

# BICESTER

## GREEN BUFFER REPORT

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2013



## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

Evidence Base for the Green Buffers around Bicester  
26<sup>th</sup> September 2013

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*This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2008.*

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## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The historic market town of Bicester lies within the administrative boundary of Cherwell District Council (CDC) and is the District's main focus for future growth. The town is identified as a rapidly expanding commuter town needing to improve its self-sufficiency and image as a place to live and work. It is proposed that most employment and housing growth will take place on the edge of the town, although measures will also be taken to strengthen the historic town centre.

When considering the growth of the town, it is recognised that landform provides a limited constraint to the development of Bicester. Environmental Assets such as Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, floodplains associated with the valley of the River Ray and its tributaries and biodiversity sites have shaped how the town has grown and will also contribute to shaping future growth, limiting the number of Strategic Development Sites available on the edges of the existing town.

In order to maintain the distinctive identity of Bicester and that of its surrounding villages, green boundaries have been identified within The Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2012) between the areas of growth/the edge of the town and adjacent settlements. It is the intention that this Green Buffer will protect the identity of settlements, vulnerable gaps between the existing or planned built up limits of Bicester and neighbouring villages, and to protect valuable landscape or historic features. Existing important views will also need to be taken into account.

#### **1.1. Scope of the Report and Structure**

LDA Design Consulting LLP (LDA Design) was commissioned by CDC to provide a review of the Green Buffer around Bicester as illustrated in The Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2012). The brief requires this study to determine clear criteria for inclusion of land within the Green Buffer, review the illustrative Green Buffer against those criteria and recommend revised boundaries to the Green Buffers, ensuring that areas recommended for inclusion meet the requirements of the emerging Green Buffer policy.

The study has taken into account the Strategic Sites allocated for development in the Proposed Submission Local Plan but, where appropriate, gives a broad indication as to whether areas of the site could meet the criteria for inclusion in the Green Buffer.

The purpose of the report is to add to the evidence base of the emerging Local Plan, providing the detailed justification for the designation of land as Green Buffers at Bicester. The Green Buffer Report has been informed by the Bicester Environmental Baseline Report (March 2013) also produced by LDA Design.

The report is structured as follows:

**Section 2:** outline of policy context at a national, regional and local level, focusing at a local scale on Green Buffer policy with the emerging Local Plan and associated countryside policy and any relevant green infrastructure policy pertaining to development allocations.

**Section 3:** methodology for identifying the extent of the Green Buffer.

**Section 4:** a detailed description of each area of Green Buffer.

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### **2.0 Policy Context**

#### **2.1. National Planning Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out overarching principles for planning in England and how planning policy can be expected to be applied. The document states at paragraph 6 that *‘the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development’* and that *‘the planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions’* (paragraph 8).

To this end, three dimensions of sustainable development are highlighted – economic, social and environmental – requiring the planning system to perform a number of roles. These are:

- *‘an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- *an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.’*

The NPPF continues in paragraph 8 stating that:

*‘These roles should not be taken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent...Therefore to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.’*

To deliver sustainable development through the planning system, the NPPF notes at paragraph 17 core principals of planning to be [inter alia]:

- *‘not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;*
- *take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;*
- *contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;*
- *contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework’.*

The NPPF also offers guidance in relation to plan making, in particular Local Plans, stating in paragraph 157 that Local Plans should:

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- *‘identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance’.*

**2.2. Local Planning Policy**

**2.2.1. The Cherwell Local Plan**

The Cherwell Local Plan, Proposed Submission (August 2012) sets out the priorities and policies for Cherwell District, including a vision for the District as well as planning policies grouped around three themes: Theme One – Developing a Sustainable Local Economy; Theme Two – Building Sustainable Communities; and Theme Three – Ensuring Sustainable Development.

Of relevance to this study are the proposed planning policies and supporting text contained within Theme Three relating to Green Buffers and local landscape protection and enhancement, which are outlined below.

**Policy ESD 15: Green Boundaries to Development**

The supporting text to the proposed Green Buffer policy identifies that green boundaries will be defined *‘between areas of growth on the edge of Bicester and surrounding villages to maintain their distinctive identity and prevent coalescence’*. The supporting text also identifies that the buffers are *‘intended to define the limits of development and protect gaps between the existing/planned edge between Bicester and the villages of Bucknell, Chesterton and Launton’*. Additional buffers are shown on the Proposed Submission Policies Map to the east of Graven Hill and between the DLO Caversfield site and the proposed North-West Bicester Eco-Town.

The policy states that:

*‘Proposals for development on the edge of the built up area must be carefully designed and landscaped to soften the built edge of development and assimilate it into the landscape. Existing important views of designated or attractive landscape features will need to be taken into account. Proposals will also be considered against the requirements of ‘Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement’.*

*Green buffers as indicated on the Proposed Submission Proposals Maps will be kept free from built development to protect the identity of settlements, vulnerable gaps between the existing or planned built up limits of Banbury and Bicester and neighbouring villages, and to protect valuable landscape or historic features.*

*Green buffers will take the form of community woodland where opportunity exists and when woodland planting is appropriate in landscape terms.’*

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

As outlined in the above proposed policy, consideration will also be given to *Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement* when considering development proposals. This policy seeks to conserve and enhance the countryside and landscape character of the whole district, and so includes land within the area defined as a Green Buffer.

The policy recognises the important relationship between the District’s towns and adjoining countryside and the need to avoid an abrupt transition from built development to open

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farmland, with special attention to be given to the landscaping of existing and proposed development. The policy states that:

*‘Where new development will extend to the built up limits of the towns the Council will seek a masterplan and well-designed approach to the urban edge. This could incorporate the enhancement of existing hedgerows and woodlands and new areas of woodland planting and hedgerows to be incorporated as part of the development, to ensure the satisfactory transition between town and country.’*

Furthermore, the policy states that proposals will not be permitted if they would:

*‘Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside;*

*Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;*

*Be inconsistent with local character;*

*Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity;*

*Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features; or*

*Harm the historic value of the landscape.’*

**Policy ESD 18: Green Infrastructure**

Policy ESD 15 indicates that Green Buffers do not negate the need for green infrastructure provision within strategic development sites. Policy ESD 18 Green Infrastructure seeks to maintain and enhance the district’s green infrastructure network. The policy seeks to do that through the following measures:

- *‘Pursuing opportunities for joint working to maintain and improve the green infrastructure network, whilst protecting sites of importance for nature conservation’;*
- *‘Protecting and enhancing existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network and improving connectivity between sites in accordance with policies on supporting a modal shift in transport (‘Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections’), open space, sport and recreation (‘Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision’), adapting to climate change (‘Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change’), SuDS (‘Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)’), biodiversity and the natural environment (‘Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment’), and Conservation Target Areas (‘Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas’)’*
- *‘Ensuring that green infrastructure network considerations are integral to the planning of new development. Proposals should maximise the opportunity to maintain and extend green infrastructure links to form a multi-functional network of open space, providing opportunities for walking and cycling, and connecting the towns to the urban fringe and the wider countryside beyond’*
- *‘All strategic development sites (Section C ‘Policies for Cherwell’s Places’) will be required to provide and link to green infrastructure.’*

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**3.0 Methodology**

The purpose of the study is to provide a review of the Green Buffers as illustrated in The Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2012) and accompanying Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5) to recommend a definitive Green Buffer to be defined for Bicester through the Local Plan process.

**3.1. Green Buffer Policy Review**

To allow the Green Buffer to be defined, an initial review of Green Buffer policy has been undertaken by LDA Design. Suggested changes to the wording of the draft policy contained within the emerging Local Plan have been provided by LDA Design following discussion with Cherwell District Council. Clear criteria have been defined to determine the purposes of a Green Buffer. These purposes and the suggested wording of the emerging policy are:

*‘Green buffers as indicated on the Proposals Map will be maintained to:*

- *maintain Banbury and Bicester’s distinctive identity and setting*
- *protect the separate identity and setting of neighbouring settlements which surround the two towns*
- *prevent coalescence and protect the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements*
- *protect the identity and setting of landscape and historic features of value that are important to the identity and setting of the two towns*
- *protect important views’*

A Green Buffer policy will protect the distinctive identity and setting of Bicester and its surrounding settlements. Important historic routes and arrival points between and into settlements will also be protected, enhancing the sense of arrival and reinforcing the identity of the town as an ancient market centre. The distinction between Bicester and surrounding villages will be preserved, protecting important gaps between built form, preventing coalescence and maintaining the separate identity of settlements. The setting of other assets such as landscape and historical features will also be protected as part of the Green Buffer designation, retaining important views and visual links between settlement and the adjacent countryside.

The expanded purposes of the Green Buffer are outlined in further detail in the following section.

**3.1.1. Purposes of the Green Buffer**

**Maintain Banbury and Bicester’s distinctive identity and setting**

The countryside around the town of Bicester provides attractive approaches to the town, creating a rural setting to the town. Whilst Bicester has been subject to rapid expansion since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the development of large infrastructure elements such as the M40 corridor, main line railway and its own ring road, beyond this the rural landscape remains largely intact and contains a number of small scattered settlements, often historic in character.



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The town itself is situated on the gently sloping landform created by the River Ray and its tributaries, which are located to the south east of the town. The landform creates very little enclosure to the town, with localised topographic features such as Graven Hill creating striking features in the relatively flat landform. Higher landform to the north and east offers viewpoints with panoramic views over Bicester and its surrounding landscape.

Given the openness of the surrounding landscape the town and its landscape setting are intimately interlinked. The rural setting of the town forms an integral part of its character which needs to be planned for positively as a central part of the decision-making process. The Green Buffer policy will allow the identity and setting of the town and the surrounding villages to be maintained.

#### **Protect the separate identity and setting of surrounding settlements**

As with the setting and identity of Bicester town itself, the setting of surrounding settlements is also integral to their character. The rural villages, often historic in character, are scattered throughout the surrounding landscape. These settlements are frequently located along the tributaries of the River Ray, with the relatively flat landform often creating a visual relationship with the edge of Bicester. Approaches to the villages also form an important part of their character and overall setting. The Green Buffer policy will allow the setting of these surrounding settlements to be protected.

#### **Prevent coalescence between the two towns and their surrounding settlements ensuring the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements are kept them free from built development that would harm the character of the Green Buffer**

Fundamental to the distinctive identity and setting of Bicester and its surrounding settlements is ensuring the town and villages do not merge. The areas of countryside, or gaps, between both the existing or planned edge of Bicester and the surrounding settlements are important in retaining the character and setting of the town and villages, creating a distinct approach and often a rural setting. The Green Buffer will prevent development extending beyond the settlements to such an extent that the identity of individual settlements is lost and development coalesces. The designation will also be essential to protect important gaps, preventing development which would harm its character.

#### **Protect valued features of landscape and historical importance and their settings**

Whilst many features of landscape and historical importance are protected through various designations, for example Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens, others remain without formal designation. However, such features are often recognised locally as important features contributing positivity to the character of the area and sense of place. The Green Buffer designation will afford such features protection. It will also enhance the protection already afforded to designated sites.

#### **Protect important views**

As a result of the topographical variations of the landscape surrounding Bicester, there is often a strong visual link between the edges of the town and surrounding countryside and settlements. Important views include views to and from Bicester over the surrounding countryside in which Bicester can be appreciated in its landscape setting. Often important views can contribute to the designated status of areas, such as Conservation Areas. However,

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important views are not necessarily designated views alone, but those which contribute to the experience of a place and visually link Bicester and its surrounding landscape and settlements.

The Green Buffer will allow existing important views to be retained, therefore maintaining the important visual link between Bicester and the surrounding environment, and contributing to the qualities of the countryside and people’s enjoyment of it.

**3.1.2. Four Stages of Study and Recommendations**

Following the policy review and clear purposes being defined for the Green Buffer, the methodology for establishing the location and extent of Green Buffer around Bicester has been structured as follows. It involves four stages following on from the Policy Review.

- 1) Define Study Area
- 2) Baseline Survey
- 3) Field Work
- 4) Analysis and Green Buffer Proposals

**3.2. Stage One: Defining the Study Area**

The Study Area for the Green Buffer has been based on that defined for the Bicester Environmental Baseline Report (LDA Design, 2013)

The study area is influenced by the planned expansion proposals for the town as set out in the Submission Local Plan and on a combination of the topography and visibility of Bicester from within the surrounding landscape, physical features within the landscape such as roads and watercourses, the presence of surrounding settlements around the town and relevant environmental assets in the area.

This area is considered to represent the setting of Bicester in landscape terms, considering its context and immediate surrounding environment, the outlying villages and features of interest and taking account of the growth strategy as set out in the emerging Local Plan. The study area was refined using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyse terrain data and also by field observation.

The extent of the Study Area is illustrated on Figure 1.1.

**3.3. Stage Two: Baseline Study**

As part of the baseline study, an analysis of a wide range of environmental baseline information supplied by Cherwell District Council was carried out. The baseline information considered included:

- Topography and Hydrology
- Landscape Character (Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study and the Current Landscape Character Assessment: Strategic Framework Study, (2006), Northamptonshire County Council)
- Ecological Habitats and Biodiversity

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- Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
- Access and Amenity
- The geography of the area including outlying villages and features in the landscape which we judged have a relationship with Bicester due to physical proximity, historic or other connectivity, intervisibility or other factors.

From an initial site reconnaissance visit and analysis of baseline data and OS base mapping (1:25,000), a boundary was drafted illustrating the potential outer extent of the Green Buffer areas. When drafting the Green Buffers, continual reference has been made to the main purposes of the Green Buffers as defined within the policy. The boundaries have been clearly defined following identifiable and logical features on the ground.

When defining the extent of the Green Buffer consideration was given to the Strategic Development Sites identified on the Proposed Submission Proposals Map to ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting future housing needs. The Green Buffers have a key role in shaping the growth of Bicester and fulfilling the objectives for the overall vision for the town. As such, the Green Buffers have been defined to take account of potential longer term development needs, by ensuring that land is not included within a Green Buffer where it is unnecessary for Green Buffer purposes.

At the time of writing the Strategic Development Sites identified in the Submission Local Plan do not have approved masterplans. Any green infrastructure provision, or other areas of land which could perform a Green Buffer function within the Strategic Development Sites have not been included within the Green Buffer areas which we recommend. It is recommended that at an appropriate time in the future, and once the Strategic Development Sites have gained planning approval, that these areas of open land are appraised for potential inclusion within the Green Buffer policy area.

#### **3.4. Stage Three: Field Work**

The field work involved reviewing the land surrounding Bicester and surrounding settlements, considering the baseline data as outlined above and ensuring that land located within the Green Buffer fulfilled the policy requirements and purposes of a Green Buffer as outlined in 3.1 above. Land within a Green Buffer is required to contribute to the maintenance of Bicester's distinctive identity and setting, and protecting the setting and identity of surrounding settlements. Land has also been included within the Green Buffer to make certain that Bicester and the surrounding settlements do not coalesce, ensuring that the gaps between the town and surrounding villages are of a suitable scale to retain the separate identity of settlements and are kept free from built development that would harm the character of the Green Buffer. Field work further verified where a Green Buffer was required to protect the setting of valued features of landscape and historical importance, and their settings. Settings are defined as the surroundings in which heritage or landscape features are experienced in their local context, considering present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape.

Whilst undertaking the field work, the visual environment of Bicester and surrounding villages has been reviewed. When looking at the visual environment, consideration has been given to the levels of intervisibility between the town and the surrounding landscape and

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settlements, and the importance of the arrival experience and approaches to Bicester and the villages.

The boundaries and extent of the Green Buffers have been verified as part of the field work, ensuring that land within the Green Buffers fulfils the policy criteria and that boundaries follow identifiable and logical features on the ground. Land was not included within a Green Buffer where it was not necessary for Green Buffer purposes.

### **3.5. Stage Four: Analysis and Green Buffer Proposals**

This stage of the study involved integrating the baseline desk studies, detailed site studies in the field and professional judgement to propose eight Green Buffer areas around Bicester. The areas have been digitised using GIS and are illustrated on Figure 1.2. Detailed descriptions for each area have been provided in Section 4 of this Study.

Regular contact was maintained with CDC Planners during the course of the work to ensure compliance with the emerging Local Plan strategy and to take advantage of their knowledge of the District and plans for Bicester.

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### **4.0 Green Buffer Areas**

Eight Green Buffers have been identified around Bicester, as illustrated on Figure 1.2. These eight areas are:

- Green Buffer 1: Caversfield
- Green Buffer 2: Stratton Audley
- Green Buffer 3: Launton
- Green Buffer 4: Ambrosden
- Green Buffer 5: Wendlebury
- Green Buffer 6: Chesterton
- Green Buffer 7: Bignell Park
- Green Buffer 8: Bucknell

A detailed description of each of the sections is provided below.

#### **4.1. Green Buffer 1: Caversfield**

The Caversfield Green Buffer is located on the northern edge of Bicester, between the former DLO Caversfield site, now being partially redeveloped as ‘The Garden Quarter’, and Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town. The northern boundary of the Green Buffer follows a tree belt and hedgerow associated with the historic extent of parkland at Caversfield House. The eastern boundary is defined by a minor road and the former DLO Caversfield site. To the south the A4095 along the northern edge of Bicester defines the boundary and the B4100 defines the western boundary. The Caversfield Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.3.

The main purposes of the Caversfield Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence and maintain a gap between development at the former DLO Caversfield site, Caversfield and the planned future edge of Bicester in the form of the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town development
- Protect the setting of the historic hamlet of Caversfield and its associated area of parkland
- To assist with the protection of the setting of the residential area associated with the former Bicester Airfield as an historic feature and designated Conservation Area

At its narrowest, the existing gap between the development at the former DLO Caversfield site and the edge of the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 1 (the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town development) is approximately 300m. The southern edge of the former DLO Caversfield site is a maximum of approximately 300m from the existing edge of Bicester. The area of land extending between the former DLO Caversfield site and the edge of the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 1, and from the northern edge of Bicester to the northern extent of parkland historically associated with Caversfield House, has been defined as Green Buffer to maintain the gap between these existing and proposed areas of settlement. This will prevent their coalescence and maintain their separate identities.

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Caversfield as a settlement lies approximately 700m from the existing northern edge of Bicester and comprises Caversfield House, associated parkland, buildings and lodges and the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century Grade II\* listed Church of St Lawrence, adjacent to the B4100. Home Farm is located on the opposite side of the B4100, within the Bicester 1 Strategic Development Site, and includes a Grade II listed farmhouse dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Caversfield has been included within the Green Buffer given its limited size and historical interest and value. Other than Caversfield, the farm at South Lodge and a short row of houses on Fringford Road the Caversfield Green Buffer is generally free from built development. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the setting and identity of Caversfield. It will also ensure that area of land that has historically been the parkland associated with Caversfield House remains free from built development.

The former DLO Caversfield site to the east of the Green Buffer was the living quarters associated with RAF Bicester. The pre World War II parts of the living quarters fall within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area, with many of the buildings also Listed. An important feature of the domestic areas of the Conservation Area is the spacious informal landscaped setting of grass and mature trees. The triangle of land between the southern edge of the former DLO Caversfield site and the existing edge of Bicester is described as “*critical in preserving the setting of the conservation area in views from the south and south west*” in the RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2008). This triangle of land, as well as land to the north west of the Conservation Area, have been included within the Green Buffer designation to ensure that the setting of the Conservation Area is protected from built development and that the open, spacious nature of this part of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area is retained.

Land within the Caversfield Green Buffer is a patchwork of arable land, grazing land and grassland/private gardens associated with Caversfield House. Woodland cover within this section of Green Buffer is relatively high, particularly around Caversfield House. However, hedgerows are less frequent in this vicinity. Limited public access into the Caversfield Green Buffer, combined with the woodland cover, limit views towards the edge of Bicester from within the Green Buffer. However there are relatively open views from the northern edge of Bicester, along the A4095, into the southern area of the Green Buffer. There is also intervisibility between the former DLO Caversfield site and the existing northern edge of Bicester. This intervisibility will be maintained through the Green Buffer designation.

#### *Future Review of the Caversfield Green Buffer Boundary*

Located to the west of the Caversfield Green Buffer is the Strategic Housing Sites at Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town development. Whilst there is currently no approved masterplan available for this site, the preamble to Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-town, within the emerging Local Plan, indicates that a masterplan will be required for the site. At an appropriate time in the future, the boundary of the Green Buffer will require review to examine whether any green infrastructure provision or other areas of land which perform a Green Buffer function should be included within the Caversfield Green Buffer.

Green infrastructure provision on the eastern edge of the north-west Bicester Eco-town could fulfil the criteria for inclusion within the Buffer and perform an important role ensuring a distinct gap is retained between the future edge of Bicester and both Caversfield and the former DLO Caversfield site. This would ensure that the settlements do not coalesce and

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protect the setting of the historic hamlet of Caversfield. Such green infrastructure provision should be examined as part of the Eco-town masterplanning process.

#### **4.2. Green Buffer 2: Stratton Audley**

The Stratton Audley Green Buffer is located to the north east of Bicester, between the former RAF Bicester site, also known as Strategic Development Site Bicester 8, and the village of Stratton Audley. It also wraps around the south eastern edge of the Airfield. The north western boundary of the Green Buffer follows the A4421. The north eastern boundary is aligned with Stoke Lyne Road to the north west of Stratton Audley, Launton Road to the south east of the village and the south western edges of the village itself. To the south east Langford Brook and its associated vegetation defines the boundary of the Green Buffer and to the south west the boundary is defined by the perimeter fence and associated vegetation of Bicester Airfield. The Stratton Audley Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.4.

The main purposes of the Stratton Audley Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence of and provide a gap between the village of Stratton Audley and the north eastern edge of Bicester
- To help protect the setting of Stratton Audley as a historic village and designated Conservation Area in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- To help protect the setting of Bicester Airfield as an historic feature and designated Conservation Area in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the character of the historic arrival experience to Stratton Audley village from the south, east and west
- Protect important views over a rural landscape between Stratton Audley and Bicester, in particular across Bicester Airfield

The village of Stratton Audley lies approximately 2km from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point and approximately 800m from the edge of the Strategic Development Site at RAF Bicester (Bicester 8). The area of land between the village and the airfield, extending from the A4421 to Langford Brook, has been defined as Green Buffer to ensure the development does not extend beyond the existing edge of Bicester and RAF Bicester, thereby preventing coalescence of the settlements.

The area of land that has been defined as the Stratton Audley Green Buffer is generally free from built development, with the exception of West Farm Barns and a property called Old Byre located on Launton Road to the south east of Stratton Audley. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the role of the gap. It will also ensure that development does not occur beyond the airfield that would encroach on the setting of Stratton Audley.

The village of Stratton Audley itself has medieval origins, with the moated remains of the medieval castle of the Audley family, a Scheduled Monument, located to the south east of the village. The name of the village is derived from 'street', due to its location close to the Roman road from Alchester to Towcester, and from the Audley family who held the manor from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The church of St Mary and St Edburga at the core of the village is Grade I listed, with a number of Grade II monuments and gravestones within its grounds. There are also a number of Grade II listed properties, dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, within the core of



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the village, which contribute to Stratton Audley being designated as a Conservation Area. The Conservation Area boundary does not include all the properties within the village, as some of the more modern development within the village does not meet the definition of ‘*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance*’ required to justify the Conservation Area boundary. The Green Buffer boundary extends to the boundary of the Conservation Area where this forms the outer extent of the village and to the south western limits of the village elsewhere to ensure that the open fields surrounding the settlement are retained to protect the overall character and setting of Stratton Audley, as well as protecting the setting of important historical features, including the moated remains of Stratton Audley Castle and the Church of St Mary and St Edburga.

RAF Bicester has been identified by English Heritage as retaining ‘*better than any other military airbase in Britain, the layout and fabric relating to pre-1930s military aviation..... With West Rainham in Norfolk it comprises the best-preserved bomber airfield dating from the period up to 1945..... It also comprises the best preserved and most strongly representative of the bomber stations built as part of Sir High Trenchard’s 1920s Home Defence Expansion Scheme*’. It initially opened in 1918 as a temporary RAF station and closed again in 1920 with the whole camp demolished. As part of the Air Defence of Great Britain project, reconstruction of the base commenced in 1925. This saw the airfield and technical site develop to the south east of what is now the A4421 and the domestic site develop to the north west. Further expansion of the site occurred during the 1930s, before the base became a storage centre in the mid 1940’s and RAF/military use gradually declined from then onwards. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies that ‘*The open flying field is the major feature on the site. Clearly it is the raison d’etre of the entire development and its open aspect, the vistas across it from key vantage points and the functional relationship between the flying field and specific buildings are all critical to an appreciation of the character and appearance of the site*’. The Green Buffer boundary extends to the north eastern and eastern boundaries of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area to ensure that the open aspect of the flying field is retained and kept free of built development. This will prevent visual intrusion of built development into the setting of the Conservation Area and the important historic features within it.

To the east and west of Stratton Audley, along Stoke Lyne Road and Launton Road, farmland to the south west of the roads is located within the Green Buffer policy area to ensure that the approaches to the settlement are kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village. This is also the case for fields to the east and west of Bicester Road, which enters the village from the south west. These fields contribute to the overall setting and identity of Stratton Audley as a historic village and provide a rural approach to the settlement, in keeping with its overall character. The A4421 to the west of Stratton Audley forms a distinct boundary to the Green Buffer, with the approach to the village clearly beginning at this junction. The fact that the route was also a Roman road identifies that this is an historic boundary alignment. Langford Brook, to the south east of the village, not only marks a minor change in landform but is also well vegetated and similarly marks a boundary to the approach to the village, which requires protection as an arrival point to the settlement.

Land within the Stratton Audley Green Buffer is a combination of arable farmland, small scale grazing land in close proximity to the village, agricultural trial sites to the south of the village and ecological sites in disused quarries on the northern edge of the airfield.



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Vegetation within the Green Buffer is relatively limited, with hedgerows generally low and clipped. Taller vegetation occurs along the corridor of Langford Brook and a tributary located to the south of Stratton Audley. The disused quarries also contain regenerating vegetation. The relative openness of the fields to the south west of Stratton Audley allows views out of the village towards Bicester and the airfield. Views out from the Stratton Audley Conservation Area over open countryside will be protected by the Green Buffer designation. Vegetation along the north eastern perimeter of the airfield filters views towards the existing edge of Bicester from the village. However, views out from the RAF Bicester Conservation Area are still possible in some locations, as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, and these views will also be protected by the Green Buffer designation.

Through the use of the Green Buffer, not only will the setting of Stratton Audley and RAF Bicester be protected, but also that of historic features such as the Scheduled Monument and St Mary and St Edburga's Church in Stratton Audley and buildings within the airfield. The Green Buffer will ensure that development at RAF Bicester does not extend beyond its existing limits, thereby preventing coalescence of Bicester and Stratton Audley. The Buffer will also contribute to the retention of rural approaches to Stratton Audley from the east, west and south west. Furthermore, important views from the edge of Stratton Audley towards Bicester and out from the RAF Bicester Conservation Area will be retained.

#### *Future Review of the Stratton Audley Green Buffer Boundary*

Located to the south west of the Stratton Audley Green Buffer is the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 8/RAF Bicester. Whilst there is currently no approved proposal or masterplan available for the site, the implication within the emerging Local Plan and a Development Brief for the site is that retention of the main part of the airfield for aviation purposes would be favoured. As such it is unlikely that any part of the airfield would perform a Green Buffer function or that the Green Buffer boundary will require future review unless matters change.

#### **4.3. Green Buffer 3: Launton**

The Launton Green Buffer is located to the east of Bicester, between the existing eastern edge of Bicester and the village of Launton. The northern boundary of the Green Buffer follows the dismantled railway line from the stream in the northwest to Grange Farm in the northeast. The south eastern boundary is aligned with the edges of the village itself, excluding rear gardens and approved development sites. To the south the boundary is defined by the London Marylebone to Banbury, Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon railway line, which is situated on an embankment. The eastern boundary is concurrent with the A4421 and the eastern edge of Bicester. The Launton Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure I.5.

The main purposes of the Launton Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence of and maintain a gap between the village of Launton and the eastern edge of Bicester
- To help protect the setting and identity of Launton in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the approach to the village from the north west

The village of Launton lies less than 200m from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point. The parcels of land contained within the Green Buffer to the north west of the village

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and the edge of Bicester are small scale grazing and arable land with occasional playing fields and areas of woodland planting. These parcels of land have remained largely unchanged since the introduction of the two nearby railway lines, the more recent of which is the Chiltern Mainline which was constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The construction of the Bicester bypass during the 1990's foreshortened some of the fields to the south of Bicester Road, but the field pattern to the east of the A4421 remained unchanged. The Green Buffer has been defined to cover these fields to prevent development encroaching on the very limited gap between Bicester and Launton that currently exists and to prevent their coalescence.

The small fields within the Launton Green Buffer are generally free from built development, with the exception of the club house/pavilion at Launton Sports and Social Club. There are also a number of fields within the Green Buffer area that contain evidence of ridge and furrow and as such it is likely that these have had an important relationship with the village for a long period of time. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that the designated area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the rural character of the landscape and the historic relationship between the village and the small fields around it. It will also ensure that the separate identity, setting and approach to Launton is retained.

There are a number of listed buildings within the village, concentrated around the Grade I listed 12<sup>th</sup> century Church of St Mary in the north west of the village and along West End/Station Road. The majority of these properties are grade II listed and date from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other than the church, the only exception to this is a grade II\* listed barn to the south of Manor Farm in the north west of the village, which dates from the 14/15<sup>th</sup> century. Although the village does not contain a Conservation Area, it is still considered that the protection of the setting of the village, with its close relationship to the surrounding fields, is important and that the Green Buffer will help protect the historic character of the village.

To the north west of Launton, along Bicester Road, the fields between the dismantled railway and Bicester Road contribute to the approach to the village. The small gap between Bicester and Launton is particularly apparent from the elevated road bridge over the railway line. The Green Buffer policy area has been defined to ensure that this approach to the settlement is kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village.

Through the Green Buffer designation, Launton will retain its separate identity within its closely connected setting of small scale fields. The Green Buffer will maintain the narrow gap that currently exists between Bicester and Launton and prevent their coalescence. The key approach into the village from the north west would also be protected from any built development that could potentially erode the gap between Bicester and Launton.

#### *Future Review of the Launton Green Buffer Boundary*

There are no Strategic development sites in the vicinity of the Launton Green Buffer. As such it is unlikely that the Green Buffer boundary will require future review.

#### **4.4. Green Buffer4: Ambrosden**

The Ambrosden Green Buffer is located to the south east of Bicester, between Graven Hill, the Bicester 2 Strategic Development Site that is currently part of MOD Bicester, and the village of Ambrosden. The northern boundary of the Green Buffer follows the A41 Aylesbury Road

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and the eastern boundary follows the B4011. To the south the boundary is initially aligned with the minor road that enters Ambrosden from the east. It is then aligned with the northern edge of the village, before following the military railway that runs between Graven Hill and Arncott Hill (another part of MOD Bicester). The western boundary of the Green Buffer is aligned with the eastern edge of the Graven Hill Strategic Development Site. The Ambrosden Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.6.

The main purposes of the Ambrosden Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent the coalescence of Ambrosden and the planned future edge of Bicester and maintain the separate identity of Ambrosden and maintain a gap between the settlements
- To help protect the rural setting of Ambrosden in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the approach to the village from the north

Ambrosden is located approximately 600m south east of the edge of Graven Hill and 1.7km from the edge of Bicester itself. The village houses army personnel from St George's Barracks at Graven Hill, as well as non-military residents, but is a separate settlement in its own right. The area of land extending between Ambrosden and the edge of the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 2 has been defined as Green Buffer to maintain the gap between the existing and proposed areas of settlement. This will prevent their coalescence and maintain the separate identity of Ambrosden.

The area of land that has been defined as the Ambrosden Green Buffer contains a number of scattered farms, accessed from either Ploughley Road through the centre of the Green Buffer or the B4011 along the eastern boundary of the Green Buffer. To the west of Ploughley Road the farmsteads are generally located within large scale arable fields with smaller pastoral fields to the north and south. There is also a large band of woodland running north-east to south-west through the arable farmland. To the west of Ploughley Road fields are smaller scale and generally pastoral, with varied hedgerows forming the field boundaries. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the rural character of the landscape and to the setting of Ambrosden.

To the north of Ambrosden, along Ploughley Road, farmland on either side of the road is located within the Green Buffer policy area to ensure that the approach to the settlement is kept free from built development that would be harmful to the overall setting and identity of Ambrosden. These fields provide a rural approach to the settlement and provide visual relief from the built up area of Bicester. Beyond the B4011 to the west, the association with the edge of Bicester/Graven Hill and the settlement of Ambrosden diminishes. As such, this land is not located within the Green Buffer.

Graven Hill is a protrusion of Corallian limestone that forms a marked contrast to the relatively flat surrounding landscape of Oxford Clay. It forms a distinctive landscape feature in an area that contains little change in landform. The block of ancient semi-natural oak and ash woodland located on the top of Graven Hill, Gravenhill Wood, is a prominent feature, accentuating the height of the hill in relation to the surrounding landform. Closer to Graven Hill the military land uses and large scale warehouse type buildings are a particularly noticeable feature, but these do not register prominently in more distant views. Whilst Graven Hill is an important landscape feature in the setting of Bicester, the existing development around the base of the hill already forms part of its setting in local views. It is

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therefore not considered that the Ambrosden Green Buffer is required to protect the setting of Graven Hill as one of its purposes.

Through the use of the Green Buffer, the setting of Ambrosden and approaches towards it from the north will be protected. The Green Buffer will ensure that development at Graven Hill does not extend beyond the existing limits of the MOD site and it will prevent any potential future coalescence of Graven Hill/Bicester with Ambrosden. The setting of Graven Hill will also be protected from inappropriate development in the area of the Green Buffer.

#### *Future Review of the Ambrosden Green Buffer Boundary*

Located to the north west of Ambrosden Green Buffer is the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 2/Graven Hill. There is currently a proposed masterplan for the site that has been prepared by the MOD. This indicates that there would be little scope for green infrastructure or land that could perform a Green Buffer function in the south east of the site. As such it is unlikely that any part of Graven Hill would perform a Green Buffer function or that the Green Buffer boundary will require future review.

#### **4.5. Green Buffer 5: Wendlebury**

The Wendlebury Green Buffer is located to the south west of Bicester, between the village of Wendlebury and the proposed Strategic Development Sites at Bicester 10 and Bicester 2. Bicester 10 is known as Bicester Gateway and is indicated as new employment land in the emerging Local Plan. Bicester 2 is the Graven Hill site. The north eastern boundary of the Green Buffer follows the edge of the Bicester 10 site and is then aligned with the edge of the existing sewage works south west of Bicester itself. It is then aligned with a short section of the Bicester to Oxford railway line, which is at grade, before following the boundary of Graven Hill. The south eastern boundary follows the course of a small stream. The south western boundary follows another small stream and a series of tall hedgerows, followed by tree belt to the north of College Farm, Wendlebury and then continues around the edge of the village. The north western boundary of the Green Buffer is aligned with the A41 Oxford Road, from the edge of Wendlebury to a point just north of the Bicester 10 site to include an area of woodland between Bicester 10 and the A41. The Green Buffer contains the Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Monument. The Wendlebury Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.7.

The main purposes of the Wendlebury Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence between the village of Wendlebury and the planned future south western edge of Bicester and maintain a gap between the settlements
- To help protect the setting of Wendlebury as a historic village, in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the approach to Bicester along the A41
- Protect the approach to the Wendlebury from the north east
- Protect Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Monument and its setting within the Green Buffer

The village of Wendlebury lies approximately 2.5km from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point and approximately 1.5km from the from the edge of the Strategic Development

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Site at Bicester 10. New employment sites are proposed at both Bicester 10 (the Bicester Gateway site) and Bicester 4, which is located to the north east of Bicester 10 and adjacent to the existing edge of Bicester. Bicester 4 is known as Bicester Business Park. The area of land between Wendlebury and the future south western edge of Bicester, extending from the railway line to the east and the A41 Oxford Road to the west, has been defined as Green Buffer to ensure the development does not extend beyond the planned edge of Bicester, thus serving protect the approach to the two settlements and to prevent coalescence between them.

The area of land that has been defined as the Wendlebury Green Buffer is generally free from built development, containing only three farms. These are Lakeside Farm adjacent to the southern boundary of Bicester 10, Promised-land Farm off Wendlebury Road and south of Bicester 10, and Elm Tree Farm to the east of Wendlebury. The land within the Green Buffer is a combination of small to medium scale arable and pastoral land, with a large number of tall hedgerows containing hedgerow trees. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development harmful to the rural character of the landscape or which would encroach into the gap between Wendlebury and the planned edge of Bicester.

The village of Wendlebury has Saxon origins and grew up around an 11<sup>th</sup> century manor house. There are a number of mainly 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Grade II listed properties within the village, grouped around Church Lane and the Main Street. These include the Church of St Giles, which dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and a small number of farmhouses within the village. There is also a stream that runs alongside the Main Street and forms a tributary of the River Ray. Although no part of the village is designated as a Conservation Area, the Green Buffer designation to the northern and eastern limits of the village will ensure that the fields surrounding the settlement are retained to protect the overall character and setting of Wendlebury, as well as protecting the setting of important historical features, including the Church of St Giles.

To the north east of Wendlebury along Wendlebury Road, farmland to the east of the road, and to a lesser extent to the west of the road due to physical limits, is contained within the Green Buffer policy area to ensure that the approach to the settlement is kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village. This approach to the village has remained intact despite the construction of the A41 in to Bicester. These fields contribute to the overall setting and identity of Wendlebury as a historic village and provide a rural approach to the settlement, in-keeping with its overall character. Fields further north within the Green Buffer adjacent to the A41 also serve as an attractive green approach to Bicester contributing positively to its setting and identity.

A large proportion of the Wendlebury Green Buffer is formed by the Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Monument. Alchester was a planned Roman settlement with rampart and ditch boundaries and occupied throughout the Roman period. It was preceded by a possible vexillation fort with associated Parade ground. The Scheduled Monument is an important historic feature in the vicinity of Bicester. It has been included within the Wendlebury Green Buffer to assist in the protection of the Scheduled Monument and in part its setting.

In conclusion the Green Buffer will protect the setting of Wendlebury, the approach to the village from the north west and also the setting of historic features within the village, such as St Giles' Church. The Green Buffer will ensure that development does not extend beyond Bicester 4 and Bicester 10 towards Wendlebury, thereby acting to prevent coalescence of

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Bicester and Wendlebury. The Buffer will also contribute to the protection of Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Monument and its setting.

#### *Future Review of the Wendlebury Green Buffer Boundary*

Located on the north eastern edge of the Wendlebury Green Buffer are the Strategic Development Sites at Bicester 10 and 4. The Bicester 4 site currently has permission for a business incorporating offices and a hotel. The Bicester 10 site is envisaged in the emerging Local Plan as a high tech knowledge industry business park. Both sites are relatively constrained and Bicester 4 is remote from the edge of the Wendlebury Green Buffer. As such it is unlikely that any part of Bicester 4 would perform a Green Buffer function. However eastern parts of Bicester 10 are promoted in the emerging Local Plan for flood attenuation/recreational/ecological uses and could potentially be included within the Green Buffer in future. Subsequently, the Green Buffer boundary may require a review in future in relation to the Bicester 10 Strategic Development Site.

#### **4.6. Green Buffer 6: Chesterton**

The Chesterton Green Buffer is located to the south west of Bicester, between the edge of the South-west Bicester development known as Kingsmere combined with the proposed Strategic Development Site at Bicester 3 and the edge of Chesterton village. The north eastern boundary of the Green Buffer follows the newly constructed section of Bicester Bypass (the A4095 Vendee Drive) that marks the edge of the South-west Bicester development (both the Kingsmere element and the Bicester 3 Strategic Development Site). To the south east the boundary is aligned with the A41 Oxford Road, from the new bypass to a point due south of Lodge Farm. The south western boundary follows a tree belt to the south west of Lodge Farm, returns along the southern edge of Chesterton village and then follows the eastern boundary of the Chesterton Conservation Area. The north western boundary of the Green Buffer is aligned with the A4095 Bignell View. The Chesterton Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.8.

The main purposes of the Chesterton Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence between the village of Chesterton and the planned future western edge of Bicester and maintain a gap between the settlements
- To help protect the setting of Chesterton as a historic village and designated Conservation Area, in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the approaches to the village from the south east and north east
- Protect important views over a rural landscape between Chesterton and Bicester

The village of Chesterton lies approximately 1.4km from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point and approximately 480m from the newly constructed section of Bicester Bypass that marks the edge of the South-west Bicester development. The area of land between the village and future south western edge of Bicester has been defined as Green Buffer to ensure the development does not extend beyond the future edge of Bicester as delineated by the new section of road, thereby preventing coalescence of the settlements.



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The area of land that has been defined as the Chesterton Green Buffer is generally free from built development, with the exception of Bignell Lodge Farm on the northern edge of Chesterton village and Lodge Farm to the south of the village. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the rural character of the landscape and which would intrude into the gap between Chesterton and Bicester.

The village of Chesterton grew up around the village church of St Mary, with the earliest recording of the church dating back to 1087 and the present church dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The village is thought to be of Anglo-Saxon origin, having taken its name from the nearby Roman settlement of Alchester, but did not take its current form until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Chesterton Lodge was erected in the southern part of the village. The strong sense of place created in the village through the use of limestone for buildings and walls, a number of which are listed, has contributed to Chesterton being designated as a Conservation Area. The Conservation Area boundary aligns with the grounds of Chesterton Lodges, as well as dwellings on the eastern side and a small number on the western side of Alchester Road, and is largely coincident with the boundary of the Green Buffer. Extending the Buffer to the Conservation Area boundary at the southern and eastern limits of the village ensures that the fields surrounding the settlement are retained to protect the overall character and setting of Chesterton, as well as protecting the setting of important historical features, including Chesterton Lodge and the church of St Mary.

To the south east of Chesterton, along Alchester Road, farmland to the north and south of the road is located within the Green Buffer policy area to ensure that the approach to the settlement is kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village. These fields contribute to the overall setting and identity of Chesterton as a historic village and provide a rural approach to the settlement, in keeping with its overall character. Views from the south eastern corner of Chesterton Lodge looking south east along the road are identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal for Chesterton as a key positive view from the southern part of the village. The green treed approach to the village from this direction is identified as forming an important part of the character of the village. These fields along this approach are essential to the Green Buffer to ensure the setting of the village and its historic assets is protected. Beyond Lodge Farm to the west, the association with the edge of Chesterton diminishes due to the presence of a strong tree belt and the loss of parkland characteristics. As such, this land is not located within the Green Buffer.

To the north east of Chesterton, along Bignell View, farmland to the south of the road is located within the Green Buffer to ensure that this approach is also kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village. These fields again contribute to the overall setting of Chesterton as a historic village and maintain its separate identity, providing a rural approach to the settlement.

Land within the Chesterton Green Buffer is largely under arable production, with smaller fields closer to and south of the village under grazing. To the north east of Gagle Brook woodland blocks are limited and field boundaries are often low and clipped. South west of Gagle Brook there is a much higher concentration of trees associated with the smaller fields on the edge of the village. South of the village, field boundaries are well treed and there are occasional field trees. The slight valley landform and the lesser vegetation cover to the east of the village of Chesterton, ensure that views are possible across the landscape towards the edge of Bicester. From the eastern edge of Chesterton, immediate views are apparent over the

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rural valley landscape, with more distant views towards the new development taking place at South-east Bicester. Views towards the edge of Bicester are also afforded from public rights of way to the east of the village. Intervisibility across the valley and between Chesterton and the edge of Bicester will be protected through the Green Buffer policy.

Through the use of the Green Buffer, not only will the setting of Chesterton and approaches towards the village be protected, but so will the settings of historic features such as Chesterton Lodge and the church of St Mary. The Green Buffer will ensure that development at South-west Bicester does not extend beyond its current proposed extent, thereby preventing coalescence of Bicester and Chesterton. Furthermore, important views from the edge of Chesterton towards Bicester will be retained.

#### *Future Review of the Chesterton Green Buffer Boundary*

Located to the north east of the Chesterton Green Buffer is the South-west Bicester development known as Kingsmere, containing the Bicester 3 Strategic Development Site. The edge of the development is clearly defined by the new section of bypass. There are no large areas of suitable green infrastructure to the east and north east of the bypass and, as such, it is unlikely that any part of the South-west Bicester development would perform an additional Green Buffer function. Therefore the boundaries of the Chesterton Green Buffer are unlikely to require future review.

#### **4.7. Green Buffer 7: Bignell Park**

The Bignell Park Green Buffer is located to the west of Bicester, between the existing edge of Bicester and the M40. Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town, is located to the north of the Green Buffer and Bicester 3, part of the South-west Bicester development, is located to the east. The north eastern boundary of the Green Buffer follows the B4030, with the Bicester 1 site located on the opposite side of the road. To the south east the boundary is aligned with the A4095 Bignell View. The A4095 then turns towards the north west, forming the south western boundary of the Green Buffer. The western boundary of the Green Buffer is aligned with the M40, which is either at grade or located within false cutting for this stretch. The Bignell Park Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.9.

The main purposes of the Bignell Park Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence between the village of Chesterton and the planned future western edge of Bicester in the form of the proposed Bicester Eco Town development
- Provide a gap between the village of Chesterton and the future edge of Bicester to the north west
- Protect the undesignated historic parkland of Bignell Park
- Protect the approaches to the village of Chesterton from the north east and north west

Bignell Park lies approximately 100m from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point as defined by the new road link along the western side of Bicester 3, in the vicinity of the roundabout at the junction of the A4095 and the B4030. The full extent of Bignell Park, extending from the B4030 in the north, to the A4095 in the south and east, and the M40 motorway in the west, has been defined as Green Buffer to protect the park and ensure the development does not extend beyond the existing edge of Bicester or that planned as part of the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town or the South-west Bicester development, thereby



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preventing coalescence of Bicester and Chesterton. Bignell Park also forms an important gap between the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town and Chesterton village that will be retained through the application of the Green Buffer policy.

The area of land that has been defined as the Bignell Park Green Buffer contains built development associated with Bignell House and also at Bignell Park Barns, a small Business Park set within the parkland. The parkland contains numerous designed landscape elements such as copses, tree belts and coverts that date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the character of the historic parkland.

To the north east and north west of Chesterton, along the A4095, land to the northwest of the road is located within the Green Buffer policy area to ensure that the vegetated approaches to the settlement are kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village and of Bignell Park. These fields contribute to the overall setting and identity of Chesterton as a historic village and provide a rural approach to the settlement, as well as being an historic feature in their own right.

Through the use of the Green Buffer, not only will the historic features of Bignell Park be protected but the Green Buffer will ensure that development at Bicester 1 and 3 does not expand beyond its proposed limits, thereby preventing coalescence of Bicester and Chesterton. The Buffer will also contribute to the retention of rural approaches to Chesterton from the north east and north west.

#### *Future Review of the Bignell Park Green Buffer Boundary*

Located to the north east of Bignell Park Green Buffer is the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town. Bicester 3, part of the South-west Bicester development, is also located to the east south east. Although Bignell Park is very much a self-contained parcel of land with clearly defined boundaries, green infrastructure provision on the western edge of the north-west Bicester Eco-town could fulfil the criteria for inclusion within the Buffer and perform an important role ensuring a distinct gap is retained between the future edge of Bicester and Chesterton. This would ensure that the settlements do not coalesce and help to protect the setting of both Chesterton and Bignell Park.

#### **4.8. Green Buffer 8: Bucknell**

The Bucknell Green Buffer is located to the north west of Bicester, between Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town, and the village of Bucknell. The northern boundary of the Green Buffer follows Middleton Road as it enters Bucknell from the west. It then aligns with the southern edge of Bucknell before continuing along Bainton Road to the east of the village. To the east the boundary is aligned with the B4100. The southern boundary is aligned with the north western edge of the Bicester 1 Strategic Development Area. The western boundary of the Green Buffer is aligned with the Chiltern Mainline railway line, which is partially in cutting and partially at grade. The Bucknell Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.10.

The main purposes of the Bucknell Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence between the village of Bucknell and the planned future northern edge of Bicester in the form of the proposed Bicester Eco Town development

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- Provide a gap between the village of Bucknell and the future edge of Bicester
- To help protect the setting of the village of Bucknell as an historic village, in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the approaches to the village from the south, east and west

The village of Bucknell lies approximately 1.8km from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point and approximately 600m from the northern edge of the planned Strategic Development Site at Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town. The area of land between the village and northern edge of Bicester 1, extending from the Chiltern Mainline railway to the west to the B4100 to the east, has been defined as Green Buffer to ensure the development does not extend beyond the planned edge of, thereby preventing coalescence of the settlements.

The area of land that has been defined as the Bucknell Green Buffer is generally free from built development, with the exception of a cluster of buildings around the junction of Bicester Road and Crowmarsh Road to the south of the village. The farmland is a combination of large scale arable fields and small to medium scale pastoral fields. Field boundaries are generally hedgerows, many of which contain a high proportion of trees. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the rural character of the landscape and the separate identity of the village.

The village of Bucknell is of medieval origin and grew up around a small stream that flows eastwards towards Gagle Brook along the southern edge of the village. There was also a manor house at the centre of the village, south of Bainton Road. A manor house is still present in the village, south of the Grade I listed 11/12<sup>th</sup> century Church of St Peter, and dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the village has been rebuilt since 1945, with modern Council housing replacing older thatched cottages. The village does not contain a Conservation Area; however, a number of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century properties are located along Bainton Road. Extending the Green Buffer to the southern limits of the village ensures that the fields surrounding the settlement are retained to protect the overall character and setting of Bucknell, as well as protecting the setting of important historical features, including the manor house and the Church of St Peter.

To the east and west of Bucknell, along Bainton Road and Middleton Road, farmland to the south of the road is located within the Green Buffer policy area, thus helping to ensure that the historic approaches to the settlement are kept free from built development that would be harmful to the character of the village. These fields contribute to the overall setting of Bainton Road as a rural approach to Bucknell, helping to protect its separate identity. Land to the north also performs this function, and is protected by being open countryside some distance away from Bicester. Beyond the Chilterns Mainline railway to the west the association with the edge of Bucknell diminishes due to the presence of the railway line. This land is not located within the Green Buffer.

Through the use of the Green Buffer, not only will the setting of Bucknell and approaches towards the village be protected, but also that of historic features such as the manor house and the Church of St Peter. The Green Buffer will prevent coalescence of Bicester and Bucknell by constraining the future edge of Bicester and the North-west Bicester Eco-town.

26th September 2013

**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

*Future Review of the Bucknell Green Buffer Boundary*

Located on the southern edge of the Bucknell Green Buffer is the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town (Bicester 1). Whilst there is currently no approved masterplan available for the site, the Eco-town principles that are aspired to for the development require careful masterplanning that considers the urban edge and respects the landscape setting. Should development come forward, and if green infrastructure is provided on the northern edges of the scheme, the boundary of the Green Buffer may require review to ensure that any green infrastructure provision or other areas of land which perform a Green Buffer function are included within the Bucknell Green Buffer. This is particularly the case because the northern boundary of the Bicester 1 site is currently an arbitrary straight line. Any open space or green infrastructure in the vicinity of this boundary, or land that does not come forward as part of the development, could fulfil the criteria for inclusion within the Green Buffer, thus increasing the extent of the un-built gap between the future edge of Bicester and Bucknell.

26th September 2013

## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

### **5.0 Conclusions**

Bicester is the main focus of growth within Cherwell District. Environmental assets such as Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, floodplains associated with the valley of the River Ray and its tributaries, biodiversity sites and the separate identity of the outlying villages and the isolated landforms at Graven Hill have influenced how the town has grown and will also help to shape future growth.

Emerging planning policy within Cherwell District requires that there is a need for green boundaries to be defined between areas of growth on the edge of Bicester and surrounding villages. The purpose of the Green Buffers is to maintain settlement's distinctive identity, prevent coalescence, protect valued features of landscape and historical importance and protect important views. This report has identified eight areas of Green Buffer that meet the criteria stemming from the purposes of emerging policy. The main purposes of each of the areas of Green Buffer have been identified and justified, with boundaries following clearly defined features on the ground. Areas which do not fulfil Green Buffer purposes have not been included within the proposed designated areas.

The potential need for a future review of Green Buffer boundaries has also been identified arising from the masterplanning of the Strategic Development Sites. Some areas of green infrastructure within these sites may be appropriate for future inclusion in extensions to the Green Buffer areas.

26th September 2013  
**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

**Appendix 1. Bicester Study Area**

26th September 2013  
**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

**Appendix 2. Bicester Green Buffer**

26th September 2013  
**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

**Appendix 3. Response to Local Plan Representations**

<b>Local Plan Representation</b>	<b>Response</b>
<p>Consider making provision for a Green Buffer to the West and North West of Bicester 1 extending as far as the M40. (Middleton Stoney Parish Council Rep ID 37)</p>	<p>Requests provision of a Green Buffer to avoid “urban creep”. The land referred to does not meet the criteria for Green Buffer designation.</p> <p><b>Response: No change to Green Buffer boundary or report.</b></p>
<p>Question why the Green Buffers have not been extended to include land West of Bicester 1, South of Bicester 2, East of Bicester 12 and South East Bicester 11. (CPRE Oxfordshire Rep ID 95)</p>	<p>These areas of land are not considered to meet the criteria for designation of Green Buffers; evidence is contained within the landscape evidence base documents.</p> <p><b>Response: No change to Green Buffer boundary or report.</b></p>
<p>The Green Buffer report directly conflicts with the draft Bicester Masterplan SPD. This relates to Green Buffer 1 at Caversfield. Caversfield is physically joined to Bicester and has visual functional and social relationship with the urban area of Bicester. Coalescence has already occurred and the Local Plan promotes further coalescence with Bicester 1 and Bicester 8. The narrowest point of the Green Buffer between Caversfield and Bicester is 250m wide. Consider deleting Green Buffer 1. (Cerda Planning Rep ID 105)</p>	<p>The Bicester Masterplan was only published in draft form. The Green Buffer report has been undertaken since publication of the draft masterplan and has assessed the land as meeting the objectives of the Green Buffer.</p> <p><b>Response: No change to Green Buffer boundary or report.</b></p>
<p>Objection to the principle of Green Buffers and the production of evidence to post-justify them. The Green Buffer reports were written following the designation of Green Buffers. (Hives</p>	<p>Objects to the principle of green buffers and the production of evidence to post-justify them. No objection to the specific contents of the landscape evidence base.</p>

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**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

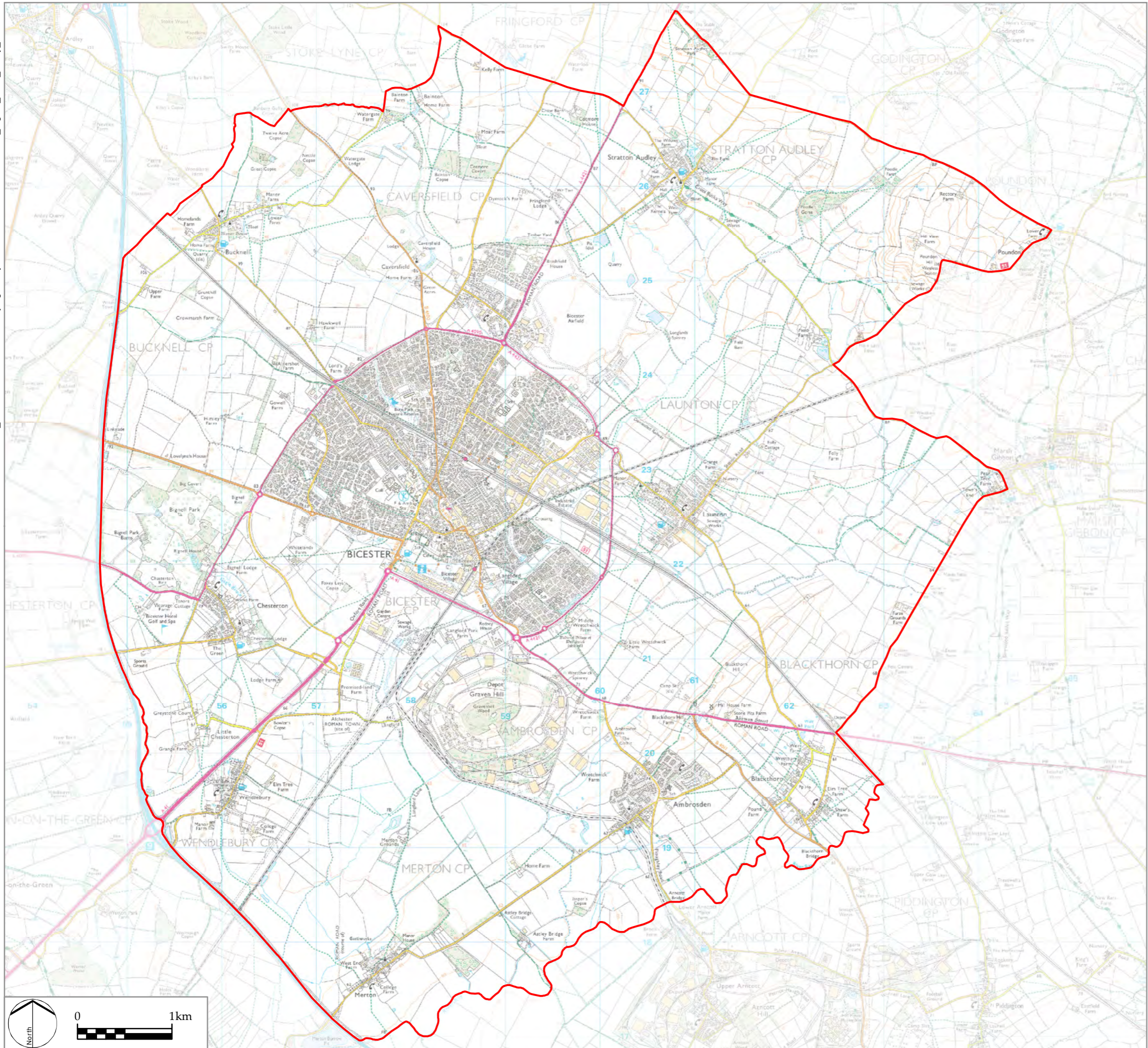
<p>Planning Rep ID 195)</p>	<p><b>Response: No change to Green Buffer boundary or report.</b></p>
<p>Deletion of “protection of important views” from the policy as it is neither justified nor effective. There is no explanation of what this means, what the criteria are for judging and what might be an important view. It is unclear how designating a green buffer will protect important views. (Rapleys Rep ID 232)</p>	<p>Important Views are an important element of the Green Buffer Designation. Text at 3.1.1 has been amended to provide more clarity.</p> <p><b>Response: Important view text (Section 3.1.1) amended to provide more detail.</b></p>
<p>Consider extending Green Buffer 3 at Launton to cover 200m – 300m on the other sides of the railway lines to the North West and South West of the village.</p> <p>NW – Land between the roundabout on the perimeter road and the railway line.</p> <p>SW – Land between the railway line and the boundary line of Launton Parish Council. (Launton Parish Council Rep ID 101)</p>	<p>Following further review the boundary of Green Buffer 3 at Launton has been extended to included land northwest of the settlement beyond the railway line as this land meets the Green Buffer criteria.</p> <p>Further review has confirmed that land to southwest of Launton does not meet the Green Buffer criteria and there is little relationship between this land and the settlement of Launton to the north. The Green Buffer boundary remains as proposed.</p> <p><b>Response: Inclusion of land within Green Buffer northwest of Launton beyond the railway line (paragraph 6 Section 4.3).</b></p> <p><b>No change to Green Buffer boundary or report to the southwest of Launton.</b></p>
<p>Consider removing Land to the East of the A41, Bicester from Green Buffer 5. (JPPC Rep ID 218)</p>	<p>Following further review, this land is considered to play an important role in the approach to Bicester along the A41, acting as an attractive approach to the town and contributing positively to the town’s distinct identity and setting.</p> <p><b>Response: No change to Green Buffer boundary. Text in Section 4.5 amended</b></p>




26th September 2013  
**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

	<p><b>to clarify inclusion of land.</b></p>
<p>Objection to principle of Green Buffers (Savills Rep ID 303)</p>	<p>Relates to the principle of the policy rather than the content of the Landscape evidence base documents.</p> <p>Reference in the objection is made to PPS7 which has been replaced by the NPPF. Para 157 of the NPPF indicates that local authorities should indicate where they consider development to be inappropriate. Green buffers are intended to give additional protection to that afforded by ESD13 and countryside policies in indicating where development would have an impact on the identity and setting of Banbury, Bicester and surrounding villages, their coalescence and features of importance, to differentiate from land where the impact of development would be less significant on these objectives. Green buffers are not just aimed at preventing coalescence and the landscape evidence base demonstrates that development on the proposed strategic allocation sites can be accommodated without undue impact on these objectives. The first paragraph of the policy relates to land within the proposed strategic allocations and not to land within the proposed green buffers and there is therefore no conflict.</p> <p><b>Response: No change to Green Buffer boundary or report.</b></p>





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 Study Area

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PROJECT TITLE  
**BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT**

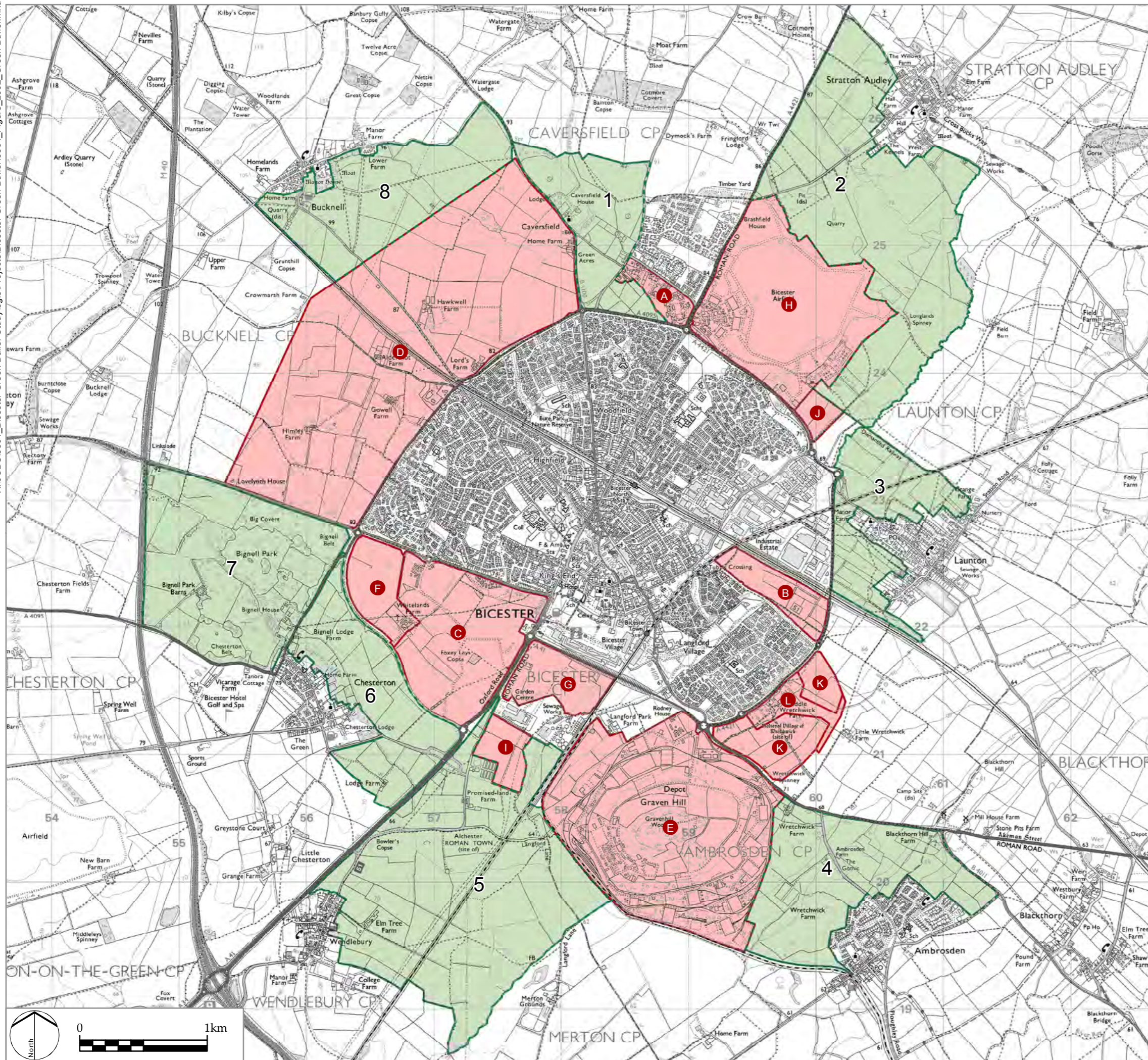
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- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
- A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)
- B: Gavray Drive (Approved)
- C: South-West Bicester Phase 1 (Approved)
- D: Bicester 1
- E: Bicester 2
- F: Bicester 3
- G: Bicester 4
- H: Bicester 8
- I: Bicester 10
- J: Bicester 11
- K: Bicester 12
- L: Bicester 12 - Proposed New Green Space

- Proposed Bicester Green Buffer
- 1: Caversfield Green Buffer
- 2: Stratton Audley Green Buffer
- 3: Launton Green Buffer
- 4: Ambrosden Green Buffer
- 5: Wendlebury Green Buffer
- 6: Chesterton Green Buffer
- 7: Bignell Park Green Buffer
- 8: Bucknell Green Buffer

Rev A Green Buffer added to northwest of Launton 11.09.13

# LDĀ DESIGN

PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

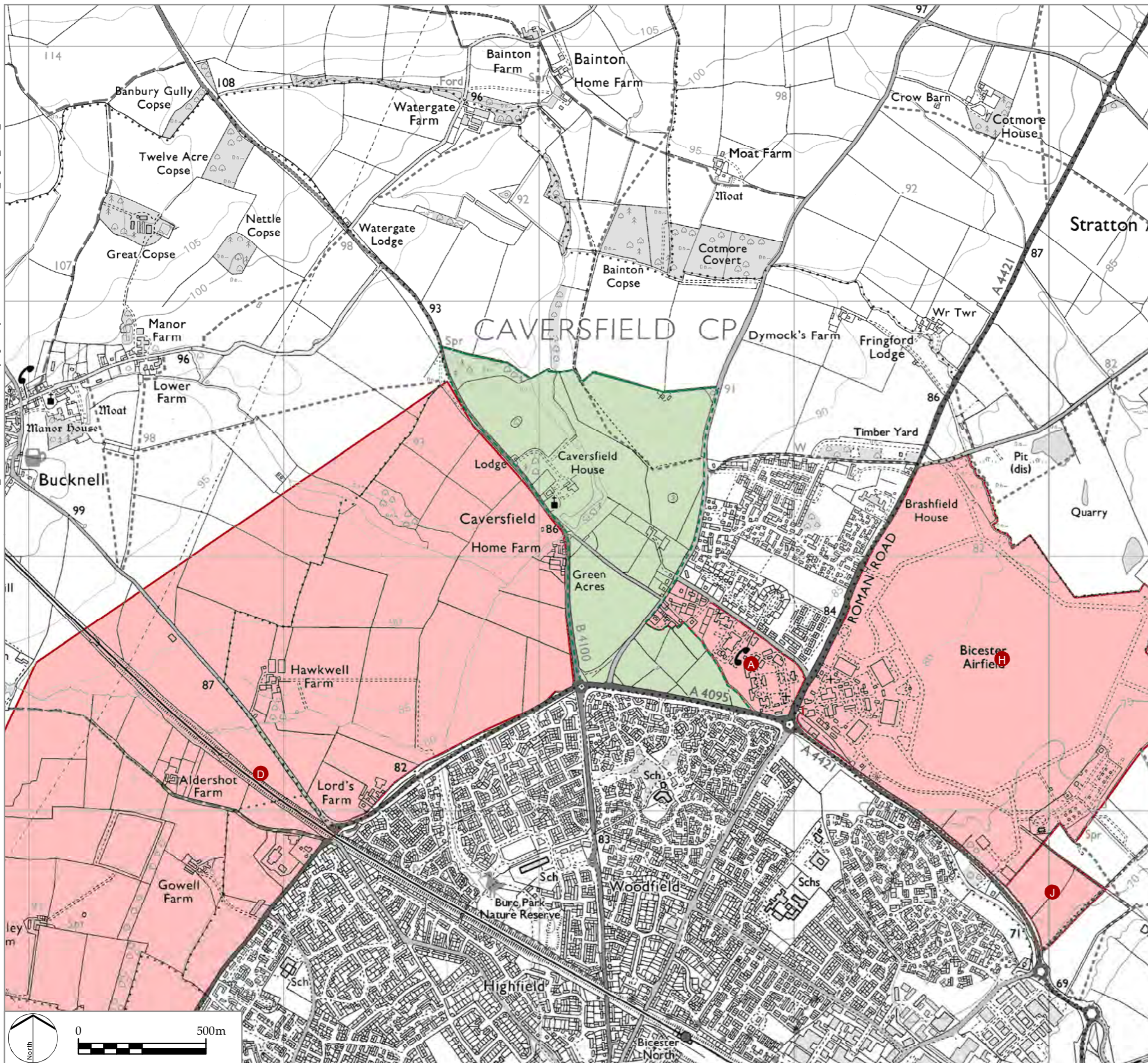
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Bicester Green Buffers

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- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
- A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)
- D: Bicester 1
- H: Bicester 8
- J: Bicester 11
- Caversfield Green Buffer

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PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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**Figure 1.3**  
Caversfield Green Buffer

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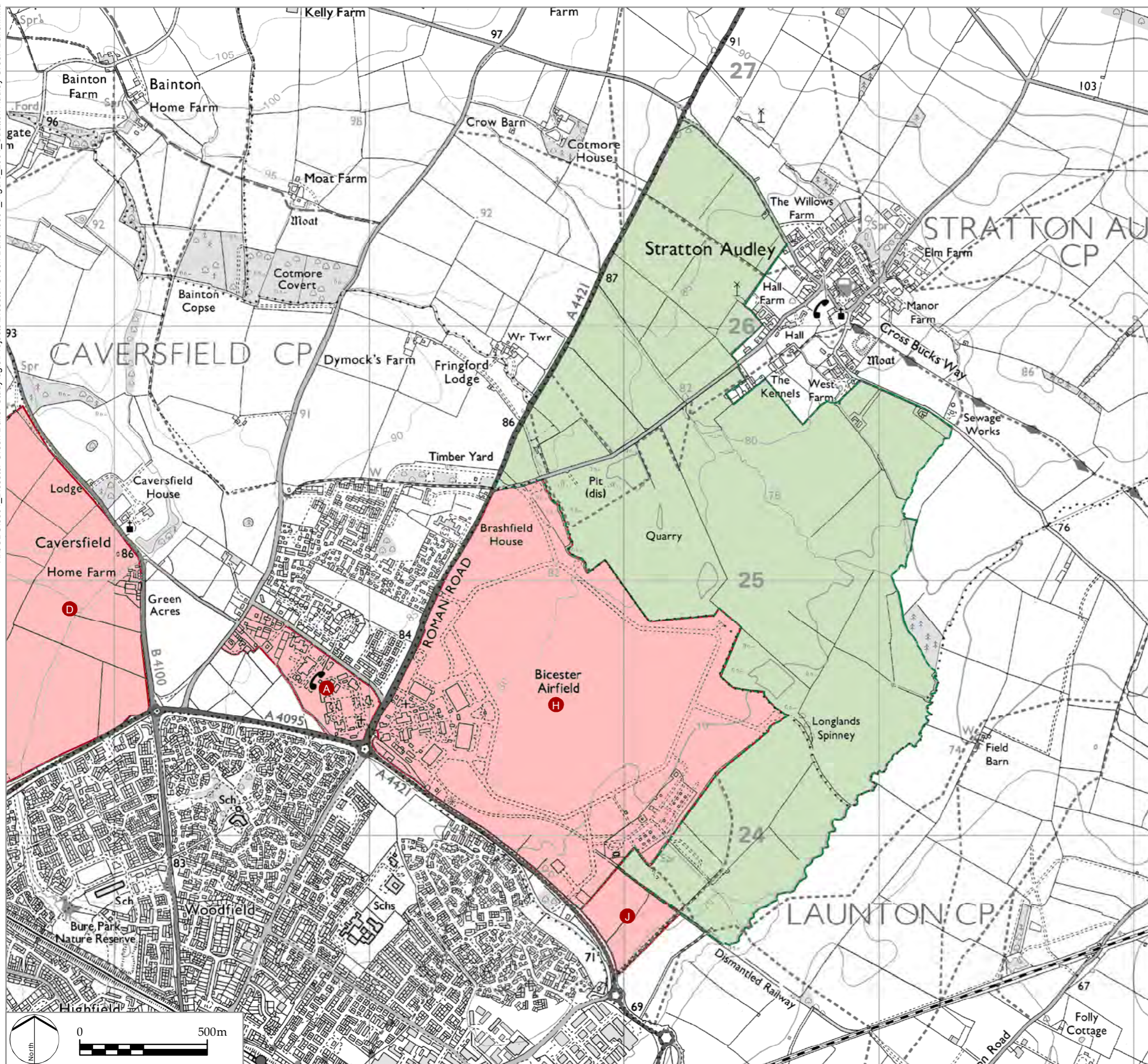
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**LEGEND**

- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012)  
Proposed Allocated Sites
- A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)
- D: Bicester 1
- H: Bicester 8
- J: Bicester 11
- Stratton Audley Green Buffer

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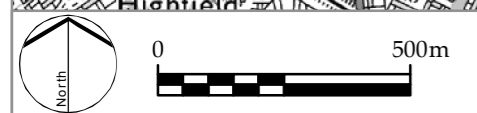
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BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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Stratton Audley Green Buffer

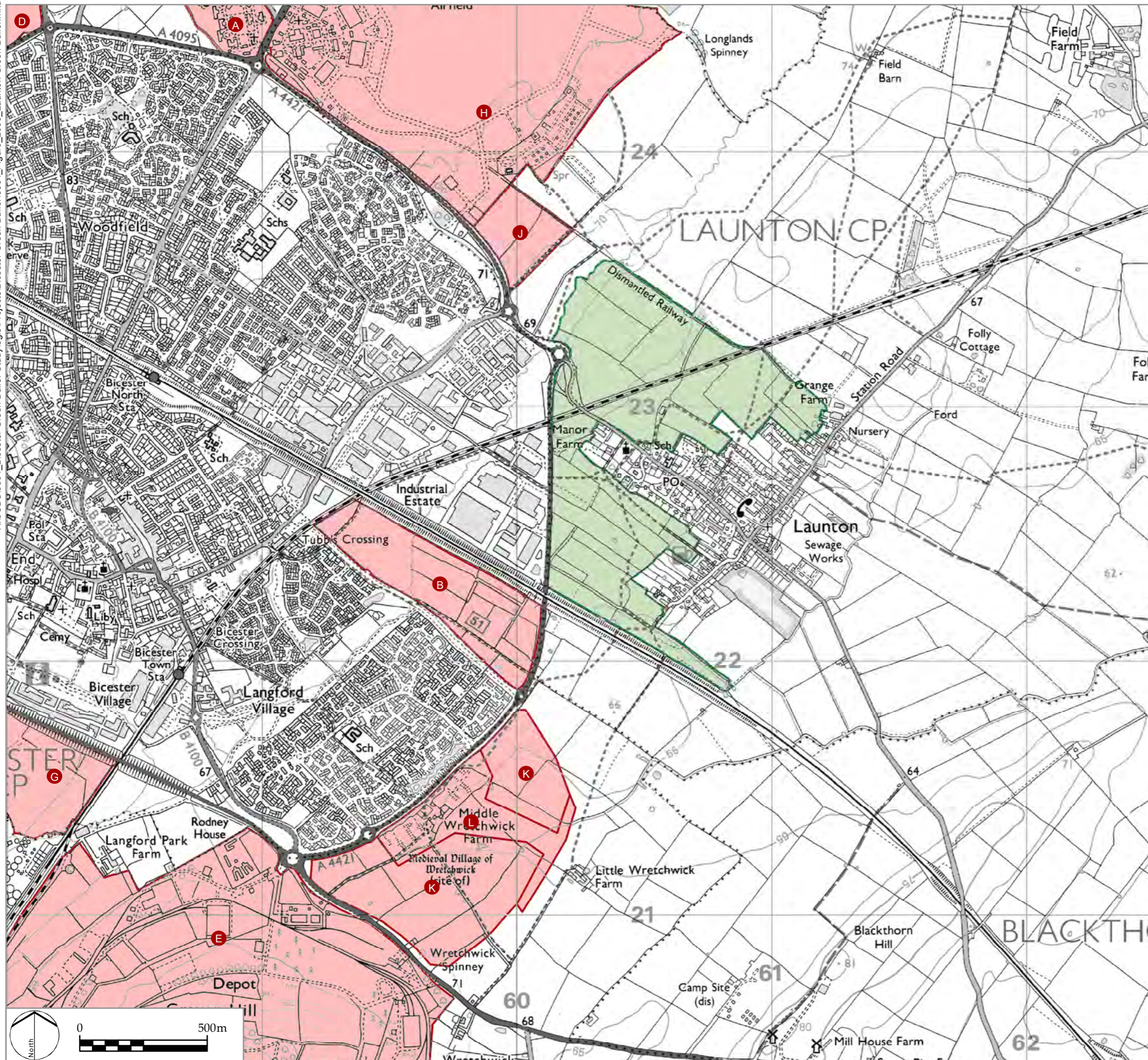
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Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites

- A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)
- B: Gavray Drive (Approved)
- D: Bicester 1
- E: Bicester 2
- G: Bicester 4
- H: Bicester 8
- J: Bicester 11
- K: Bicester 12
- L: Bicester 12 - Proposed New Green Space

Launton Green Buffer

Rev A Green Buffer added to northwest of Launton 11.09.13

# LDĀDESIGN

PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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Figure 1.5  
Launton Green Buffer

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STATUS	Final	APPROVED RT

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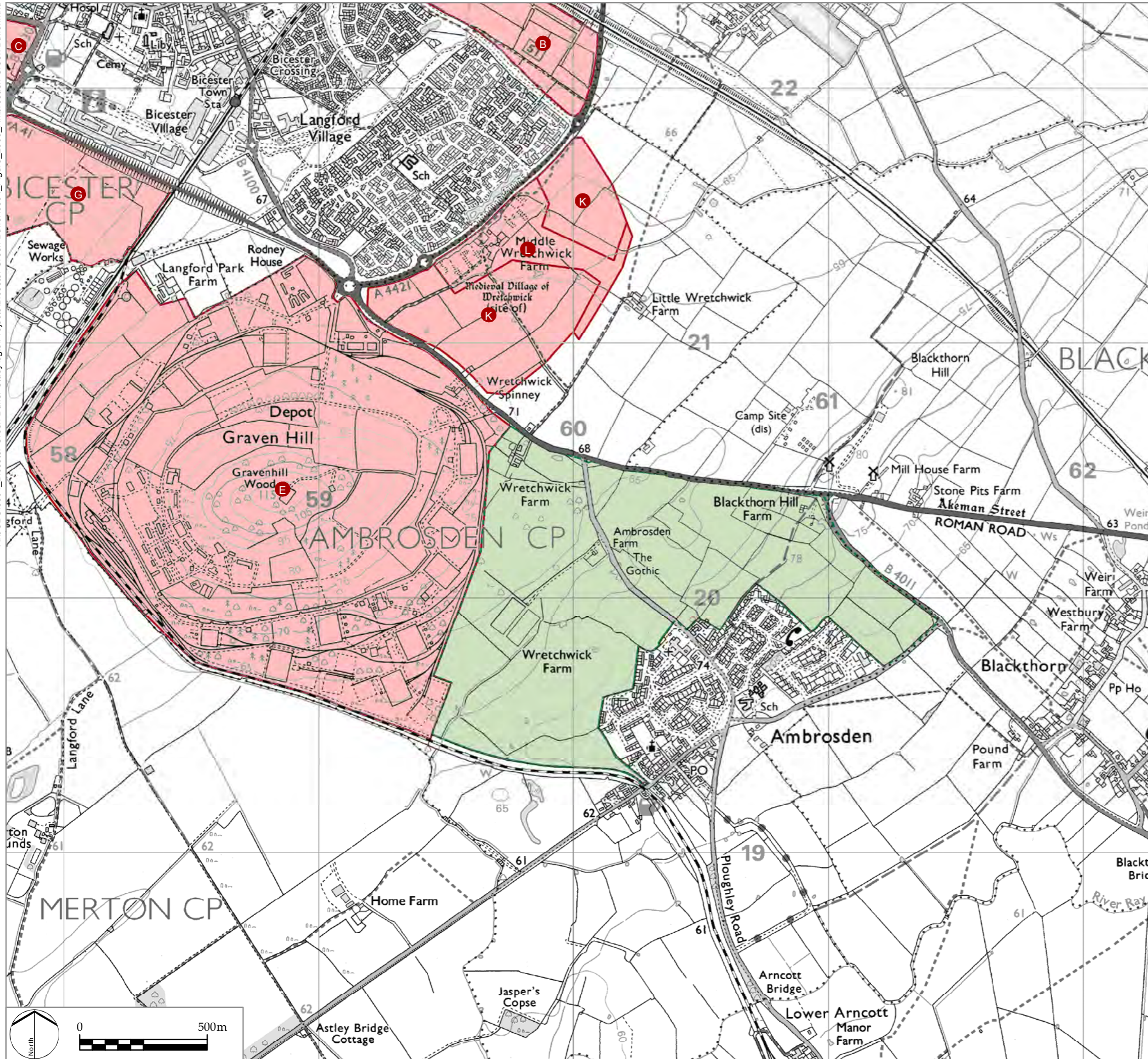
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LEGEND

- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
- B: Gavray Drive (Approved)
- C: South-West Bicester Phase 1 (Approved)
- E: Bicester 2
- G: Bicester 4
- K: Bicester 12
- L: Bicester 12 - Proposed New Green Space
- Ambrosden Green Buffer

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PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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Figure 1.6  
Ambrosden Green Buffer

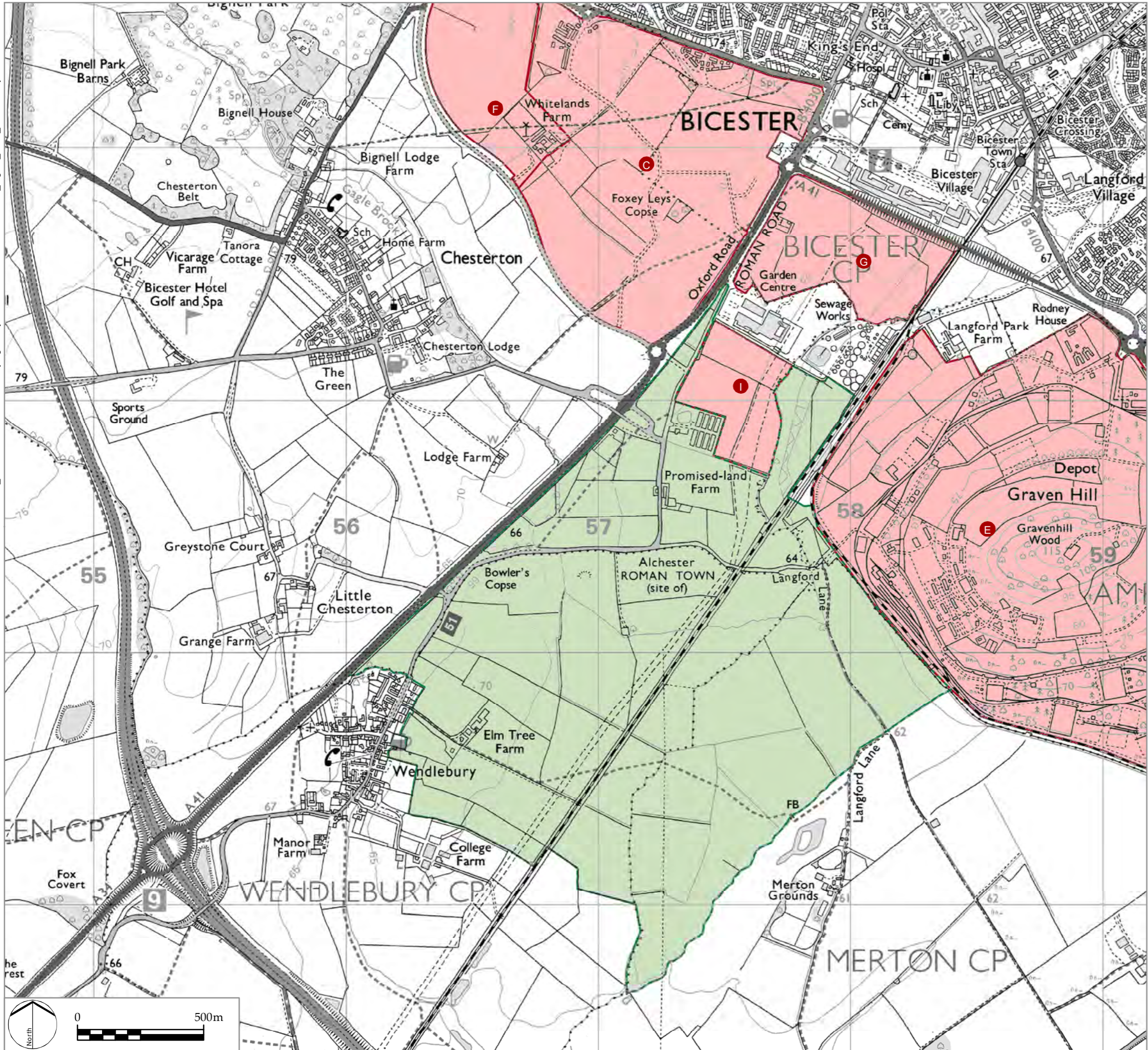
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STATUS	Final	APPROVED RT

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- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
- C: South-West Bicester Phase 1 (Approved)
- E: Bicester 2
- F: Bicester 3
- G: Bicester 4
- I: Bicester 10
- Wendlebury Green Buffer

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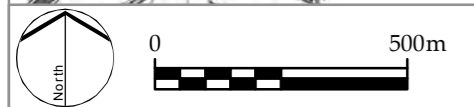
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BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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Wendlebury Green Buffer

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STATUS	Final	APPROVED RT

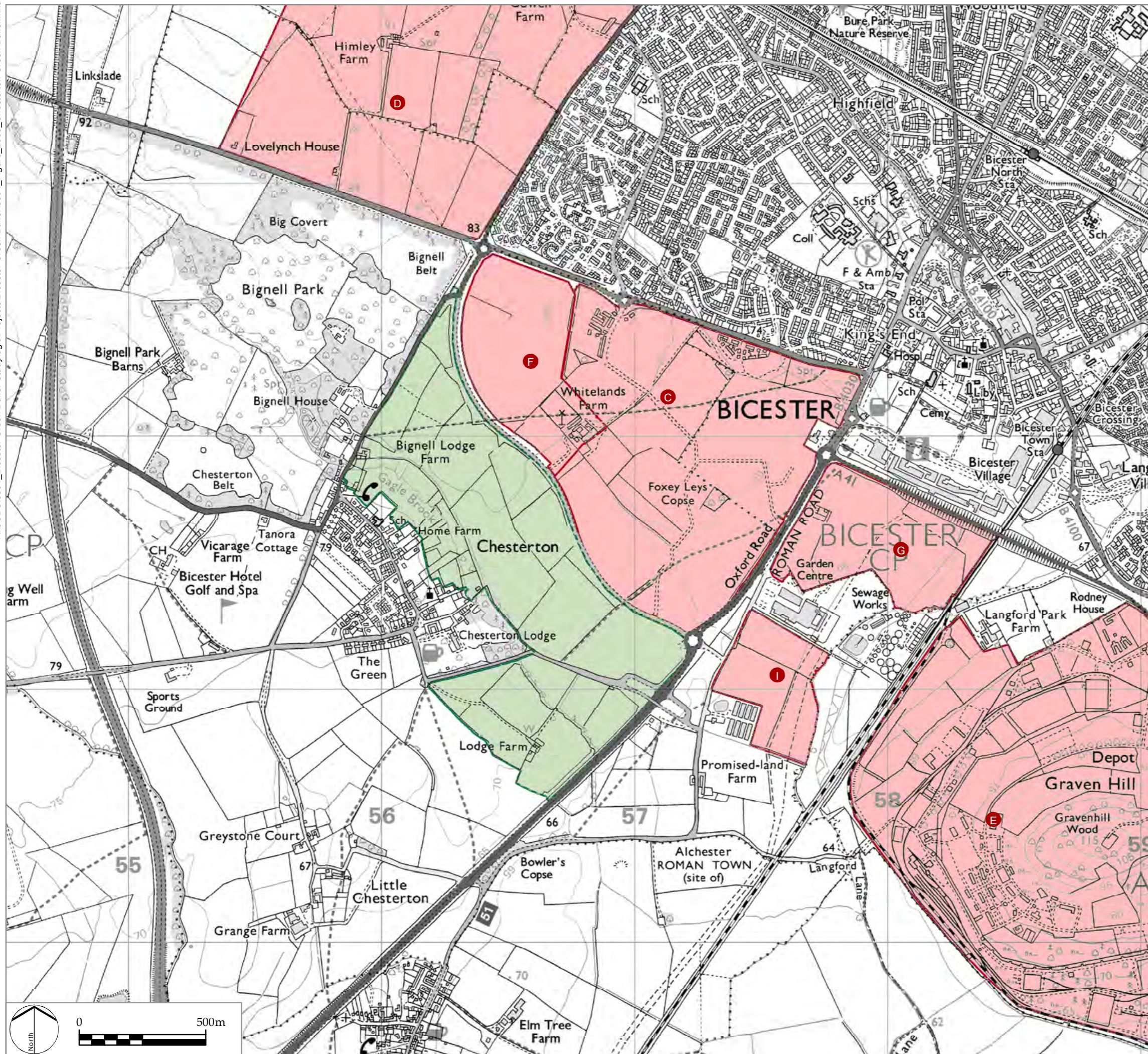
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**LEGEND**

- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
- C: South-West Bicester Phase 1 (Approved)
- D: Bicester 1
- E: Bicester 2
- F: Bicester 3
- G: Bicester 4
- I: Bicester 10
- Chesterton Green Buffer

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PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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Figure 1.8  
Chesterton Green Buffer

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STATUS	Final	APPROVED RT

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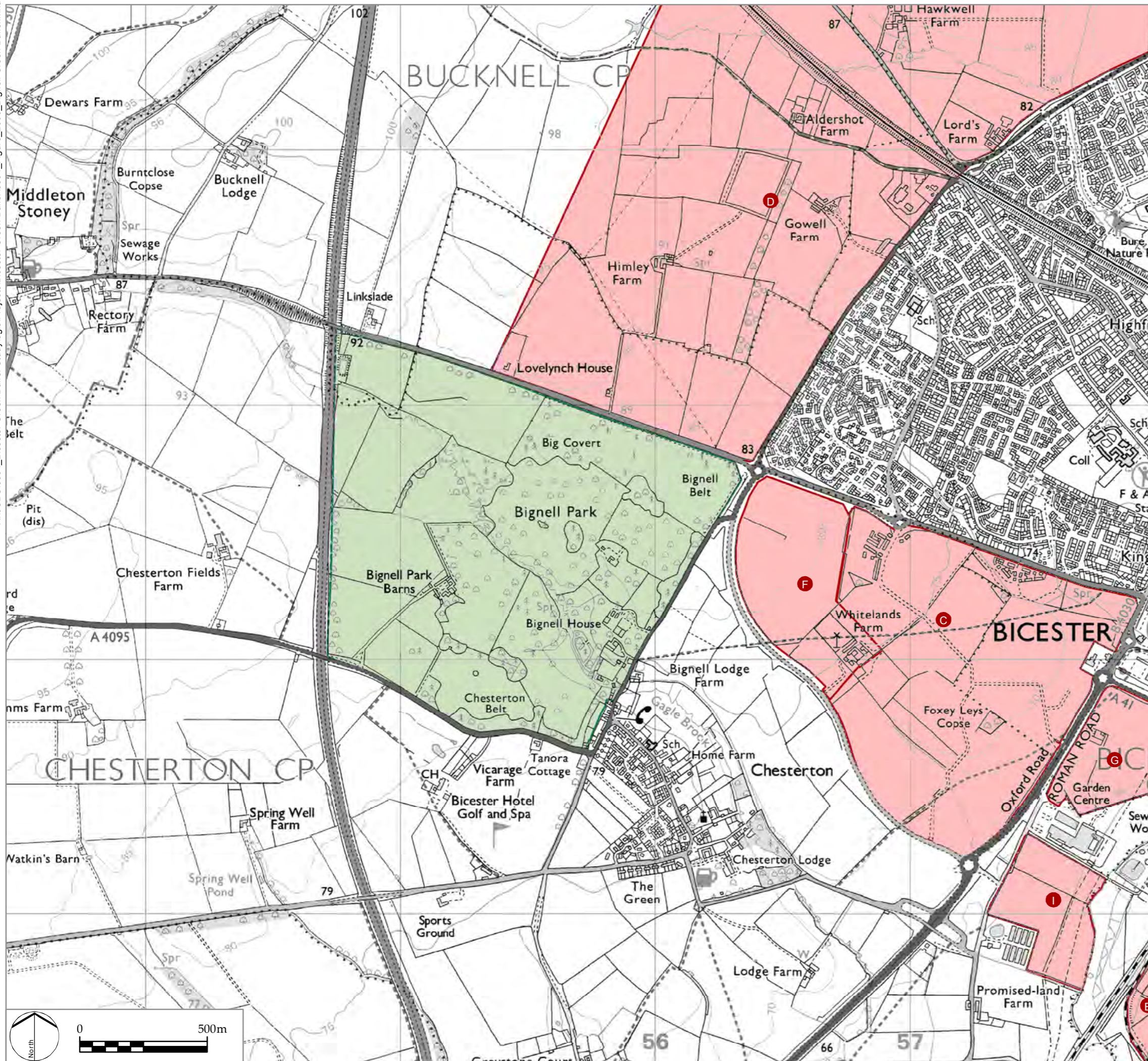
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**LEGEND**

- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
  - C: South-West Bicester Phase 1 (Approved)
  - D: Bicester 1
  - E: Bicester 2
  - F: Bicester 3
  - G: Bicester 4
  - I: Bicester 10
- Bignell Park Green Buffer

# LDA DESIGN

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BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

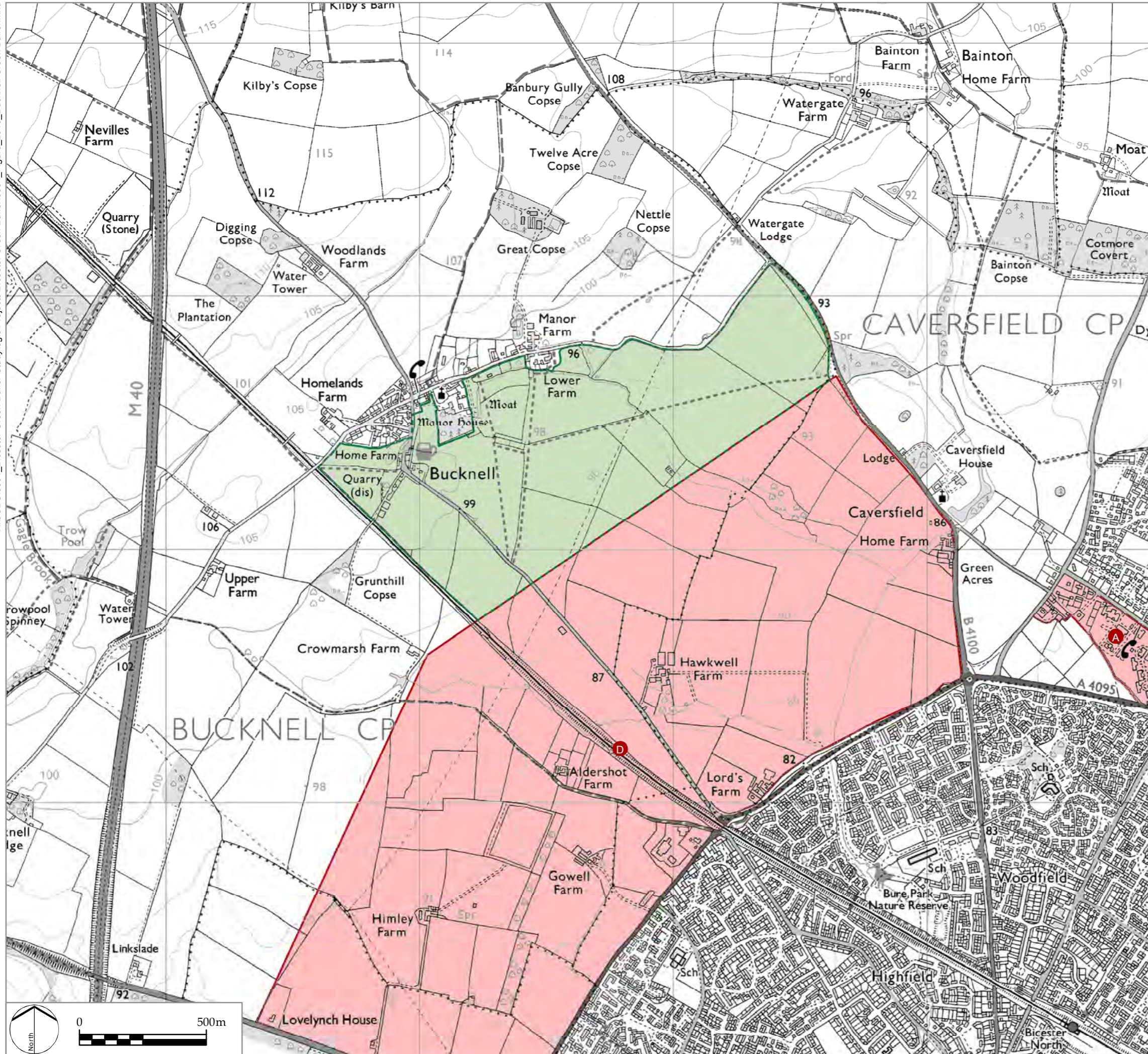
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Bignell Park Green Buffer

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- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012)  
Proposed Allocated Sites  
A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)  
D: Bicester 1
- Bucknell Green Buffer

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BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

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Figure 1.10  
Bucknell Green Buffer

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