensure that a mixed community is delivered. These will include apartments as well as two, three, four and five bed-houses, with building heights varying across the development and a maximum height of up to four storeys (figure 2.3). Flexible building types will be provided where appropriate to allow the neighbourhood to change and adapt to social and economic pressures over time.
- 2.31 Thirty percent of the new housing will be affordable. The size of the units and the range of tenure will be agreed with the two nominated housing associations and CDC.
- 2.32 In order to make efficient use of land, the site is being developed at an average density of 34 dwellings per hectare. Densities vary throughout the development, with higher density (e.g. 40 – 45 dwellings per hectare) applied where appropriate, such as adjacent to the local centre, along the primary

street (bus routes) and close to the town centre. This will maximise potential for walking and cycling into town and the local centre, thereby reducing car use and allow for areas of lower densities (e.g. 30-35 dwellings per hectare) to be located in the outlying areas, particularly the countryside edge. The building density plan is included as figure 2.4.

- 2.33 This section 73 application seeks to increase the total number permitted by the outline consent by up to 100 units. This will take the total number of dwellings up to 1,685, with the additional units being accommodated within the areas that have not yet been subject to reserved matters or sold for development, as identified in figure 2.5. Thirty percent of the additional dwellings will be affordable. The additional 100 units can be accommodated within the parameters of building heights and building density as set out in figures 2.3 and 2.4 respectively.

Primary school

- 2.34 The 2006 consented scheme made provision for two primary schools. A primary school of up to 2.47 hectares will form part of the local centre and have capacity for 420 pupils in a dual class entry system. Land for a possible second primary school (approximately 1.31 ha) was identified in the west of the development.
- 2.35 In 2007 CDC and OCC confirmed that a second primary school was not required. The land previously shown as ‘potential land for a primary school’ (the reserved school site) was therefore released for up to 46 residential units. The discrete development was brought forward through application 11/05102/OUT that was consented in July 2011.
- 2.36 This element does not form part of the section 73 application, but has been considered where appropriate in the topic specific chapters.