

Planning and Development

David Peckford, Assistant Director – Planning and Development



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Stantec
61 Oxford Street
Manchester
M1 6EQ

Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

www.cherwell.gov.uk

Please ask for: **Caroline Ford**

Direct Dial: **01295 221823**

Email: **caroline.ford@cherwell-dc.gov.uk**

Your Ref:

20th January 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Application Nos.: 21/02337/DISC and 21/02339/REM

Applicant's Name: Countryside Properties

Proposal: Discharge of various conditions and reserved matters for first phase of 500 dwellings

Location: Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester
Middleton Stoney Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire

Parish(es): Bicester/ Chesterton

I write with reference to the above applications currently with the Council for consideration. I have reviewed the Design Code and reserved matters submission, including using this to test the Design Code. Comments from Consultees, where received, have also been included. My comments are as follows:

Discrepancies between submission and outline parameters

I have raised with you on several occasions that the Design Code introduces inconsistency between it and the parameter plans approved by the outline permission (14/02121/OUT). Notably, the allotments are repositioned entirely, and development appears to sit closer to the hedgerows due to this repositioning and development appears far closer to the Lovelynych House boundary than the parameter plans allowed. I must advise you that this cannot be agreed via a Design Code, which must show consistency with the approved plans unless an application has first been made to amend the outline permission via a S73 planning application. However, I would have concerns about amending the outline permission in this way.

I also note that the S106 requires various elements of infrastructure to be provided within the first 500 homes but these all sit outside the reserved matters site currently. This is a reminder that these will need to be progressed separately.

Design Code

Firstly, I acknowledge that you have been working to address comments that I have raised previously. However, notwithstanding the amendments made, I still hold fundamental concerns with the approach currently suggested.

A key site-specific design and place shaping principle as set out by Policy Bicester 1 is to achieve high quality, exemplary development and design standards, including zero carbon development. The policy sets out various criteria with regard to layout to enable a high degree of integration and connectivity. This includes making provision for and prioritisation of non-car modes to encourage a modal shift away from car use and to provide infrastructure to support sustainable modes of transport. A well-designed approach to the urban edge is also required.

The NW Bicester SPD further emphasises the Council's Vision for NW Bicester to be a high-quality pioneering eco-development that will establish a new sustainable community, which is integrated with and for the benefit of the whole of Bicester. It also includes a section on Design and Character areas, which sets out various criteria. Of particular note as a 'key driver' in the design of the eco-town and a fundamental principle in achieving a zero-carbon development is sustainability, that character is important to create a sense of place that responds positively to the area, that is well integrated and legible with filtered permeability that responds to its landscape setting. Guidance is provided on key areas and this should be referenced. In respect of character, the SPD states that 'proposed development should be sensitive to the existing landscape and townscape character whilst creating a unique image for the eco-town'. This would enable an 'identity' to be built for this development (a key characteristic as set out in the National Design Guide).

The Council's Residential Design Guide sets out good practice for new development, but it also acknowledges that within sustainable exemplars such as NW Bicester that new building typologies, architectural styles and materials may be appropriate. It also sets out how the Council actively promotes schemes which deliver exemplary levels of sustainability (like at Bicester Eco-town) and that the Council recognises that innovative, non-traditional architecture and street typologies may be an appropriate response. Development should though still be compatible with the wider character of the district and an exceptional urban, landscape and architectural design standard. Guidance is also given for non-traditional architecture. Please see Chapter 8 'Innovation and Sustainability' of the Residential Design Guide. Whilst I accept it may not be appropriate for the whole site to necessarily be non-traditional, design choices should be influenced by the site being part of an Eco-Town which should influence the whole development both architecturally and through the public realm.

The National Design Guide sets out that well-designed places and buildings come about when there is a clearly expressed 'story' for the design concept. This explains how the concept influences the layout, form, appearance and details of the proposed development. I am struggling to see this narrative in this Design Code. It would be helpful to understand how the ten characteristics of a well-designed place have influenced your proposals as set out within this design code.

Referring back to the outline application and its design and access statement, it is clear that landscape was intended to lead development with reference to the local context and references were also made to exemplar, sustainable, residential-led developments given the high aspirations for the eco-town development including for example Clay Farm and Accordia in Cambridge and Newhall in Harlow, Essex, as well as examples from Europe such as Freiburg, in Germany and sites in the Netherlands. The concept led heavily on Green Infrastructure and promoting healthy living. Five Neighbourhoods were identified which were to respond locally to the physical characteristics of the site to create a series of connected neighbourhoods, each with its own distinct character and feel to form part of a coherent whole. Detail was provided on each of these areas in terms of key principles and the character for each, including landscape character. It also covered issues not referenced within the Design Code such as around matters such as water (i.e., rainwater harvesting as well as drainage and SUDs) and provided far more detail than is proposed now. I consider much of the ambition demonstrated (by the content and imagery) within the DAS has been lost to a Design Code which proposes a standard development that could be found anywhere. The DAS could, as previously suggested, be a good basis for the Code which develops what was proposed then to provide the level of detail expected to lead future reserved matter proposals. A landscape-led approach would be beneficial.

Many of the points set out below have been raised previously and I note that re-submitted information is not accompanied by a justification statement to explain the rationale for the Code and to set out how previous concerns have been addressed or why they have not been if there is justification for this (instead, it would appear that previous comments (not the most recent comments issued) are used as a tick list of points leading to tweaks to the content). Please do accept that the points raised below are examples – I

have not necessarily highlighted every detail at this stage, a full-scale review of the proposals for the site should be undertaken.

- The Code includes a ‘mechanism for review’ on page 8. It is unsuitable to include such a section and particularly for this to be proposed to deal with matters such as ‘areas of the code which conflict’ or ‘which lack clarity’ as these should be resolved now.
- Thank you for including mandatory design fixes, however I am concerned that these are not consistently applied and do not fix all relevant matters (see below).
- The Design Code includes a section on sustainability strategy, and this is generally positive although Bioregional did raise various comments including on energy and carbon, which were provided to you with my letter dated 19 August 2021. Those points do not appear to have been addressed. These should be reviewed and influence design (i.e., on proposed building performances, how the energy load of the buildings can be reduced through good layout and orientation to maximise natural heating, cooling and lighting, guidance around PV and overheating, on optimising thermal mass, on considering the colour of materials to avoid absorption of heat, on ventilation systems – i.e., passive/ natural measures/ mechanical ventilation with heat recovery). In addition, this section will need to be checked for consistency with the Energy Statement once agreed. However, I am still concerned that this, alongside matters within the Energy Statement itself have not influenced design decisions or guidance required by the Code for character areas and the public realm. This is a point I have made consistently since January 2021. For example:
 - Air Source Heat pumps are proposed but there is no guidance within the Code for these. For example, where should they be positioned to ensure they limit visual impact?
 - PV panels are proposed but there is no guidance as to their position – it should be stated that they will be integrated into the design (i.e., flush with the roof surface where possible) rather than appearing as an afterthought. In addition, how the roof pitch should be considered to ensure it is optimal for PV as well as how overshadowing of solar panels is avoided.
 - Bullet point two under 2.12 (page 12) states that pitched roofs should be oriented southeast/ south/ southwest and should be fully covered in PV. This is a point made in the Council’s pre-app response from May 2021 where you were specifically encouraged to take the opportunity to introduce gable ended development onto the primary street and other streets that have a north-south orientation to optimise roof slopes facing south. This is a design approach successfully provided for at Elmsbrook (the Exemplar Phase) – see images in Appendix 1. The later character areas do not reflect this requirement – instead stating that pitched roofs with dominant gables should be used to animate the public realm (the same guidance is given for each of the character areas). In reviewing your reserved matters submission, it is clear that this lack of clarity and inconsistency has not assisted with the design of the scheme – for example, street scene A-A is a north south oriented street, yet all roofs face east/ west therefore not maximising a south/ southeast/ southwest arrangement.



- In comparison, on an east-west orientated street, there appears to be a mixture of linear roofs (enabling a south facing slope), alongside randomly positioned gable end facing roof slopes, which therefore have an east/ west roof slope. Whilst they may ‘animate the public realm’, it appears that opportunities to maximise roof orientation for PV has not led the design choices being proposed. See street scene H-H.



- The Energy Statement refers to latter stages of the masterplan consisting of higher density residential developments, commercial, health and education uses and justifies that these can significantly outperform low rise houses in terms of their carbon performance ... as flatted developments are better at retaining heat than semi-detached and detached properties. The Code does not define where lower and higher densities would be achieved. Indeed, the information on 'residential parcels' on page 48 indicates a relatively consistent density across the site and large areas of the later phases are within the 'core' character area, which is defined as having a generally lower density. There are also areas of the site such as the edges where higher density would be less appropriate. As is mentioned later, no further definition is given on building heights so again, I am not clear as to how what is said in the Energy Statement would be translated when the Code is inconsistent.
- The Energy Statement also sets out that 'the non-residential uses within the wider masterplan will be equipped with large, flat roofed areas' but this is not reflected as a requirement in the Code. In fact, the design imagery and illustrative section on pages 64, 66 and 68 show pitched roof buildings and the information relating to 'roofscape' does not mention flat roofs (or at least south facing roof slopes).
- The Sustainability Strategy refers to overheating and states that development should be tested using the Design Summer Year weather file for the 2020's. At Elmsbrook, 2050 climate scenarios have been tested for overheating, which is more appropriate to be able to consider future climate scenarios. Please update. The guidance regarding how overheating should be addressed should be made explicit. As suggested previously, passive design measures such as the control of solar gain to benefit from heat when required without causing overheating in summer via the size and depth of windows on different elevations and the potential for shuttering/ external louvres to ensure that where they are likely, they can be designed in from the start to avoid retrofitting.
- The images provided in the Sustainability Statement are unclear – for example the key on page 17 is unreadable.
- The only mandatory guidance in the Sustainability Section is the glazing ratio guidance on page 17, which is concerning.
- Green Roofs are not mentioned.
- The 2019 version of the NPPF is quoted, but this has been updated by a 2021 version. This means that references throughout are, in some places, incorrect and out of date.
- I note that the contextual analysis has been reduced and the analysis of Bicester Town Centre/ the historic part of Bicester has been removed. Please explain why. This means that your relatively brief contextual analysis now draws on only two modern developments rather than considering the historical development of Bicester and what factors of that context should influence the site. A thorough analysis of context is acknowledged to be a key characteristic of good design in the National Design Guide and as you will note, whilst the CDC Residential Design Guide encourages innovation, it acknowledges that development should have a sense of belonging to Cherwell.
- I would question some of the imagery shown in the contextual analysis which seems to highlight unsatisfactory arrangements on other sites (such as the bottom image on page 31 showing faux windows onto a street) and which uses questionable examples (such as the varied roofline identified on page 35, which does not, to me, indicate such an arrangement). I would suggest that a varied roofline would be more appropriately demonstrated on a strong consistent frontage where rooflines vary, rather than two adjacent detached units with garaging between.
- The contextual analysis seems to refer to Georgian influences from those two modern developments, but those influences are tenuous (especially with reference to Elmsbrook) and I do not consider Bicester historically has a strong 'Georgian' character.
- I note the design principles on pages 36-37 but there is limited information provided on how these points are achieved. In addition, Exemplary/ Sustainability led development is not mentioned at all. There are also points stated such as 'use of single and dual sided streets with varying degrees of enclosure' that I am unclear on what this means.

- References are made to linked routes to achieve maximum sustainability but given the proliferation of private drives shown through the reserved matters, I am not convinced that this is what is shown. There is a lack of detail around routes (as discussed below).
- Various plans through the Code show a LEAP on the Village Green, however as you will be aware, the S106 requires this to be a NEAP (which seems to be acknowledged on page 99 of the Code).
- The Regulating and Placemaking Plans refer to various 'Key Frontages' but there is no other guidance in the Code on these or what differentiates between them. I am unclear therefore what these are attempting to show. I note there is guidance provided on page 74 on 'formal', 'intermediate' and 'informal' frontages but these are not consistent with the plans.
- Page 47 shows a plan 'to be updated' which is unacceptable in a document submitted for formal approval.
- I note that the proposal has reverted to three-character areas traversing the whole site. I cannot see any justification for why this change has been made. You will note that I raised concerns with this approach at the pre-application stage and I referred you to the original DAS (which is also summarised above). The site is very large and to create appropriate character, I strongly consider that character areas need to be defined across the site with elements that give consistency on key frontages (i.e., perhaps the form of development or materials used along the primary street even if there are changes in character that reflect different character areas). Character also goes beyond the buildings themselves and relates to the whole character of a place.
- Paragraph 6.25 on page 50 refers to the character areas forming new 'neighbourhoods' across the development. I am confused how this is achieved given the extent of the character areas and the fact that they extend across the whole site.
- Please explain the rationale for the positioning of the Character Areas. Why are contemporary types proposed at the outer edges only? I am concerned that the types proposed create confusion and an incoherent development.
- I have consistently questioned the Georgian approach proposed with this set out in the pre-app response from May 2021. I do not consider that sufficient rationale has been provided to justify this approach. How have the requirements around sustainability led to this choice, bearing in mind the clear steer in the SPD for exemplary development and unique development and how does this approach fit with sustainability led choices (i.e., if roof orientations are altered as noted above, how would a Georgian approach work?) and otherwise, how has the context justified such an approach? Georgian streets are typically strongly consistent with significant scale with a symmetrical quality. I am not convinced that what is proposed has a Georgian character even if this approach were accepted. I am also unclear on how this is being applied through the reserved matters. Street Scene FF is labelled as a Georgian Secondary street yet includes house types which are not influenced by such a character, which is also further obvious when reviewing street scene GG (Core Housing) which has a very similar character (due to the same house types being used) other than detailing. This demonstrates that the character areas are not well justified or then applied to what is proposed through reserved matters and results in an inconsistent character across the site. I also consider this will lead to further lack of clarity for future reserved matter submissions.



- Please confirm where the illustrative elevation along a formal frontage shown on page 52 is taken from. In comparison to this, whilst a key characteristic of the Georgian character area is a 'strong, continuous frontage to ... create a sense of enclosure and define the street scene', the reserved matters submission instead indicates a gappy street scene in such a character area made up of

semidetached units with garaging in between which backs onto the primary street. This proposal is not in compliance with the Design Code (street scene AA provided again):



- I am concerned about the variation between the character areas based upon the information set out in the Code. An example would be that all typologies are allowable in all areas.
- I am also concerned that the Character Areas are not specific – i.e., within the Georgian character area materials are quoted as ‘red brick with some use of ironstone and render’ – however arguably this could mean one ironstone, or one fully rendered building would comply – greater clarity should be provided (and in addition, I would question the use of ironstone in Bicester, which is more commonly found in the north of the District – limestone is the vernacular stone here). The distribution of materials should also take into consideration the sustainable sourcing of materials and issues such as colour to contribute to avoid absorption of heat (as above).
- The mandatory guidance on page 55 has clearly been copied and pasted from another Design Code in the District as there is reference again to character areas not mentioned in this Code and to ‘Saltway’, which is in Banbury.
- I note the Mandatory guidance for each character area but there is much information which is not mandatory.
- A point under ‘key inspiration from local character’ for the Georgian type is ‘changes in ridge and eaves height’ and it is not clear what this actually means and what character this would create.
- I have noted the information provided on detailing but as I am still questioning the character area in principle, I will not comment on those further at this stage.
- With respect to the ‘Core’ character area, I note that a key characteristic is ‘Traditional housebuilder architecture’ please explain what character this will create and how this would contribute positively to the ambitious/ exemplary development sought. Can you also explain how this will take future climate scenarios into account (i.e. overheating)?
- Again, as I am questioning the character area in principle, I have not commented in detail on the detailing proposed but would note the lack of clarity in some areas such as ‘door styles should be in keeping with the traditional housebuilder style’. What does this mean and how would this contribute to character.
- Within the Contemporary Character Area, it is stated that there is the ‘opportunity for contemporary architecture’ – This lacks clarity and I’m not convinced this could be considered a ‘mandatory’ requirement given it is only stated to be an ‘opportunity’.
- It is stated that the roofscape would be punctuated by chimneys – is this suitable on a contemporary building type? It could be that roof features are proposed if passive ventilation is proposed – is this what is meant rather than a traditional ‘chimney’?
- What is meant by ‘contemporary architecture’? What is the character and what defines this for this particular site?
- The imagery shown for the contemporary type is almost completely taken from Elmsbrook – including the description of ‘contemporary windows’. Earlier, references are to ‘Georgian influences’ on these windows – this indicates some confusion. The door styles suggested for the ‘Contemporary’ character area is worded exactly the same as the door styles for the ‘Georgian’ character area (with those words changed to suit the area). This is clearly inappropriate for such differing character areas.
- With regard to the ‘Other Uses’, it is noted that there is an acknowledgement that some residential development would be required within this area (para 6.23 – page 48), but there is no guidance within the Code section (page 64) on this, or its relationship with the other mixed uses.
- The illustrative section is inconsistent with the key characteristics listed – such as ‘feature swales and landscape buffers are provided along the northern and southern boundaries...’. No such features are visible on the section drawings. I would suggest that this introduces uncertainty for the interpretation of the Code.
- I consider that the Coding information provided for the ‘Other Uses’, ‘School Site’ and ‘Community Centre’ are quite basic, and no part of these sections are mandatory.

- Both the 'School Site' and the 'Community Centre' sections refer to the Himley Green Character Area and the guidance given for both is almost exactly the same.
- The S106 requires BREEAM 'Very Good' – this is not mentioned in the Code. If any requirements of BREEAM influence design and layout in order to achieve this standard, then I would expect these to be covered in the Code.
- I note that the Building Heights plan continues to be a direct replication of the approved parameter plan. No greater definition has been introduced so my previous comments have not been addressed. To clarify, I consider that the Design Code should introduce the next level of detail to the parameter plans. In some areas therefore, I would expect to see where building heights should be specified as being higher or lower in order to contribute to character – this is not necessarily across the whole site but in particular areas. A development of 4m versus a development of 17m at the Northern part of the site would give a very different character for example. I note the descriptive wording provided but no part of this section is mandatory, and it is ambiguous when the accompanying plan is not consistent.
- The Placemaking Section mentions Landmark Buildings and Focal Buildings, but no distinction is drawn between these two building types.
- Guidance is provided on page 75 as to 'key building groups and frontages' but none are identified on the plans in the Code (see above as to inconsistency with regard to 'frontages'). How does the guidance at paragraph 6.86 relate to the Character Areas?
- As suggested in the pre-app response from May 2021 it would be helpful to include a 'palette' or a 'toolkit' to refer to urban design principles and types and bring these together.
- Boundary treatments should refer to prominent side/ rear elevations and the fact that these should not be close-boarded timber fencing (preferably following the material of the dwelling). The guidance is not specific enough by referring to 'materials to be used appropriately to the building'.
- No elements of the Placemaking section are mandatory.
- In reviewing the first reserved matters submission, it is clear that this does not comply with the guidance provided. Page 75 includes a section on 'views and vistas' and identifies that views along streets should be terminated by a primary building elevation. In reviewing your proposed layout, there are numerous examples where this does not happen – see two examples as below:



- A plethora of private drives are visible across the site as can be seen on the road hierarchy plan on page 79. Private drives are problematic because they often reduce connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists around a site.
- The Highway Authority have confirmed that their objection remains for the following reasons:
 - In section 3.8, the OCC Residential Roads Design Guide is referenced but this has been withdrawn and replaced by the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide. OCC highlighted this guidance at the pre-app stage (21/CH0004/PREAPP) and advised that this development should be a good early example of what may be achieved by complying with the guidance in this latest document.
 - The Design Code must refer to LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design as the cycle facilities throughout the development must be designed in accordance with this guidance. Bearing in mind that sustainable modes of travel must be prioritised given the modal shift requirements at NW Bicester, it is vital that this development proposes walking and cycle infrastructure to the highest standards.
 - Paragraph 4.17 refers to bus service 25a (it is now service 250) and states there are no bus stops within the vicinity of the site. This is not the case. The service does not currently operate at a half hour frequency.

- Information given in the Walking and Cycling Connections section is inconsistent and does not tally with the masterplan. Sections 6.87 and 6.88 say that the Green Infrastructure corridors will be 3m wide and cater for both pedestrians and cyclists (solid green lines on the plan on page 76), but the plan on page 77 appears to show the same routes for pedestrians only whilst the cycle and pedestrian paths are along streets only. The Masterplan shows the GI routes as being for pedestrians only. There must be better connectivity for cyclists between the areas of the site and a clear and consistent strategy must be available to inform the reserved matters layout.
 - The plans in the Walking and Cycling Connections section should make it clear exactly what cycle infrastructure is being proposed (e.g. segregated, shared-use, on-carriageway) and on which side of the street so that it can be assessed against LTN 1/20.
 - The typical Primary Street example section shows 3m wide shared use cycle/ footpaths on both sides but these need to be separate paths for pedestrians and cyclists to be in accordance with LTN 1/20. The Masterplan shows a 'pedestrian and cycle route' on one side of the street only. In addition, the Primary Street cross section gives a spacing between buildings as circa 30m but the equivalent distance on the Masterplan is approximately 22m (and the reserved matters layout indicates less – with the width of the Primary Street being 17.5m). The Design Code and Masterplan must be consistent and wide enough to accommodate the necessary segregated cycling and walking facilities (which from a review of the reserved matters layout, appears not to be the case).
 - 25% of unallocated (visitor) car parking spaces must be equipped with EV charging points in accordance with the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy.
- I note the guidance relating to the avenue tree planting. Please clarify that what is proposed can work with street lighting requirements.
 - Are SUDs not required along the primary street?
 - There is no mandatory guidance within the Transport Section apart from a small section of page 86 relating to parking space size.
 - The Code should consider parking numbers and visitor (unallocated parking) – please note OCC's response to the reserved matters proposal that parking is overprovided.
 - There is limited guidance on cycle storage/ street furniture. For example, I would suggest that guidance be provided to say that cycle storage would be positioned so as to enable this form of transport to be a primary choice for residents (noting the modal shift targets). Could cycle parking be provided at the front of dwellings if it is appropriately designed? If so, guidance should be provided on design.
 - There is a section on green and blue infrastructure but there is very little guidance on SUDs. SUDs corridors are noted on the plan on page 89, but I am unclear if this is complete (see below comments on drainage). In addition, there is inconsistency because on page 64, it is stated that feature swales and landscape buffers are provided along the northern and southern boundaries of the 'Other Uses' area, but this is not evident on the plan on page 89. SUDs are critical to design and layout and must be covered. As below, their design, whilst ensuring sufficient capacity, must be landscape led to ensure they are appropriate features on the site rather than engineered and therefore requiring fencing off for example.
 - In the pre-app response from May 2021, I referred to the need for the Landscape Character areas to be expanded to provide more guidance (and, more latterly, I directed you to other Design Codes where landscape character areas are far better developed in terms of the Code including that for Banbury 17 – which you appear to have reviewed and used in certain respects but not in respect of landscape), however I can see very few changes. There is no mandatory guidance and no guidance on areas such as the hedgerow buffers or play (other than to state they would be in place). Play areas should benefit from natural surveillance which should be noted. Appendix 4 of the original Design and Access Statement provided far more detail.
 - The character of the public realm is also missing, and this is vital to create character. This should cover matters such as the streets, materials, street furniture, etc.
 - There should also be guidance on the style and feel of the walking and cycling routes – cross sections of these and how these will be designed to be multi-functional and safe and comfortable for all users would be beneficial. These should be optimum to enable this to be a realistic choice for people rather than the dominance of the private car which currently seems to be obvious.
 - How do pedestrians/ cyclists have priority at key road junctions?
 - How have the principles of filtered permeability influenced design and been incorporated into the movement hierarchy?
 - There is little detail on biodiversity and how net gains are achieved.
 - How are the landscape species options influenced by climate change?
 - How is an edible landscape included – this links to the point around consistency with the parameter plans earlier.
 - Please see comments below regarding cultural wellbeing.

- A section on implementation is added but is incomplete, and I am not clear as to what this section is adding given its content.
- I have previously commented upon the need for the Code to consider the Listed Building and whether this influences the development in any way, particularly within proximity to it. No justification has been provided to explain if this has been considered and if so, why the influence of the listed building has not been included.
- Please mention other eco-town standards such as water – how is water efficiency incorporated, can rainwater/ greywater harvesting be included and what is required to do so?
- Please see comments below regarding Cultural Wellbeing.

There are also points raised in the formal pre-app response (dated 5 May 2021) which have not been addressed such as:

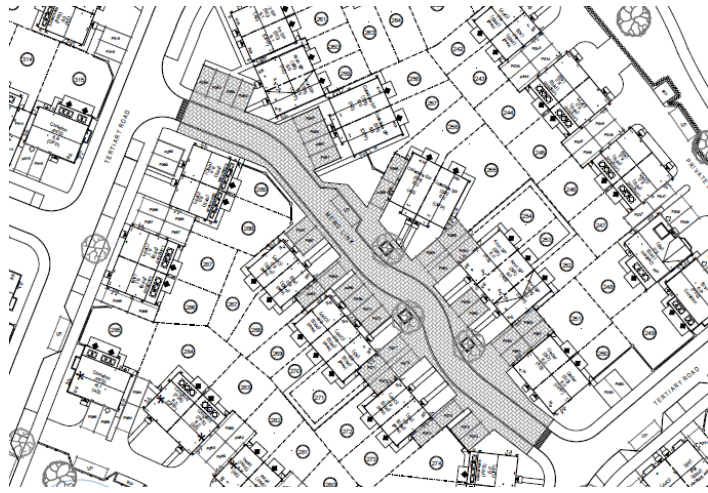
- How buildings should be designed to be adaptable/ facilitate home working and be built to lifetime homes standards.
- The guidance around parking types should cover how particular types (such as parallel and perpendicular spaces) will be handled to create successful street environments (this links to the point above regarding the character of the public realm).
- Guidance should be included on services/ utilities/ waste and recycling (see comments from Bioregional on this latter point).
- The embodied carbon credentials of materials and local sourcing should be mentioned as to lead the consideration of which materials are chosen.

I still have concerns that the narrative for this development is lacking and that the rationale for the proposals is not clear. I consider that this will lead to an incoherent development that does not meet the high-quality standards expected at NW Bicester. This leads on to comments on the reserved matters submission beyond those set out above.

Reserved Matters submission

The pre-app advice given in May 2021 raised various criticisms with the proposed layout seen at that time. No substantive changes have been made and therefore the comments made earlier are repeated. Please note, given the comments outstanding on the Design Code, the reserved matters submission has not been subject to detailed review other than high level points. The points previously made which still apply are (updated to reflect the plot numbers now specified):

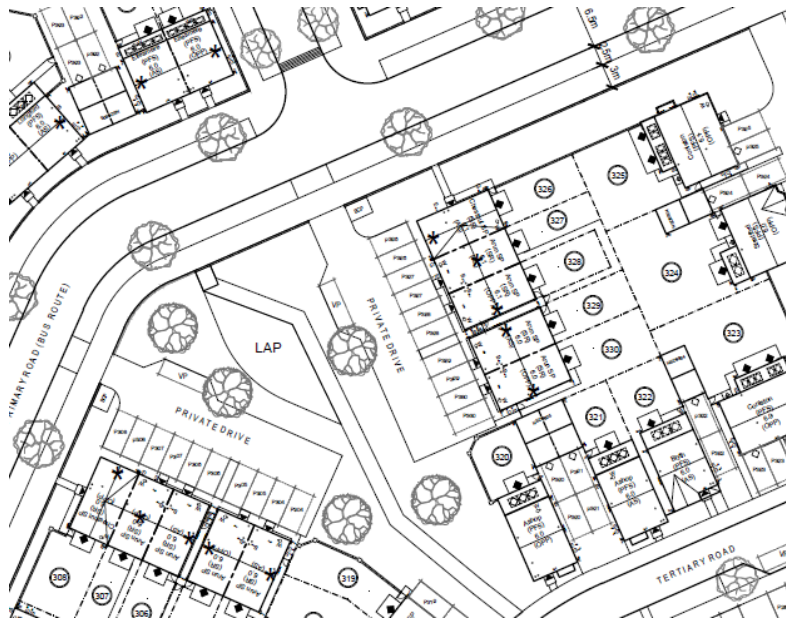
- As it stands, I consider the layout to be very standard and could be found anywhere with nothing included to set this site apart, which is at odds with the ambitions and vision for NW Bicester. You will note that I comment on and give examples of the dominance of parking below in respect of the creation of successful street scenes. However, I must stress that this site should be ambitious in terms of sustainability, in movement terms and a car dominated layout does not encourage use of sustainable transport modes and will give a character to the site that in my view is not following the vision for the site. This is not to say that parking is not required to meet needs because car travel is inevitable and indeed electric vehicles will play an important role, but OCC have raised an objection with respect to the number of parking spaces proposed – finding them above the level within OCCs parking standards for urban areas within Cherwell and with the sustainable options available to the site, as well as the modal shift targets this is unjustified. The site should really be aiming to provide a significantly lower number of parking bays. This comment also relates to how parking is accommodated within the layout arrangements for the site.
- As mentioned above, I do not consider that roof orientation has been considered enough or led the design decisions. PV is not indicated on the proposed plans, so I am unable to assess that this is being maximised across the site.
- Please note the examples above where I consider what is said in the Code is not being followed (such as the termination of views along a street).
- The layout plans propose various areas labelled as 'mews'. These do not represent what I would expect a mews to do. I would expect a mews to be typically enclosed with a far tighter layout and buildings sat closer to the carriageway. Your 'mews' would be through roads with dwellings spaced apart and set back, dominated by parking, which does not create a mews character (examples include plots 250-262/ 267-274, 155-170/ 144-125 – these examples are provided below but are not the only examples of this unacceptable arrangement). These areas are very poorly laid out and unacceptable.



- Notwithstanding the above, street scenes and the Architectural Styles/ Elevations plan are provided, which identify a Georgian approach to the primary and secondary streets. You will note I have queried this approach earlier.
- The layout of plots 440-447 is of concern being tucked away and I feel this area looks distinctly part of the affordable provision on plan.
- The extent of Secondary Street between plots 352-354 and 359-361 is dominated by parking and side boundaries. This does not create a successful street scene.
- There is an overuse of private drives. Why, in this example, is a lane not proposed rather than two private drives?



- The layout is dominated by parking and in some areas of the site, street scenes will be created that will not be acceptable. I have particular concerns regarding the following at this stage:
 - I am concerned about the mews court parking arrangement to serve the dwellings fronting the primary street. I note Thames Valley Police and OCC also continue to have concerns in this regard;
 - The northern end of the primary street in phase 1 (close to the LAP provision) is not acceptable. The provision of private drives with parking as shown will be unacceptable on the primary street and due to the provision of side gardens, creates large extents of inactive boundary walls along what should be the most important street in design terms, taking into account the hierarchy of the place. This also conflicts with what a Georgian Street would typically be like as mentioned above (see below extract);



- As mentioned above, the mews link between plots 250-262/ 267-274 is unacceptable with an odd arrangement of dwellings and parking spaces dominating the space. This will not be a successful street scene;
- As referred to above, the mews link between plots 155-170/ 144-125 will be similarly dominated by parking and an unacceptable arrangement;
- The Secondary Road east from plot 500 is dominated by parking alongside the attenuation basin hence my comments above regarding how parking alongside streets can be successfully provided (I am supportive of the approach as long as it is provided successfully);
- Streets such as that serving plots 47-50 will be dominated by parking in the arrangement shown.
- Is the design approach for the non-residential part of the site sufficiently established to conclude that backing onto this land is the correct design approach?
- The SUDs attenuation features appear to be very engineered in their design – whilst I appreciate that they must hold sufficient capacity, I would expect their design to be landscape led in order that they are appropriate within the environment being created and have biodiversity benefits also. They are also significant in scale – I can't see a plan which shows a section to understand the depth of these features. Are they going to require fencing for health and safety reasons? This would clearly have an impact upon the quality and environment being created.
- Please can you confirm how access to Himley Farm is provided? The layout plan seems to indicate this would run along the footpath network and it is unclear how this would exit onto the road network.
- OCC have noted the widening of the secondary access route, but a swept path analysis is required to show that buses can safely navigate around the junctions on the route without using both lanes.
- OCC have also raised comments regarding the lack of compliance with LTN1/20 and the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide (summarised above with respect to the Design Code).

- Cycle parking guidance should be provided within the reserved matters application. This should relate to allocated and unallocated spaces (including for example in streets close to bus stops). Guidance is provided above as to the sensitive location of cycle parking to make it a primary choice.
- Please note the detailed comments of OCC available via public access.
- Thames Valley Police also continue to strongly object to the proposal and their comments are also available via public access. Points previously raised by TVP do not appear to have been overcome.
- I am unclear of the contribution the first phase makes to Biodiversity Net Gain.

I have also briefly reviewed house types and I must say that it is very difficult to interpret which house type is proposed on which plot (and there appear to be discrepancies such as plot 108 is shown in the house type pack as a contemporary orchard end terrace, however on the layout it is a detached 'Dee' which only appears to be part of the Core Housing). A full review of the house types and which plot they relate to should be undertaken for ease of future assessment. Please note the following comments at this stage, however, I must stress that given the continuing fundamental concerns with the proposal, these have not been reviewed in detail. Should these house types remain the same in later iterations, they will then be thoroughly reviewed:

- The use of different materials on the front/ back of dwellings (and wrap around features) is unacceptable (i.e. the Coniston, Arun, Dee etc). Mixed materials may be acceptable if their distribution makes sense, and it is consistently applied around all elevations of a building.
- The roofline of the Oakham is unusual, and its side elevation is unfortunate. As before, if this were justified by maximising the roof slope for PV then this may be considered but I am not convinced that this is the case – especially as it is used in some positions where its significantly sloping roof faces north (i.e. plot 298, 482).
- There are examples of the same house type being used as Georgian and Core types – this seems inappropriate. For example, how can the Oakham be both a Georgian house type and a Core house type? This will create confusion around character.
- Blank windows are inappropriate and should not be used in any circumstance.
- Overly large porches should not be used – for example, the porch on the Coledale does not seem to suit the style of a 'Georgian' type.
- Please explain the distribution of materials on the contemporary types – there appears to be minimal change in material and so I would question how 'contemporary' these are.
- There are some house types with no roof – such as the Blackthorn and Hazel. I am unsure if this is intentional or a drawing error. If it is intentional then they appear very odd.
- No landmark buildings are proposed on the plots identified within the Code for them and looking through the house type packs, I can't see any buildings which could be identified as being 'key' or 'focal' buildings. For example, a landmark building is shown in the Code around plot 108, but even taking into account the above discrepancy, there is nothing 'key' about the Dee house type, which is used elsewhere even on plots not identified as key buildings (the Dee is used 21 times according to the layout but the key within the house type pack indicates only one as an end terrace – again indicating significant discrepancies, which makes the application very hard to assess).

Drainage

OCC originally raised no objection to the discharge of condition 11, however upon reviewing the submitted information, it is clear that the submission relates to Phase 1 only and is not site wide as the condition requires. Condition 11 was drafted to relate to the whole site to set in place a strategy for the scheme and to ensure that where phases relied on each other, that this was a clear part of the strategy. This led onto condition 19, which was a 'per phase' requirement to ensure that the design for each phase was designed taking into account that site wide strategy. Unfortunately, therefore, we will not be able to clear condition 11 outside of the submission of a site wide strategy. OCC as Lead Local Flood Authority have changed their response to an objection in this respect.

I would also highlight that the Council's Land Drainage Officer has raised some concerns with the overarching strategy to direct site run off, combined with other sites, to the offsite drains due to the poorly constructed and maintained highway ditch which also contains a number of poorly constructed and undersized culverts. These concerns have been raised with OCC as the LLFA and I understand that some discussions are to be undertaken before we can advise you further on this issue. However, it is clearly an important point in order to ensure the future efficacy of the drainage solution, whatever that may be to protect the environment and ensure a sustainable drainage solution.

Cultural Wellbeing

I have received comments from the Council's Arts Team who have noted that the submitted statement is an excellent starting point for the site. They have however noted that details as to how expansive the programme actually is or details of the specifics of the process to arrive at the realisation of these aims is limited. In addition, the statement is missing a programme of how and when proposals will be implemented through reserved matters. Specifics of approach is needed to ensure that meaningful engagement and the appointment of a lead artist in the early stages of the development is recommended to enable a more cohesive and effective meshing of the various eco-credentials contributing towards cultural wellbeing to ensure the achievement of what you propose. This would enable the opportunity for resources to be maximised (i.e. using earthworks to create features – like an outdoor amphitheatre, the repurposing of redundant materials for example). It is considered that the development of an artist's brief and indicative phasing of the public art process from the onset of the development to occupancy would be considered exemplary modelling of the cultural wellbeing strategy of this key development.

The Statement refers to numerous opportunities for art installations within 'five neighbourhoods' and that public art be used as the principle means of defining the individual characteristics of each neighbourhood – please clarify what those neighbourhoods are and how those fit with the character areas and how those are influenced by art and cultural enrichment as this is not obvious from the Design Code. In this respect, I am unclear what contribution Phase 1 makes to the cultural wellbeing of the site and whilst one position for public art is noted in the Design Code as sitting within the Village Green it is unclear whose responsibility it will be to provide this and how this is consistent with what is said elsewhere.

The statement refers to how built heritage, landscape and archaeology will be reflected in the Design of the development to establish a clear cultural identity, but I am unclear how this is achieved as this is not mentioned through the Design Code. It states that the development will be 'centred' on Himley Farm to give the development a clear agricultural theme, yet the Design Code does not reference the farm or listed buildings (other than the school and community building) and as above, the landscape character areas are not well developed but could be influenced by what is said in the Cultural Wellbeing Statement.

The statement refers to how the materials palette (including materials for play etc) will reflect the local environment and use natural materials – again I would question how when this is not well reflected in the Design Code.

The Cultural Wellbeing Statement refers to a centralised treatment system – a living machine greenhouse – please explain where this is proposed and ensure this is reflected in the DAS.

The statement also refers to signboards and information points and these too are not mentioned in the DAS.

I consider that the Design and Access Statement should bring together what is said in other documents and interpret this for the future (i.e. around the appropriate positions for features etc).

Energy

This matter has progressed following meetings between Bioregional and Hydrock and it is understood will be progressed. As is mentioned above, whilst appendix B gives details of the PV per dwelling, this is not shown on the proposed plans and so it is very difficult to assess that the use of PV is maximised across the first phase.

I note that this letter does not cover every aspect applied for and there are some issues that I have not fed back on (i.e., please note OCC have asked for amendments to the Framework Travel Plan). I wanted to get this to you to cover the substantive points as above to enable those to move forward and will need to review other matters in due course.

I appreciate that this letter is long and raises a significant number of points, however I hope it is nevertheless helpful and that the specific examples provided assist in your re-consideration of proposals for this site.

I trust this is of assistance. Please accept that this advice is provided at Officer level and is without prejudice to any formal decision the Local Planning Authority may make.

Yours faithfully

Caroline Ford - Principal Planning Officer

Appendix 1: Images from Elmsbrook



Sawtooth/ angled roof forms to benefit from a southern aspect and a mix of materials and fenestration to give a contemporary character



Angled roofs with a prominent blank elevation which is justified by the design specifically responding to the sustainability requirements