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# Planning Report

Catalyst Bicester -  
Phase 4

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MAY 2024

Q230712

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# Executive Summary

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Albion Land are seeking planning permission for employment (Class E(g)) development designed to meet the needs of the high-technology and knowledge economy at Bicester Gateway (“the Site”).

The site is the last undeveloped parcel of an allocation at Bicester Gateway and the proposal will form part of the wider Catalyst Bicester business park which lies to the east.

## Albion Land and Catalyst Bicester

Albion Land has a proven track record in this location, having successfully delivered several phases of development at Catalyst Bicester, a high-quality business park aimed at meeting the needs of high-technology, knowledge-based businesses.

Located to the southwest of the town, the business park capitalises on its location in the Oxford-Cambridge innovation arc, with Oxford within easy reach via the A34.

The first phase of Catalyst Bicester is complete and fully occupied. Phase 2 is nearing completion, with all but one unit pre-let and, following this, Phase 3 development will commence. Market interest is strong and will exceed the supply from these 3 phases.

Albion Land have now acquired an interest in this last undeveloped parcel of land in the Bicester Gateway allocation, and will deliver Phase 4 following grant of permission, providing further high-quality employment floorspace in direct response to the Local Plan’s aspirations, market advice and occupier demand.

Bicester Gateway is allocated for knowledge economy development (Use Class B1<sup>1</sup>), with the intention to attract the high-tech knowledge industry and create jobs. There is also an extant planning permission for the Site, for a greater quantum of employment floorspace. Thus, the principle of development is well established.

The previous scheme, however, showed a scheme comprising smaller units with a limited amount of office space. Market advice and occupier demand confirms that larger unit sizes with a larger proportion of ancillary office space is better suited for the kinds of high-tech businesses that this development will attract. The proposals will therefore provide three 3-storey flexible employment units operating under Class E(g)i and/or E(g)ii and/or E(g)iii.

As with the wider Catalyst Bicester business park, the overall site layout and design is of a high quality to maximise the attractiveness of the units to future occupiers and attract and retain high tech knowledge businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Class B1 was effectively replaced by Class E(g)iii in the September 2020 amendments to The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

Reflecting its gateway nature to Bicester and the wider business park, the design approach has particular regard to the north-western corner and the northern frontage provides an attractive boulevard entrance into the business park.

A number of direct and indirect planning benefits will arise from this development, including:

- The initial financial investment into delivery of the scheme.
- The temporary creation of jobs during the construction phase.
- The permanent creation of jobs during the occupation phase (ranging from approx. 199 to 994 jobs<sup>2</sup>), helping to support the local economy and optimise the allocation's aspiration.
- A deliverable scheme brought forward by a developer with a strong track record of delivery in the area in direct response to market needs.
- The provision of market-facing floorspace that will attract high-tech businesses, with the accompanying business rates this will bring and support for wider economic growth in this industry.
- Providing local jobs close to home for local residents.
- The accompanying reduction of out-commuting of residents out of Bicester.
- Providing jobs in an area with an existing leisure centre which provides facilities (including tennis courts, café, etc.) to promote the physical and mental wellbeing of future employees. This also provides an attractive location for businesses to locate themselves in.
- The wider benefit to the area of attracting more people to this area and the related spending this brings.
- The expansion of a high-quality business park with a strong sense of place, targeting BREEAM Excellent standards, EPC A and providing on-site renewable energy generation.

The scheme is fully deliverable, and in line with both the adopted development plan and national policy. It should therefore be approved without delay.

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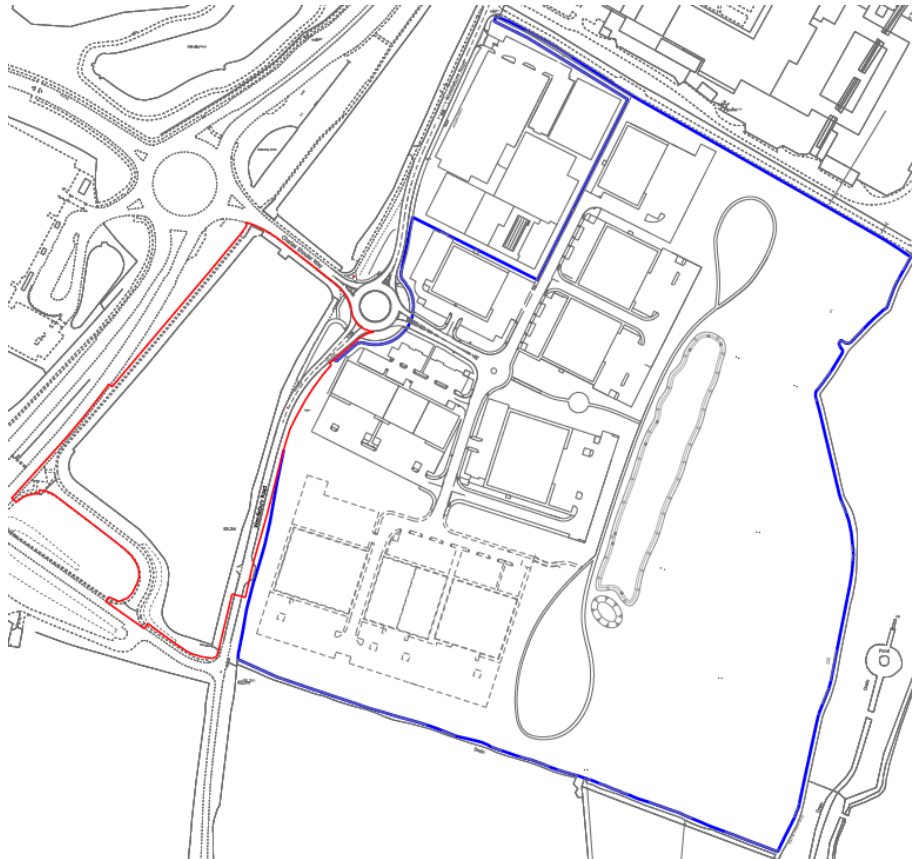
<sup>2</sup> Calculated using the Employment Density Guide 3rd Edition

# 1 Introduction

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1.1 This Planning Report has been prepared on behalf of Albion Land, in support of a full application for development at Bicester Gateway (“the Site”).

Figure 1.1 – Site Location Plan



- 1.1 The Site is allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan (2015) as part of the Bicester 10 allocation, intended to bring forward high quality and attractive development for the knowledge economy under the now superseded Use Class B1 (effectively replaced by Class E(g)), in order to attract high-tech knowledge businesses.
- 1.2 There is an extant consent for B1 development, for up to 12 knowledge economy units with a smaller proportion of ancillary office space. This was secured by the former landowners in 2022, in different market conditions.
- 1.3 Following market advice and informed by known occupier demand, the current proposals provide a demonstrably deliverable scheme, updating the development proposals to reflect current market conditions and occupier requirements. It also represents an attractive and high-quality frontage for this gateway site, designed to seamlessly expand the existing business park and provide a cohesive environment.
- 1.4 Full planning permission is sought for:

*Full planning permission for employment development (Use Classes E(g)i and/or E(g)ii and/or E(g)iii), and associated infrastructure, access (including diverted public right of way), parking, and landscaping*

- 1.5 This scheme will be Phase 4 to the adjoining Catalyst Bicester business park, which has been delivered by Albion Land. All completed units at Catalyst Bicester are occupied and those nearing completion are mostly pre-let. Known market demand will outstrip the supply in this area beyond the third phase.
- 1.6 This Phase will provide the additional high quality floorspace needed to meet the objectives of the Local Plan and evidenced needs, attracting more knowledge-based and high-tech businesses to the area.
- 1.7 This Report begins by presenting the context of the application, then detailing the proposals, the decision-making context, and the planning balance. The proposed development is shown to be fully compliant with local and national planning policy and there are no material considerations which indicate a decision should not be in accordance with these; meaning planning permission should be granted without delay.

## 2 Context for Application

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### Catalyst Bicester

- 2.1 Albion Land is delivering Catalyst Bicester, a high-quality business park aimed at meeting the needs of high-tech, knowledge businesses in Bicester.
- 2.2 Located to the south of the town, at Bicester Gateway, the first phase of Catalyst Bicester is now fully complete and occupied. Phase 2 is nearing completion (expected summer 2024), following this, Phase 3 development will commence.
- 2.3 Phase 1 comprises units 1-4, all of which have been let. Units 1-3 by Evolito and Unit 4 By YASA, two companies at the forefront of electric vehicle innovation and development.
- 2.4 Phase 2 comprises units 5-8<sup>3</sup>. All but unit 8 have been pre-let, by Tesla and a further EV related design and manufacturing business. Interest in unit 8 has been strong, with a letting expected prior to completion.
- 2.5 Phase 3 comprises units 9-12, providing a further 10,200sqm of employment floorspace. Based on current enquiries and market advice from the agents marketing the business park, it is anticipated that this provision will be outstripped within 12-18 months.
- 2.6 The Market Report and Analysis prepared by CBRE, enclosed in this application, confirms that occupier interest is for units of a larger size (with a larger proportion of office space) than those previously consented at the Site, evidenced by the occupation and letting out of multiple units by the same occupier at Catalyst Bicester and by wider market evidence.
- 2.7 Following their successful delivery of the existing business park, Albion Land are bringing forward this application for Phase 4 (units 13-15) in direct response to such market demand, providing larger units in order to attract more of the highest quality technology-based businesses to Bicester.
- 2.8 **Figure 2.1** provides an overview of the Catalyst Bicester business park, along with the neighbouring Holiday Inn hotel and David Lloyd health club.

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<sup>3</sup> Previously units 5-9, however units 8 & 9 were combined due to occupier interest for a larger unit.

Figure 2.1– Wider Catalyst Development



### Site Context

- 2.9 The Site comprises a vacant field, bound by hedgerows and scattered trees. It is c.3.68ha in size.
- 2.10 It is bound by the A41 along the northwest, Charles Shouler Way to the northeast, Wendlebury Road along the southeast, and an unnamed road and a disused slip road to the south.
- 2.11 Bicester lies c.900m to the north along the A41.
- 2.12 The wider area has seen a number of different applications approved, with development brought forward to the north for a Holiday Inn hotel and a David Lloyd health club (as shown in **Figure 2.1**).
- 2.13 To the east, over Wendlebury Road lies the Catalyst Bicester development, which is currently being brought forward by Albion Land (set out in further detail above).



- 2.14 To the west across the A41 lies the Bicester Park & Ride. The nearest bus stop is c.300m to the north along the A41, known as the “Holiday Inn” stop.
- 2.15 There is a shared pedestrian/cycle pathway to the north of the Site, provided by Albion Land as part of the wider Catalyst Bicester development, connecting to the wider pedestrian and cycle network.
- 2.16 There are two train stations within a convenient distance of the Site, Bicester Village Station and Bicester North, accessible by foot, cycle and bus.

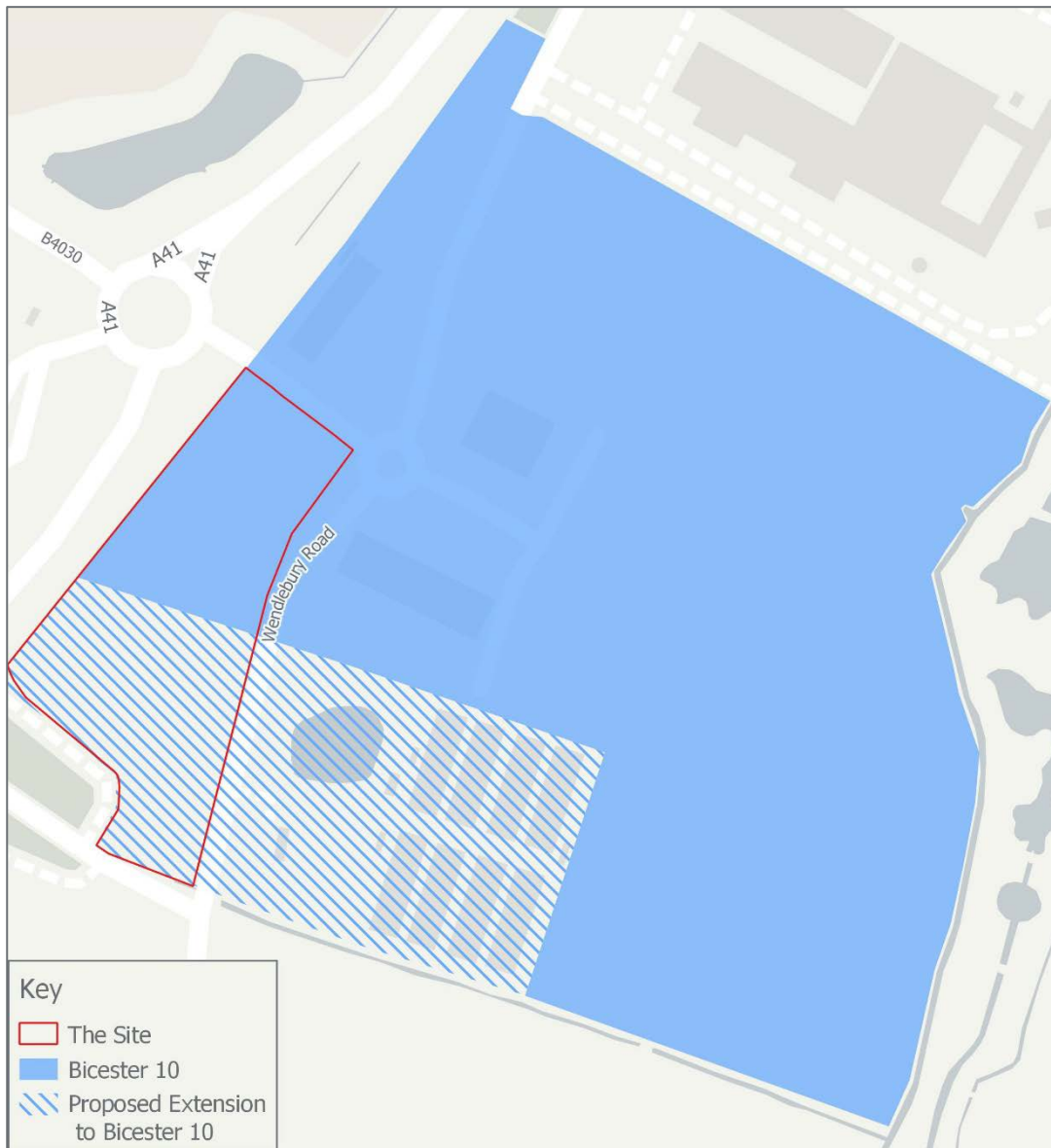
## Site Designations

- 2.17 The northern part of the Site falls within the “Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway” allocation<sup>4</sup>, which also encompasses the Catalyst Bicester development, the Holiday Inn and the David Lloyd. This allocation is for knowledge economy development under Use Class B1 (replaced by Class E(g)iii), intending to attract high tech knowledge industries and create 3,500 jobs.
- 2.18 Quod submitted representations to the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 in November 2023 to extend the allocation to include the southern part of the Site and Phase 3 of Catalyst Bicester to amend its erroneous non-allocation and reflect the extent of the extant consents on the Site (as referenced below).
- 2.19 **Figure 2.2** illustrates the Site’s relationship with the allocation and proposed extension.

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<sup>4</sup> Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1

Figure 2.2 – The Site and Bicester 10 Allocation



2.20 A public right of way (“PROW”) crosses the south of the Site.

2.21 The Site lies within Flood Zone 1, i.e. at lowest risk of flooding. There are areas of high, medium, low and very low risk from surface water flooding.

2.22 A number of policy designations lie in the vicinity of the Site:

- The Alchester Roman site scheduled monument lies to the south.
- An Approved Housing Site lies to the north, across the A41 roundabout.
- To the north of the David Lloyd lies an Existing Retail Park.
- Beyond the Existing Retail Park lies another New Employment Site and Approved Employment Site.

## Planning History

### The Site

2.23 The Site's planning history of relevance comprises :

- Outline planning permission<sup>5</sup> ("the extant consent") was granted in 2017 for a proposed new business park, comprising up to 14,972sqm (GEA) of B1 employment-based buildings, and a hotel.
  - Condition 3 requires reserved matters for the hotel component to be submitted within 2 years and the employment component within 5 years of the decision notice. Following the approval of reserved matters,
  - Condition 4 requires development to take place within two years. The hotel component comprises the Holiday Inn to the north of the Site. Reserved matters<sup>6</sup> for the hotel were approved in 2018, and in November 2022 reserved matters were approved for up to 12 knowledge economy units (Use Class E)<sup>7</sup>.
  - Condition 18 requires the approval of an archaeological written scheme of investigation prior to the commencement of development. This has been discharged in relation to the business park under ref. 24/00228/DISC.
- A later outline permission<sup>8</sup> (excluding the hotel site) was granted in 2021, for an office and residential-led mixed use development. This permission was varied under 21/02723/OUT. This permission has lapsed.

### Catalyst Bicester

2.24 The previous phases of Catalyst Bicester were brought forward under a number of consents:

- Hybrid planning permission<sup>9</sup> was consented in September 2020. The outline component included Phases 1 and 2 of Catalyst Bicester, for B1 development (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c) and the creation of a wetland and landscaped area. The full component was for a health and racquets club, now occupied by David Lloyd; a number of amendments<sup>10</sup> have been brought forward specifically related to this component.
- Reserved matters<sup>11</sup> for Phase 1 were then consented in December 2020 (and amended<sup>12</sup> in October 2021).
- Reserved matters<sup>13</sup> for Phase 2 were consented in October 2022 (and amended twice in May and October 2023 and April 2024<sup>14</sup>. Notably, the second amendment joined Units 8 & 9 to create a single, larger unit, following market demand).

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<sup>5</sup> Ref. 16/02586/OUT

<sup>6</sup> Ref. 17/02557/REM

<sup>7</sup> Ref. 22/02025/REM

<sup>8</sup> Ref. 20/00293/OUT

<sup>9</sup> Ref. 19/01740/HYBRID

<sup>10</sup> Ref. 21/03343/F, 22/00420/NMA, 22/00422/NMA

<sup>11</sup> Ref. 20/02779/REM

<sup>12</sup> Ref. 21/03217/NMA

<sup>13</sup> Ref. 22/01632/REM

<sup>14</sup> Ref. 23/01048/NMA, 23/02605/NMA and 24/00682/NMA, respectively

- As a result of direct occupier demand, Unit 5 (Phase 2) has been subject to two full applications for the use of the unit as an electric vehicle servicing centre (or the existing approved use of E(g)(i) and/or E(g)(ii) and/or E(g)(iii)) and alterations to the external layout and elevations<sup>15</sup>.
- Outline planning permission<sup>16</sup> was consented for Phase 3 in September 2020, for B1 development (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c). Reserved matters<sup>17</sup> were subsequently consented in October 2022.

## Summary

2.25 The principle of Class E(g) (formerly B1) employment-based development is established on the Site specifically by its allocation in the adopted development plan and its planning history.

2.26 The Site is a natural extension to the existing Catalyst Bicester business park, and will provide high-tech, knowledge employment floorspace in response to the strategic aspirations of the local plan to capitalise on Bicester's location in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, market advice and known occupier demand.

2.27 It lies in a highly accessible area, with connections to the wider pedestrian, cycle, public transport and road networks.

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<sup>15</sup> Ref. 23/01311/F and 23/02664/F, respectively

<sup>16</sup> Ref. 19/01746/OUT

<sup>17</sup> Ref. 22/01945/REM

## 3 Proposed Development

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3.1 The proposal is submitted in detail. The description of development is as follows:

*Full planning permission for employment development (Use Classes E(g)i and/or E(g)ii and/or E(g)iii), and associated infrastructure, access (including diverted public right of way), parking, and landscaping*

### Proposals

3.2 The proposals involve the erection of three units (numbered 13, 14 and 15 as a continuation of the existing Catalyst Bicester business park), across three storeys. The first floor will spread across the whole unit, with the two upper storeys being a smaller proportion of the overall footprint. The units will operate flexibly under Class E(g)i and/or E(g)ii and/or E(g)iii to suit the operator needs.

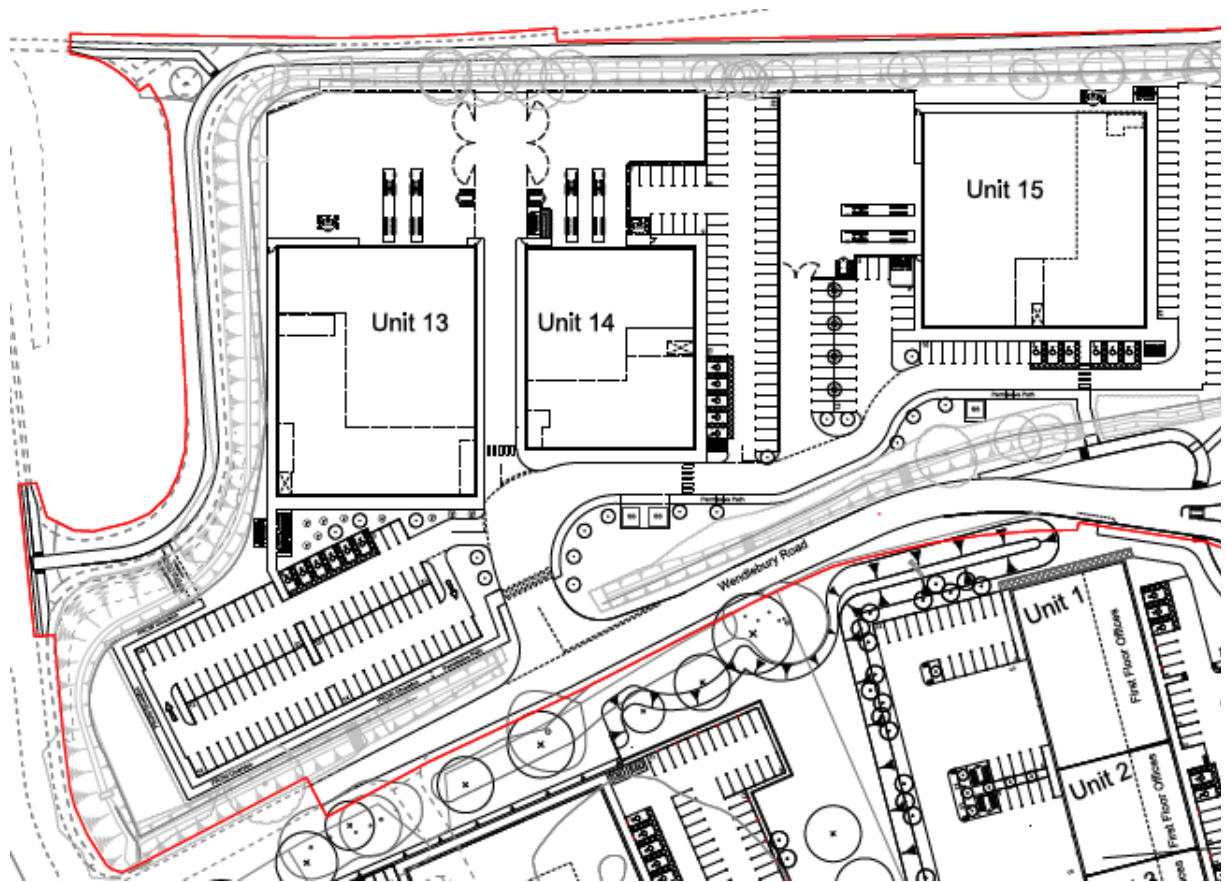
3.3 The floorspace (GIA) breakdown for each unit is provided below:

- Unit 13: 4,573sqm total.
- Unit 14: 3,122sqm total.
- Unit 15: 4,234sqm total.

3.4 A maximum quantum of Class E(g)i across the Site is proposed at 50%, which can be controlled via a planning condition. .

3.5 The proposed site plan is shown in **Figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1 – Proposed Site Plan



3.6 Reflecting the gateway nature of the Site, Unit 15 provides an attractive frontage for those approaching the Site and entering the business park. **Figure 3.2** provides a CGI to illustrate this frontage.

Figure 3.2 – CGI of Northwestern view into the Site



- 3.7 Careful consideration has gone into the design, materiality and appearance of each unit, providing an engaging active frontage with clear wayfinding for users of the Site, enhanced landscape buffers, and a striking visual appearance (in particular from the A41 roundabout and the Site entrance).
- 3.8 Each unit has a service yard, with sufficient capacity for HGVs to manoeuvre. A balanced approach has been taken in their placement/design to accommodate the likely operational requirements of the future occupiers whilst still prioritising the creation of a high-quality, cohesive design by continuing the creation of boulevard entrances to the Site in line with the earlier phases of the business park.
- 3.9 Active frontages and in particular the striking design of the unit corners will provide greater visual interest and an interaction between the public and private realms, whilst being well screened for occupier privacy and to limit external views into the Site.
- 3.10 The public right of way that crosses the Site's southern extent is proposed to be diverted slightly around the car parking. This will maintain the provision for pedestrians who use this path (which is limited), whilst ensuring a more safe and pleasant environment, away from traffic and the car parking. It also provides a secure and private environment for the occupiers of the units.
- 3.11 The Site will have two access points, one for vehicular traffic coming from Wendlebury Road, the other for pedestrians and cyclists, connecting to the wider pedestrian/cycle network.
- 3.12 Highway works are proposed to widen Wendlebury Road to better accommodate HGVs. This will be subject to a separate section 278 agreement, with details shown in the submitted plans package and assessed in the Transport Assessment.

3.13 Landscaping is proposed across the Site, including additional tree and hedgerow planting.

3.14 Proposed parking details are provided in the table below.

Car Parking	Active Electric Vehicle Chargers	Accessible Parking	Cycle
264	25%	17	168

#### Comparison with the Extant Consent

3.15 The proposed scheme updates the extant consent in line with market demand, providing a more attractive and high-quality development that fits within evidenced occupier needs and demand.

3.16 It provides a similar quantum of floorspace (11,929sqm vs the consented 11,745sqm), with an increased ancillary office provision for the desk-based technical areas noted as necessary by existing occupiers of the wider Catalyst Bicester business park, as well as wider market demand in the technology-based research and development, innovation and advanced manufacturing sectors.

3.17 The key gateway view from the A41 roundabout is also enhanced, with more attention to design and detail at this elevation. This provides a striking and active viewpoint into the wider business park and aligns with its prominent nature as a gateway site.

#### Summary

3.18 The proposed development is for a high quality, employment scheme designed to attract the high-tech, knowledge industry, whilst providing a distinctive entrance to the business park and Site.

3.19 There are limited material changes to the extant consent, with those changes being proposed delivering a betterment to that already permitted.

3.20 The proposed design is deliverable and will respond to market interest for development of such calibre.



## 4 Policy Context

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- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires all development to deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%.
- 4.3 This Section sets out the relevant policies of the development plan and then outlines other relevant material considerations which need to be considered in determining the application.

### Local Planning Policy

- 4.4 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 sets a vision for Bicester in 2031 as an established location for higher-technology businesses, specifically through the Bicester Gateway (as set out in Policy Bicester 10) development<sup>18</sup>.

#### Policy SLE 1: Employment Development

- 4.5 This policy sets out that new employment development on allocated sites should align with the specific policy for that allocation. It specifically encourages development on allocated sites.

#### Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway

- 4.6 This policy allocates the northern part of the Site for new employment use. The southern part of the Site had been intended for allocation, however was not included by error<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.7 The Bicester Gateway strategic site is identified to become a critical gateway to the town, and for its “*potential to contribute towards building and reinforcing a modern knowledge economy for Cherwell and surroundings, securing a location for science and research and technology transfer and commercial application*”<sup>20</sup>.
- 4.8 The policy seeks to attract knowledge economy employment development, operating under E(g) (formerly B1) use for high-tech knowledge businesses.
- 4.9 The policy sets out the infrastructure needs for the allocation in the form of open space and access and movement.
- 4.10 It also sets a number of site-specific design and place shaping principles, including compliance with Policy ESD 15. Key design principles are to create a high quality, modern business park environment in order to attract and retain the desired high-tech companies.

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<sup>18</sup> Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1, Paragraph C.29

<sup>19</sup> It formed part of the allocation in the Main Modifications that were accepted by the Inspector during the examination period (Modification SHMM 76 Map Correction).

<sup>20</sup> Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1, Paragraph C.96

- 4.11 Schemes should demonstrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including exemplary demonstration of compliance with the requirements of policies ESD 1–6, including achieving a minimum BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard and ensuring safety from flood risk and no increase in flood risk elsewhere.

#### Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections

- 4.12 All development should facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. The existing highways network should be suitable to accommodate any development.

#### Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

- 4.13 SuDS should be incorporated into all development to ensure the management of surface water run-off and reduce flood risk.

#### Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

- 4.14 This policy encourages development to result in a net gain in biodiversity, as well as aiming to increase the number of trees in the District.

#### Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

- 4.15 Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.

### Emerging Policy

- 4.16 Cherwell District Council are in the process of producing a new local plan, known as the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040. The Regulation 18 consultation ran from September–November 2023.
- 4.17 It is still at early stages, however it retains the goal of supporting Bicester’s status as an economic hub for business, identifying the town as the most suitable location for continued economic growth.
- 4.18 It is proposed to save the allocations from the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1, including Policy Bicester 10. Representations were submitted on behalf of Albion Land which advocated extending the boundary of the allocation to incorporate Phase 3 of Catalyst Bicester and the southern part of the Site, given their existing permissions for employment use (as well as the southern part of the Site being excluded in error<sup>21</sup>).
- 4.19 Chesterton Parish Council applied for Neighbourhood Plan designation in January 2024. This was approved in March 2024 and they will now progress with the creation of a neighbourhood plan. Once adopted this will form part of the development plan, however there is nothing to afford weight to as of yet (including no direction of travel).

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<sup>21</sup> It formed part of Bicester 10 in the Main Modifications that were accepted by the Inspector (ref: Modification SHMM 76 Map Correction).

## National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.20 The NPPF 2023 includes a general presumption in favour of sustainable development at its core, meaning development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, should be approved without delay.
- 4.21 Paragraph 85 outlines the Government's objective to create the conditions for businesses to invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity.
- 4.22 Paragraph 87 finds that the locational requirements of certain sectors should be addressed, including the provision of clusters of certain industries.
- 4.23 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 intends to shift the NPPF away from decision-taking and focusing more on plan-making. This reflects the move towards strengthening the need for decision-makers to accord with the development plan unless material considerations strongly indicate otherwise. Local plans will be stripped down to focus on local issues, with issues that apply in most areas to be considered by National Development Management Policies.

## Summary

- 4.24 The Site falls within an allocated site for new knowledge economy employment development, operating under E(g) (former B1) use and specifically encouraging high-quality design to attract and retain high-tech knowledge businesses.
- 4.25 Emerging policy is at an early stage, however indications are that this allocation will be saved, with representations submitted to extend the allocation to include existing employment use and permission (i.e. reflecting what is on the ground).
- 4.26 National policy provides support for economic growth and productivity, specifically encouraging the creation of clusters of certain industries.

## 5 Planning Balance

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- 5.1 The general presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF is triggered when proposals accord with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Such proposals should be approved without delay.
- 5.2 This section first considers the principle of the proposals, then goes on to look at detailed development management matters, demonstrating that they are in accordance with the development plan.

### Principle of Development

- 5.3 The principle of development for the proposed knowledge-based units with office space at the Site is established.
- 5.4 Policy Bicester 10 confirms the allocation for such uses on the northern part of the Site, with the southern part only excluded in error. Emerging policy saves this allocation. The scheme is compliant with Policy Bicester 10, as demonstrated in this Report.
- 5.5 The Site also benefits from an extant permission for a B1 (now E(g)) employment development, however this is not market facing. The current proposals have been informed by letting and enquiries for earlier phases of the business park and tailored to current market conditions and known occupier requirements.
- 5.6 The submitted Market Report and Analysis, prepared by CBRE, confirms that this is a demonstrably deliverable scheme, and Albion Land are committed to expanding and completing the business park. The approach to development of the previous phases at Catalyst Bicester demonstrate that delivery will be secured quickly following planning permission, bringing all the economic (and accompanying social) benefits that this scheme will bring forward.
- 5.7 There has been no material change in circumstances that would impact the acceptability of this proposal.
- 5.8 The principle of development is therefore established.
- 5.9 This Section now goes on to consider detailed development management matters.

### Technical and Environmental Considerations

#### Design

- 5.10 The proposal has been designed to a high quality, reflecting the surrounding character of the area, and to provide an attractive gateway into Bicester and the wider Catalyst Bicester business park. It is a comprehensive and cohesive extension to the existing business park, brought forward by the same developer and design team.

- 5.11 Expanding on the success at Catalyst Bicester, the vision for this development is to provide additional modern, high-quality units to attract and retain high-tech knowledge businesses who are attracted to the area.
- 5.12 The diversion of the public right of way is necessary for the privacy and occupier preference of future occupiers, and it provides a safer, more attractive environment for users of the pathway (away from traffic and avoiding the car park). It will also provide a more legible footpath. The diversion will be subject to a separate diversion application to Cherwell DC. The diversion was previously accepted in the past permissions, with officers noting the lack of regular use of this footpath.
- 5.13 The proposals are therefore compliant with Policies Bicester 10, ESD 3, ESD 15.

### Sustainable Design

- 5.14 The submission package is supported by an Energy Strategy, which demonstrates how a number of design interventions have been incorporated into the scheme, led by an aspiration to create a sustainable development during both the construction and operational phases and maximise renewable energy generation / provision on-site. These include:
- The incorporation of efficient building fabric, Air Source Heat Pumps, and Solar PV Panels.
  - Targeting EPC ratings of A for all units.
  - Targeting a BREEAM 'Excellent' standard, achieving a minimum 'Very Good'.
- 5.15 The proposals are therefore compliant with Policies Bicester 10 and ESD 1-5.

### Highways

- 5.16 In support of this application, David Tucker Associates have prepared a Transport Assessment, Framework Travel Plan and Parking and Servicing Note.
- 5.17 They have undertaken a comparison of the traffic flows that would result from the proposed development as compared with the accepted traffic flows under the extant consent on the Site, demonstrating that there would be a net benefit, with significantly lower traffic flows arising from the proposed development. Overall, the surrounding highways network will be able to accommodate the proposal.
- 5.18 They also confirm that the proposals will slot into and enhance the existing active travel network, with the widening of existing pathways and the provision of a footway/cycleway along the western boundary of the scheme, along with the enhancement of the public right of way as noted above. These improvements will also enable the scheme to integrate and connect easily with the existing business park.
- 5.19 The Framework Travel Plan will ensure that sustainable travel patterns are encouraged on site for future occupiers.
- 5.20 The local highway authority car and cycle parking standards are met in full.

5.21 Overall, it is concluded that the development accords with the transport related requirements of national and local policy and there are no transport related reasons why planning permission should not be granted.

5.22 They are therefore compliant with Policies Bicester 10 and SLE 4.

### Landscaping, Ecology and Trees

5.23 A landscaping scheme has been prepared to ensure that the development is effectively integrated into the surrounding context, with additional trees and hedgerows proposed. This will soften and screen views into the Site and provide an attractive environment for occupiers.

5.24 A development of this scale would inevitably cause an extent of landscape change, albeit the landscaping scheme has sought to minimise this and ensure the effective assimilation of the built development in to the existing landscape (which includes substantial built form on earlier phases of the business park). Such change on this Site is accepted given its allocation in the local plan and past permissions<sup>22</sup>.

5.25 The biodiversity value of the site, including its potential to support protected species has been assessed. The proposals will deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain and have no unacceptable impacts on protected species.

5.26 The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies the trees on site as being of low to moderate value, with no high value trees.

5.27 Whilst there is some loss of hedgerows and trees to accommodate the development, none of these are considered important to the character or appearance of the local landscape, and new tree planting is proposed, which is considered sufficient to compensate for these losses. This will include new planting along Charles Shouler Way.

5.28 The proposals are therefore compliant with Policies Bicester 10, ESD 10 and ESD 13.

### Heritage Considerations

5.29 Heritage impacts were considered in both of the previous outline permissions and the extant reserved matters consent on this Site.

5.30 These confirmed that the proposed development would have a negligible impact on the historic environment, and that “where any minor harm would occur to the setting of the Chesterton Conservation Area [which lies over 600m to the west, across a significant distance with extensive intervening tree belt] or Alchester Roman Town scheduled monument, officers are in no doubt that the significant economic public benefits associated with the proposals would clearly outweigh any harm”<sup>23</sup>. This was confirmed by a consultation response from Historic

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<sup>22</sup> See officer report for ref. 22/02025/REM.

<sup>23</sup> Paragraph 8.49 of the officer report for 16/02586/OUT.

England, due to the presence of the A41 flyover and thick, well-established vegetation along the southern boundary of the Site.<sup>24</sup>

- 5.31 Archaeological investigations identified a number of deposits in the southern part of the Site which was proposed for car parking, for which a method statement confirming their *in situ* preservation was considered appropriate. The officer report confirmed that a programme of archaeological investigation and mitigation should be submitted for the rest of the Site, which was conditioned<sup>25</sup>. The siting of the car parking over the areas of most dense archaeology was further accepted at reserved matters stage<sup>26</sup>.
- 5.32 The submitted Written Scheme of Investigation provides the necessary information for the programme of archaeological investigation and mitigation. This is the same report that was partially<sup>27</sup> discharged under Condition 18 of the extant consent (ref. 24/00228/DISC), following input from and a response from the statutory consultee. There is therefore no need for this to be conditioned in this application.
- 5.33 Policy Bicester 10 does require new development to set out opportunities to better reveal the significance of the Alchester Roman Town scheduled monument. When considering the extant consent (both the outline and reserved matters), officers accepted that, given that there would be no material impact on the scheduled monument and the lack of any opportunity to directly enhance its significance, this requirement was not necessary<sup>28</sup>.
- 5.34 The proposals are therefore compliant with Policies Bicester 10 and ESD 15.

#### Flood Risk and SuDS

- 5.35 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy demonstrates that the Site and proposed development is at Low risk from all sources of flooding, except surface water which has Medium risk.

That notwithstanding, a number of mitigation measures have been incorporated into the site design to ensure that this risk remains low. These include, but are not limited to, the raising of thresholds and building levels, tree planting, and the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (“SuDS”).

- 5.36 They are therefore compliant with Policies Bicester 10, ESD 6 and ESD 7.

#### Planning Benefits

- 5.37 There are a number of benefits that the delivery of the proposals will bring to Bicester and the wider area. These include:

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<sup>24</sup> Paragraphs 8.46 and 8.47 of the officer report for 16/02586/OUT and Paragraphs 9.101 and 9.102 of 20/00293/OUT.

<sup>25</sup> Paragraph 8.48 of the officer report for 16/02586/OUT and Paragraph 9.101 of 20/00293/OUT.

<sup>26</sup> See officer report for 22/02025/REM.

<sup>27</sup> Partially as it relates to the employment component of the extant consent only.

<sup>28</sup> Paragraph 8.50 of the officer report for 16/02586/OUT.

- The initial financial investment into delivery of the scheme.
- The temporary creation of jobs during the construction phase.
- The permanent creation of jobs during the occupation phase (ranging from approx. 199 to 994 jobs<sup>29</sup>), helping to support the local economy and optimise the allocation's aspiration.
- A deliverable scheme brought forward by a developer with a strong track record of delivery in the area in direct response to market needs.
- The provision of market-facing floorspace that will attract high-tech businesses, with the accompanying business rates this will bring and support for wider economic growth in this industry.
- Providing local jobs close to home for local residents.
- The accompanying reduction of out-commuting of residents out of Bicester.
- Providing jobs in an area with an existing leisure centre which provides facilities (including tennis courts, café, etc.) to promote the physical and mental wellbeing of future employees. This also provides an attractive location for businesses to locate themselves in.
- The wider benefit to the area of attracting more people to this area and the related spending this brings.
- The expansion of a high-quality business park with a strong sense of place, targeting BREEAM Excellent standards, EPC A and providing on-site renewable energy generation.

## Summary

- 5.38 The proposed development is an updated proposal for modern, market-facing units, designed specifically to attract high-tech businesses. It is an extension to the existing Catalyst Bicester business park.
- 5.39 It lies within an existing allocation for the proposed E(g) (former B1) use, which benefits from an extant planning permission for this use.
- 5.40 It is fully deliverable, and responds to evidenced demand from potential occupiers.
- 5.41 The scheme is in line with local and national policy, both of which support economic growth.
- 5.42 It is fully appropriate in all development management matters, and there are no considerations that should hold up this application.
- 5.43 There are a range of planning benefits associated with the scheme.
- 5.44 It should therefore be approved without delay.

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<sup>29</sup> Calculated using the Employment Density Guide 3rd Edition



## 6 Conclusion

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- 6.1 This Planning Report demonstrates the suitability of a proposed E(g) employment development.
- 6.2 The proposals represent a sustainable expansion to the existing well-occupied Catalyst Bicester business park, providing a high-quality design and attractive frontage for this gateway Site.
- 6.3 The Site has been specifically identified in the local plan for B1 (now E(g)) development designed at a high quality to attract the knowledge industry.
- 6.4 Albion Land has successfully delivered Catalyst Bicester, with strong interest from knowledge occupiers for upcoming units nearing completion. Planning permission for Phase 4 will enable an efficient use of this allocation to support economic growth and provide local jobs.
- 6.5 Phase 4 is a deliverable scheme which directly responds to identified demand from the high-tech businesses for larger units with increased office space. Albion Land have proven their ability to deliver this business park, and so it can be expected that the benefits identified in this application will be brought forward in a timely manner following the grant of planning permission.
- 6.6 As demonstrated in the submission package, and outlined in Section 5 of this Report, the scheme is fully acceptable in all development management matters.
- 6.7 The proposal is in full compliance with both local and national policy, and so the NPPF's presumption in favour of granting planning permission is triggered. It should therefore be granted without delay.



Quod

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