

CULTURAL WELLBEING STATEMENT HIMLEY VILLAGE, BICESTER

ON BEHALF OF COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTIES

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DESIGN **ENVIRONMENT** **PLANNING** **ECONOMICS** **HERITAGE**

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Registered Office: Pegasus House, Querns Business Centre, Whitworth Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This Cultural Wellbeing Statement is prepared for Cherwell District Council as part of the planning application for a new residential settlement at Himley Village, Bicester.
- 1.2 The statement is a requirement for all outline and full planning applications proposed within the North West Bicester development area, identified in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031.
- 1.3 The intention is for applications to demonstrate how the cultural wellbeing of residents and of Cherwell will be incorporated into the development proposals.
- 1.4 In addition, a Section 106 agreement, pursuant to the development in question, further specifies the need for a Cultural Wellbeing Statement with reference to some key elements to be included, which will also be addressed in this document.
- 1.5 As such, this statement will set out how the proposed development meets the aspirations of the Local Plan and specifically the North West Bicester development policy in relation to Cultural Wellbeing.

Document Structure

- 1.6 The structure of the statement will be as follows:
 - Planning Policy context – a review of the planning policies and their objectives as they relate to Cultural Wellbeing in Cherwell and Bicester, including a clear definition of the term.
 - Overview of S106 agreement
 - Development Overview – a brief overview of the development and development objectives, focussing on elements relevant to Cultural Wellbeing.
 - Design Context and Cultural Elements – this section will set out the design elements of the proposal and how they will address the objectives of the North West Bicester Cultural Wellbeing Strategy and of the S106 agreement pursuant to the development.

- Schedule of Actions – this will set out the specific actions proposed to address the objectives and S106 agreement as per the Design Elements section.

2. PLANNING CONTEXT

- 2.1 National Planning Policy recognises that cultural wellbeing as one of is one of twelve core planning principles as well as a key component of achieving sustainable development. It adds that public art and sculpture can play an important role in making places that people enjoy living in an using.
- 2.2 At the local level, the Cherwell Local Plan policy "Bicester 1" sets out the expected housing, employment and infrastructure outline for the development as well as site specific design principles.
- 2.3 Accompanying the policy Bicester 1 is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which expands on the policy principles and provides details of what will be expected in any development proposals for the area, as well as minimum standards.

Cultural Aspects

- 2.4 Proposed developments should support cultural activity through the provision of high quality public open space.
- 2.5 Community facilities should help to create a culturally vibrant place through the use of artworks, theatrical and cultural uses, thus achieving the NPPF core principle for cultural wellbeing.
- 2.6 Development Principle 14 in the SPD states that planning applications will be required to demonstrate how cultural wellbeing will be incorporated into development proposals. This document has been prepared to fulfil that requirement, which is specified in more detail in the SPD, in Development Requirement 14, as follows:
- a) Explore the use of sustainable materials – using recycled or locally sourced materials that reduce the carbon footprint and offset other resource use;
 - b) Celebrate nature and the natural environment, by reflecting on natural and environmental issues;
 - c) Interpret nature, inform people and raise awareness about nature and its processes, and/or about environmental issues;

- d) Encourage environmentally sustainable behaviour – projects to encourage recycling, using sustainable routes through the development – artwork projects to encourage cycle and walking routes – and help with wayfinding and directing the flow of people through public areas;
- e) Encourage local residents and visitors to think about and become environmentally aware in their everyday living;
- f) Create an identity for the development (as the first Eco-Town in the UK), to both the residents and outside world;
- g) Use projects and provision of community and cultural facilities to assist in the creation of a distinctive, safe, vibrant, cohesive and socially sustainable community.

2.7 In addition, Appendix V of the SPD sets out a Cultural Wellbeing Strategy for North West Bicester. This states that cultural wellbeing initiatives should cover 2 main areas of focus:

- 1) where artists positively influence physical form and function (e.g. through involvement in design of space or building or the design of individual works)
- 2) where artists engage with the new community

Section 106 Agreement (Schedule 12)

2.8 A Section 106 agreement agreed for the Himley Village planning application confirms the need for a Cultural Wellbeing Statement to be submitted. It specifies a minimum requirement to contain:

- the strategic approach to ensuring the integration of cultural elements of form and function of the development;
- the strategic approach to promote community engagement through events
- include the involvement of a public artist in proposals
- a programme indicating how and when proposals will be implemented through Reserved Matters applications

3. DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

- 3.1 Himley Village will be part of the North West Bicester Eco-Town development, located north of Howes Lane and Lords Lane to the north west of Bicester town.
- 3.2 The entire Eco Town development is expected to accommodate up to 6,000 homes and around 4,600 jobs. The Himley Village component is expected to comprise 1,700 homes.
- 3.3 The Eco-Town concept was introduced by Gordon Brown in 2007 and originally ten sites were selected for new Eco-Towns. Ultimately, only four of the original ten were approved by local planning authorities and the concept did not progress at the national level to gain specific planning policy guidance or support.
- 3.4 For the four that did gain approval – of which North West Bicester is one - the original idea and concept has largely been retained and embraced, and this is reflected in local policy such as the North West Bicester SPD referenced here. The vision for Himley Village is of a development that fosters a close relationship between natural and built environment. This will be a key aspect of achieving cultural wellbeing at the development through a strong sense of place and a connection with those built and natural environments achieved through design, art and engagement.

4. DESIGN CONTEXT, CULTURAL ASPECTS and FEATURES

Design Context

- 4.1 Himley's built heritage, landscape and archaeology will be reflected in the design of the scheme and will establish a clear cultural identity for the development. In particular, the development will be centred on Himley Farm from which the development takes its name. This will be used to give the development a clear agricultural theme based around orchards, farming, local food production, sustainable land use, and the natural environment.
- 4.2 The original grade II listed barns at Himley Farm are constructed with limestone and wood lintels. Houses will be built from a materials pallet reflecting the local environment and using natural materials. Features such as planters, pathways edgings and play areas will incorporate local natural and recycled materials where possible.

- 4.3 The local landscape is generally characterised by agricultural uses arising from the farm, and by hedgerows, ponds and woodlands. Every effort will be made to integrate Himley Village into this natural landscape, to make use of it and reflect it in the development design.
- 4.4 Existing woodlands will create peaceful spaces for walking, cycling and horse riding¹. Also, existing hedgerows will be enhanced with a 10-metre buffer either side, creating natural areas for food growing, orchards and meadows. Information boards, newt corridors and seating will help and encourage users to engage with the natural environment before them.

Figure 4.1: Integration of walkways and natural landscapes into communities



- 4.5 Movement and access through the development will prioritise walkways, paths and cycleways, segregated from traffic. These will be built to provide the most direct access to local services, schools, employment zones and local centres.² This clear integration and use of existing landscapes addresses requirements 'b', 'c' and 'e' in the SPD (see para 2.6).
- 4.6 Water management, drainage and drainage systems play a key role in the design, function and operation of the proposal for Himley Village. Water will variously be treated, stored, re-used and filtered. In addition, water being carried through the site via a network of swales will form a variety of onsite ponds and habitats. These will in turn support planting, vegetation, trees and wildlife.

¹ DAS Chapter 4.2.1 page 109

² DAS Chapter 4.2.6 page 131

- 4.7 A large, centralised treatment system – a living machine greenhouse - will provide natural filtration and treatment of grey and black water and feed back in to the swale network, bringing water into the public realm. Lakes and ponds will form central features in the community landscape to create habitats for water birds and mammals.
- 4.8 Overall, the use and management of water in the development will play a vital role in encouraging environmentally responsible behaviour, in raising awareness of environmental issues relating to water use, and in inspiring residents and visitors to appreciate and value the local environment. It also helps to establish the identity of the area. These aspects address requirements 'b', 'd', 'e' and 'f' of the SPD.
- 4.9 The use of sympathetically designed sign boards and information points at key locations will help to raise awareness of nature and natural processes that play a key role in the development such as through the management of water or the production of food.

Figure 4.2: Example information boards and interactive sign-posting



- 4.10 Himley Farm will form a centrepiece of the development and provide the basis for the key themes of sustainability, farming and food production that will permeate throughout the development. As such, a centre for horticultural activity and food

production is proposed, serving as an educational resource for the adjacent Primary School.

Table 4.1: Summary of how Cultural Wellbeing Statement meets SPD Objectives

SPD: CULTURAL WELLBEING OBJECTIVES	STATEMENT PARAGRAPH
a) Exploring the use of sustainable materials – using recycled materials or locally sourced materials to reduce the carbon footprint and inventive ways to offset other resources used;	4.2, 4.8
b) Celebrating nature and the natural environment, by reflecting on natural and environmental issues; interpreting nature, projects to inform people and raise awareness about nature and its processes, and/or about environmental issues;	4.5, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9
c) Encouraging environmentally friendly behaviour – artwork as bins to encourage recycling, using sustainable routes through the development – artwork to encourage cycle and walking routes – and help with wayfinding and directing the flow of people through public areas;	4.4, 4.5
d) Encouraging local residents and visitors to think about and become environmentally aware in their everyday living;	4.8, 4.9, 4.10
e) Create an identity for the development (as the first eco town in the UK), to both the residents and outside world;	4.1, 4.8
f) To use projects to assist in the creation of a distinctive, safe, vibrant, cohesive and socially sustainable community.	4.10

5. SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS

5.1 As is set out in detail in this statement, the proposals for Himley Village provide the environment and associated design elements to establish a very clear cultural identity for the development and its residents and visitors. The design themes and its status as an Eco-town mean it is an identity embedded in nature, the environment, and in the sustainable use of resources.

5.2 Public art can play a key role in establishing identity and in building social capital through public engagement and civic discourse. The design and proposals for Himley

Village understands the role of public art in enriching the lives of residents and visitors by connecting them with their living environment and fostering a sense of identity, civic pride, and of course, cultural wellbeing.

- 5.3 It is intended therefore that Himley Village provide numerous opportunities for public art installations within each of its five neighbourhoods, and that public art be used as the principle means of defining the individual characteristics of each of these neighbourhoods.

Figure 5.1: Public Art installations



- 5.4 To achieve this, artists and communities will be invited to design installations, sculptures and features to be included within in the public realms of Himley Village. This can be achieved through the use of local arts resources such as OxOnArts (the Oxfordshire Arts Partnership), and the engagement of local communities, schools and colleges.
- 5.5 There will also be a programme of events to engaged and inform the community about Himley Village, at various stages as each of the phases of the development progress.
- 5.6 At the current moment of the first Reserved Matters application, the full details of the phasing of the development, up to completion, are in progress and being finalised. As such, a full programme of community engagement, commissioning of works and installation of works will follow as soon as possible after the submission of the first Reserved Matters application, when the full phasing of the complete development has been finalised.