

# DEVELOPMENT SPECIFICATION (UPDATED)

CATALYST BICESTER

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# 1 Introduction

## Purpose of Document

- 1.1 Albion Land (“AL”) are seeking planning permission for employment floorspace and a racquets club on land to the south-east of Wendlebury Road, Bicester (“the Site”).
- 1.2 Planning permission is sought via two planning applications:
  - **Application 1** is submitted in hybrid form (part full and part outline). It seeks outline planning permission for up to 16,800 sq.m of employment floorspace (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c) and full planning permission for a racquets club on Site A (see **Figure 1a**).
  - **Application 2** is submitted in outline and seeks permission for up to 10,200 sq.m of further employment floorspace (also in Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c) on Site B (see **Figure 1b**).
- 1.3 This Development Specification has been prepared to support both applications. It has been amended (December 2019) to reflect changes to the applications post-submission.
- 1.4 The development proposed by Application 2 will not come forward unless the development proposed by Application 1 is delivered.
- 1.5 It is envisaged that this will be prevented by either a planning condition or obligation attached to any planning permission.

Figure 1a – Site A

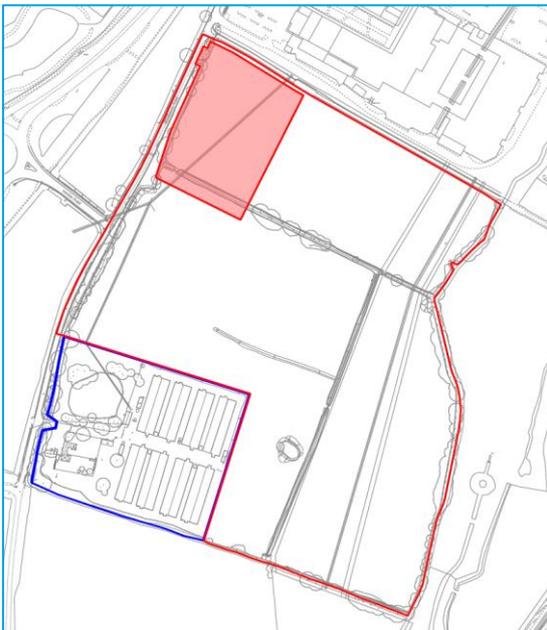
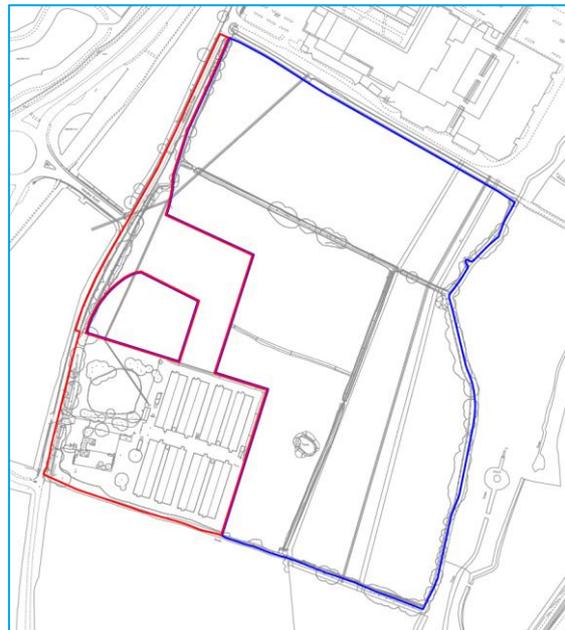


Figure 1b – Site B

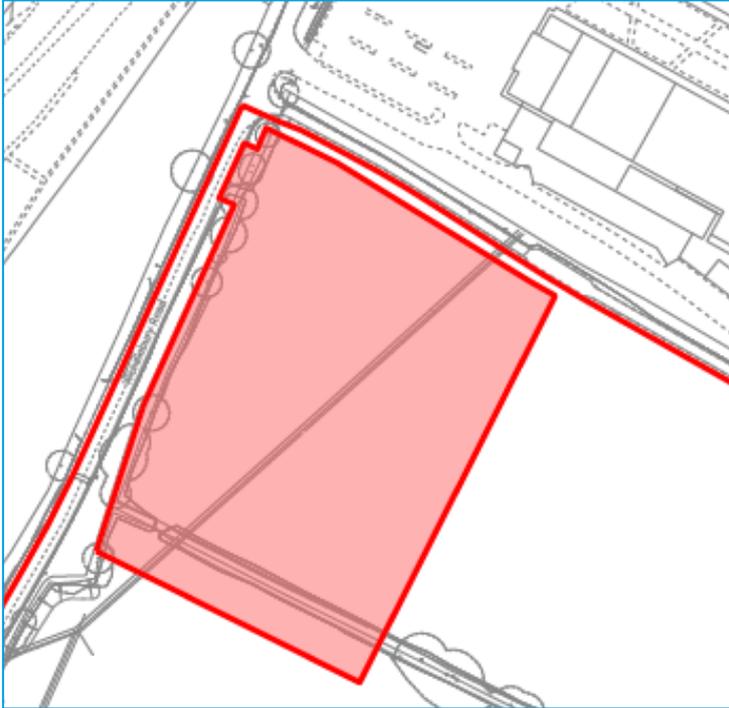


## Proposed Development

- 1.6 The employment floorspace is intended to meet known market demand for accommodation which is suitable for high-technology business and the wider knowledge economy. It will therefore comprise a mix of uses falling within Use Class B1 (i.e. B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c).

- 1.7 The proposed racquets club (Use Class D2), which is brought forward in detail on behalf of David Lloyd Leisure Clubs, is located on 1.66ha in the north-western corner of Site A (**Figure 2**). It will complement and catalyse the delivery of B1 uses across the remainder of the Site.

Figure 2 – Site of Proposed Racquets Club



- 1.8 The racquets club is accessed directly from Wendlebury Road, and comprises the following:
- Clubhouse building, incorporating (inter alia):
    - Sports hall, providing 3 no. indoor tennis courts;
    - 4 no. fitness studios a fully equipped gym;
    - Indoor swimming pool;
    - Café/restaurant and member lounge areas;
    - Changing facilities;
    - Spa;
    - Ancillary offices and staff facilities.
  - 2 no. outdoor tennis courts and a further 3 no. tennis courts within a permanent airdome;
  - Outdoor swimming pool;
  - Car parking (246 spaces), external plant and servicing areas.

## Principle of Development

### Application 1

- 1.9 Site A is allocated for uses falling within Use Class B1 by Policy Bicester 10 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (2015) (“CLP 2015”).
- 1.10 The principle of developing Site A for the B1 uses proposed via Application 1 is therefore accepted by Cherwell District Council (“CDC”) through its allocation in CLP 2015.
- 1.11 The text which supports Policy Bicester 10 confirms CDC’s aspiration for development at the allocation to contribute towards the creation of a knowledge economy in the District, capitalising on Bicester’s proximity to Oxford and its location in the “corridor” between Cambridge and Oxford (see **Planning Report** for further details).
- 1.12 Policy Bicester 10 also acknowledges that the allocation is significantly constrained by flood risk, and it seeks to avoid development within the flood plain.
- 1.13 The developable area of the allocation (circa 24ha in total) is suggested to be 18ha in Policy Bicester 10 but AL’s flood risk engineers have indicated it is 15.4ha (i.e. between 25% and 36% of the allocation cannot be developed, depending on the accepted figure).
- 1.14 The outline component of Application 1 fully accords with CLP 2015, subject to demonstrating that the detailed requirements of Policy Bicester 10 and the Plan’s other development management policies are satisfied.

### Application 2

- 1.15 Site B falls outside of the Bicester 10 allocation, on land which is currently in use as a poultry farm. It would, however, form a logical extension to the proposed development.
- 1.16 Site B’s redevelopment as proposed by Application 2 would also remove a use which may be incompatible with CDC’s aspirations for Bicester 10.
- 1.17 Whilst a departure from CLP 2015 by virtue of its location beyond the allocation and the settlement limits of the town, there are clear and substantial benefits of allowing it to be brought forward for B1 uses alongside Site A and the rest of the Bicester Gateway allocation. These are considered in the **Planning Report**.
- 1.18 Planning permission for the first phase of development at Bicester Gateway, comprising offices and a hotel, was granted in 2018. That development has now commenced, with the hotel anticipated to be open in early 2020.

## Matters for Approval

- 1.19 The knowledge economy, by nature, evolves rapidly. Flexibility is therefore sought within the outline planning consents to allow the development to be tailored to suit the specific needs of occupiers.
- 1.20 Whilst some speculative development may take place at the Site, reserved matters applications are also likely to be developed and submitted in response to occupier requirements.

- 1.21 The outline planning applications are therefore submitted with matters of scale (other than the maximum amount of employment floorspace and maximum building heights, which are fixed), landscaping and appearance reserved.
- 1.22 The proposed means of access into the Site from the A41/Vendee Drive is submitted in detail as part of the outline applications.
- 1.23 A zone within which internal vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access will be formed within the Site is shown as part of the Parameter Plans for the applications. This zone is shown to be wider than the internal access routes will be, to enable some flexibility in the final location of estate roads.
- 1.24 An indicative internal estate road layout is shown within the submission (see **Indicative Masterplan**), though the exact arrangement will be confirmed at reserved matters and will respond to occupier requirements. These internal roads will remain private.
- 1.25 The following plans and documents are submitted with each of the applications to describe the proposed development:
- Application Boundary Plans;
  - Parameter Plans (submitted for planning approval);
  - Development Specification (this Document, which is submitted for planning approval);
  - Indicative Masterplans (indicating ways in which development could possibly come forward, not submitted for planning approval);
  - Design and Access Statement (setting out design precedents, not intended to be subject to planning approval).
- 1.26 A series of Parameter Plans fix development parameters for subsequent reserved matters applications to work within. This allows for a reasonable, worst case assessment of the potential environmental effects of the development i.e. a “Rochdale envelope” approach<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.27 This Document describes the development “envelope” and should be read alongside:
- Site Location Plans – Drawing references: 18022/TP/101 Rev B and 18022/TP/1111 Rev B;
  - Land Use – Drawing references: 18022/TP/102 Rev B and 18022/TP/112 Rev B;
  - Building Heights – Drawing references: 18022/TP/103 Rev C and 18022/TP/113 Rev C;
  - Vegetation Retention and Removal – Drawing references: 18022/TP/104 Rev B and 18022/TP/114 Rev B;
  - Access and Circulation – Drawing references: 18022/TP/105 Rev B and 18022/TP/115 Rev B.

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘Rochdale Envelope’ arises from two cases: R. v Rochdale MBC ex parte Milne (No. 1) and R. v Rochdale MBC ex parte Tew [1999] and R. v Rochdale MBC ex parte Milne (No. 2) [2000]. These cases dealt with outline planning applications for a proposed business park in Rochdale. They acknowledged that details of a project evolve over time and confirmed that, provided this was within clearly defined parameters and a cautious ‘worst case’ approach was adopted, the likely effects of development could be understood whilst maintaining flexibility in the permission.

1.28 This Document also confirms the detailed proposals for the racquets club and then summarises parameters and key design principles which are submitted for approval the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

## 2 Background

### Development Plan Allocation

- 2.1 The principle of developing Site A for uses falling within Use Class B1 is accepted through its allocation in Policy Bicester 10 of the CLP 2015.
- 2.2 Whilst beyond the allocation, Site B would form a logical extension to the proposed development, giving rise to a range of significant planning benefits that would weigh heavily in favour of the proposals for its redevelopment.

### Development Management Principles

- 2.3 CLP 2015 identifies a series of development management objectives (both in Policy Bicester 10 and its other general development management policies).
- 2.4 Of relevance to the proposals, CLP 2015 sets out the following (inter alia):
  - Target of approximately 3,500 new jobs (albeit acknowledging site constraints may reduce job creation<sup>2</sup>);
  - B1 business development suitable for the “*high tech knowledge industries*”;
  - Structured open spaces and planting that provide a strong landscape setting, support SUDs and give rise to improvements to the microclimate;
  - A well designed, modern area with the provision of high-quality property to attract and retain “*best in class*” technology companies;
  - A high-quality design and finish, with consideration given to layout, architecture, materials and colourings and building heights to reduce overall visual impact;
  - Conservation and enhancement of the setting of Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument and the setting out of opportunities to better reveal its significance;
  - Layout that enables a high degree of integration and connectivity between new and existing development, particularly the mixed-use urban extension at South West Bicester to the west, the garden centre to the north, and, further to the north, Bicester Village retail outlet and Bicester town centre;
  - Provision of opportunities for Green Infrastructure links beyond the development site to the wider town and countryside;
  - Provision and encouragement for sustainable travel options as the preferred modes of transport rather than the private car;
  - Flood plain land in the eastern parts of the site to be used for informal recreation and ecological benefit in order to enhance Bicester’s green infrastructure network;
  - Development should not encroach within 8m of the watercourse banks;
  - Adequate investigation of, protection of and management of priority and protected habitats and species on site;
  - Provision for a staged programme of archaeological work in liaison with statutory consultees;

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<sup>2</sup> As set out above, the impact of flood risk on the developable area of the allocation is significant.

- The provision of public art;
- A sequential approach should be followed; where possible, buildings should be located away from areas at high risk of flooding.

2.5 The above development management objectives of CLP 2015 have informed the proposals for the Site. This is fully explained in the submitted **Design and Access Statement** (“DAS”) and **Planning Statement**.

### 3 Development Parameters

- 3.1 Each of the Parameter Plans submitted as part of the outline planning applications define and regulate a separate aspect of the B1 development.
- 3.2 Those matters regulated by each of the Parameter Plans is described below. This text should be read alongside the Parameter Plans themselves.
- 3.3 The proposals for the racquets club are submitted in detail, as such they are not shown on the Parameter Plans. They are, however, shown on the suite of drawings which form the application for full planning permission.

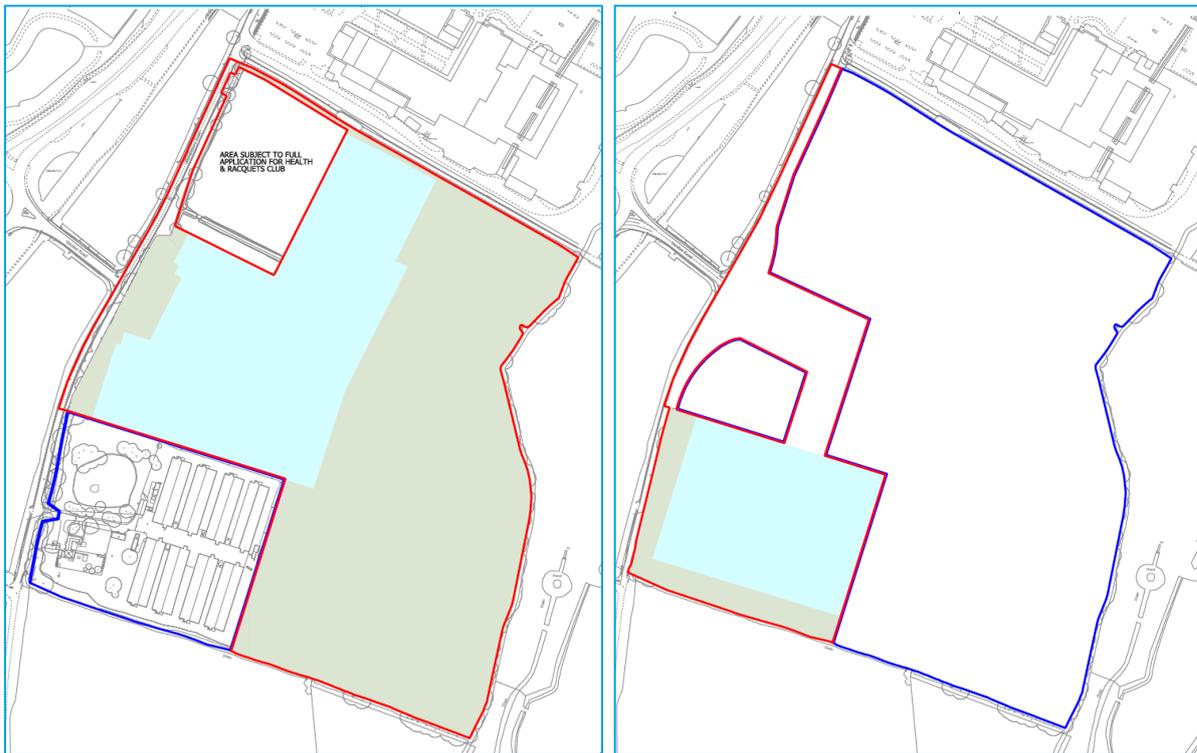
#### Application Boundaries

- 3.4 Whilst not Parameter Plans by name, the Site Location Plans (References 18022/TP/101 and 18022/TP/111) establish the extent of Site A and Site B.
- 3.5 Site A is 15.76ha in total and includes all land required in association with the development (whether for B1 uses or B1 uses and the health and racquets club), including built form, areas of landscaping/open space and access onto the public highway.
- 3.6 Areas of highway land required for access works are not included, these works being the subject of a Section 278 Agreement with the highways authority in due course.
- 3.7 Site B similarly includes all land required in association with the development (except for highway land), including an area of overlap with Site A to accommodate the connection to the existing public highway (albeit there would be no intention to bring Site B forward in isolation to Site B, as explained above).

#### Land Use

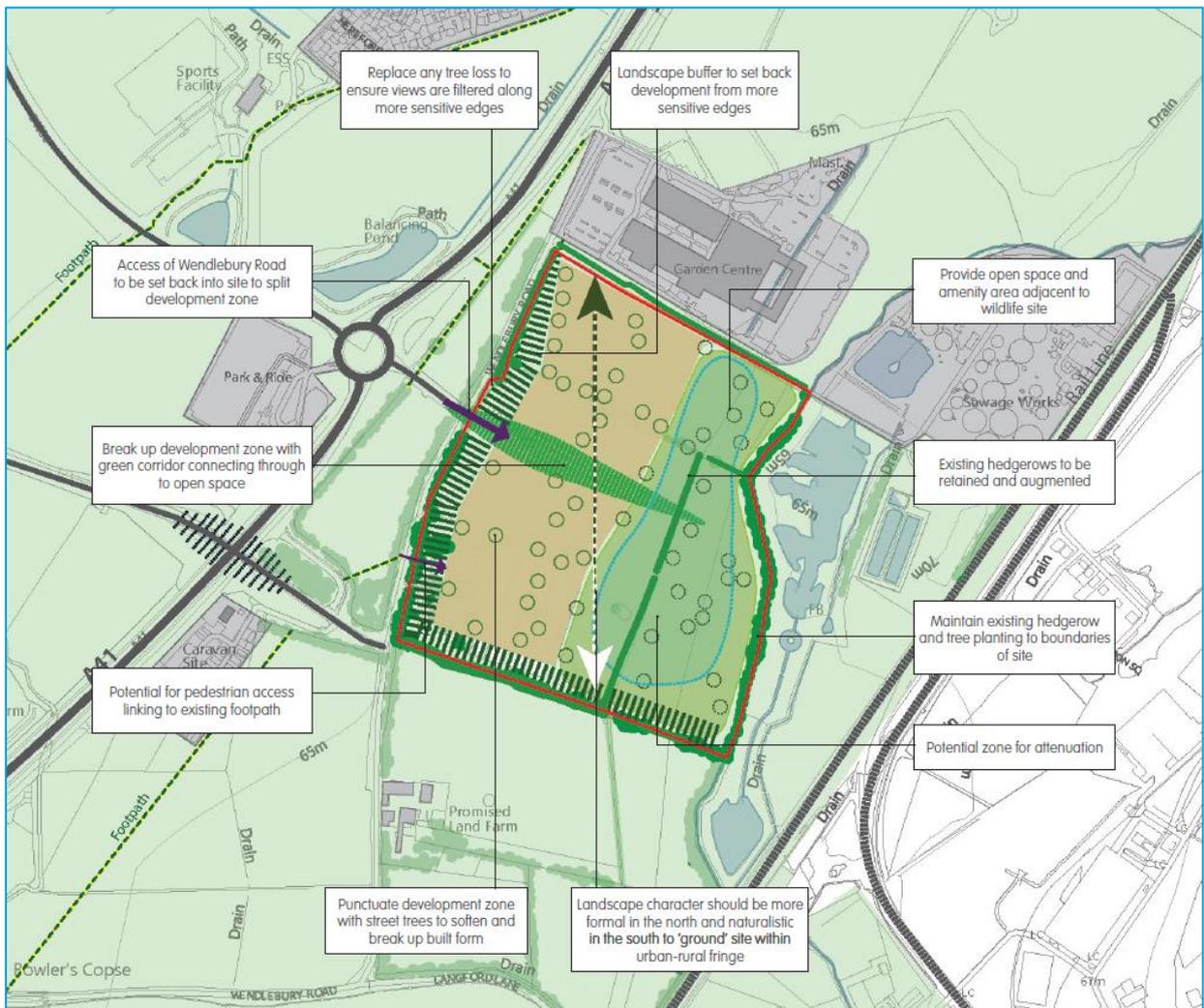
- 3.8 Parameter Plans (References 18022/TP/102 and 18022/TP/112) set the maximum extent of the areas proposed for B1 development across the Site (i.e. “Development Zones”) (**Figure 3**).
- 3.9 B1 (B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c) development is proposed across the Development Zones. A health and racquets club (Use Class D2) is proposed in the northern western area of Site A, within the area covered by the full component of Application 1.
- 3.10 Not all these areas will accommodate buildings. Within the Development Zones there will also be (for example) car parking, servicing areas and incidental landscaping. Areas outside of the Development Zones will provide strategic landscaping, amenity areas, flood compensation, and sustainable urban drainage systems and a wetland area.
- 3.11 It is anticipated that the employment development will comprise a range of commercial building types. Some will have smaller footprints, whilst others may be larger. No minimum or maximum floorspace for individual buildings is fixed at this stage.

Figure 3 – Development Zones



- 3.12 The detail of the landscaping approach will be confirmed via reserved matters, but a comprehensive approach to both the Sites is intended (assuming both Application 1 and Application 2 are approved).
- 3.13 The varying characters of these areas is shown indicatively on the Strategic Landscape Framework (drawing ref RF18/598/SK/001 Rev P01) (Figure 4).
- 3.14 It is anticipated that planting will be more formal in character to the north of the Site, along Wendlebury Road. This will reflect the character of planting within the hotel site, on the opposite side of the road.
- 3.15 It is intended that reserved matters will generally accord with the principles of this drawing, albeit it is not submitted for approval at this stage.
- 3.16 Planting will gradually become more informal travelling away from this area of the Site. This will enable a gradual transition from the urban edge to the open countryside beyond the Site boundaries, as well as enhancing the amenity and biodiversity value of landscaping within the Site, for the benefit of future occupiers of the development and contributing towards achievement of net biodiversity gain.

Figure 4 – Strategic Landscape Framework



3.17 There are a range of development scenarios that could arise at the Site (assuming Application 1 is approved), dependent on whether Application 2 is also approved alongside Application 1.

3.18 4 scenarios were tested initially by the Applicant's technical team, though 2 are no longer possible<sup>3</sup> due to amendments made post submission<sup>4</sup>:

- **Scenario 1** – B1 development across all of Site A;
- **Scenario 2** – B1 development across most of Site A, with racquets club (Use Class D2 on the remainder);
- **Scenario 3** – Development as per Scenario 1, plus B1 development across all of Site B;
- **Scenario 4** – Development as per Scenario 2, plus B1 development across all of Site B.

<sup>3</sup> Indicated by text struck through.

<sup>4</sup> See correspondence dated 3 January 2020

- 3.19 In all cases, the maximum quantum of B1a office floorspace is capped at 35% of the gross B1 floorspace to be delivered. This cap has been determined by a range of factors, including market advice on likely occupier requirements and highways impacts. It can be secured via a planning condition.
- 3.20 **Table 1** demonstrates the maximum amount of B1 floorspace that could be delivered at the Site in each of the development scenarios which are still applied for, and the maximum amount of B1a floorspace that can be delivered as part of the proposals in each case.

Table 1 – Floorspace Schedule

	Use Class B1	Use Class B1a
Scenario 2	16,800 sqm	5,880 sqm
Scenario 4	27,000 sqm	9,450 sqm

### Building Heights

- 3.21 Development platforms will be created at the Site, with the exact level of these confirmed at detailed design stage (anticipated to be in the range of 64.15m AOD and 65.5m AOD (the latter of which is the approximate level of Wendlebury Road)).
- 3.22 Parameter Plans References 18022/TP/103 Rev C and 18022/TP/113 Rev C fix the maximum height of the employment development across the Site to between 76.25m AOD and 76.5m AOD. This would equate to a maximum ridge height of circa 11-12m from development platform level.
- 3.23 The height of individual buildings will vary depending on (inter alia) the footprint of the building, the intended occupier and the approach to its design. Not all the buildings will be constructed at the maximum permissible height.
- 3.24 Plant will be designed into the overall composition and design of buildings wherever practical. It should be integral to the design such that it is perceived as part of the intended form and shape of a proposal building.
- 3.25 Some plant, flues or antennae may exceed the stated maximum building heights provided they are located to reduce visual clutter and appropriate design, screening or visual mitigation (if necessary) is provided.

### Vegetation Retention and Removal

- 3.26 Parameter Plans References 18022/TP/104 Rev B and 18022/TP/114 Rev B confirm which existing trees and hedgerows will be retained and which will be removed.
- 3.27 Within the proposed areas of landscaping (as indicated on Parameter Plans 18022/TP/102 Rev B and 18022/TP/112 Rev B and considered above) there will be replacement and additional planting. These areas are expressed as minimums, demonstrating the minimum set back of development from the Site's boundaries and areas available for new planting.

### Access and Circulation

3.28 The access arrangements for the business park are shown on Drawing reference 19539-12-02 Rev B and 19539-13-01 Rev A (**Figures 5 and 6**).

Figure 5 – Proposed Vehicular Access to Business Park

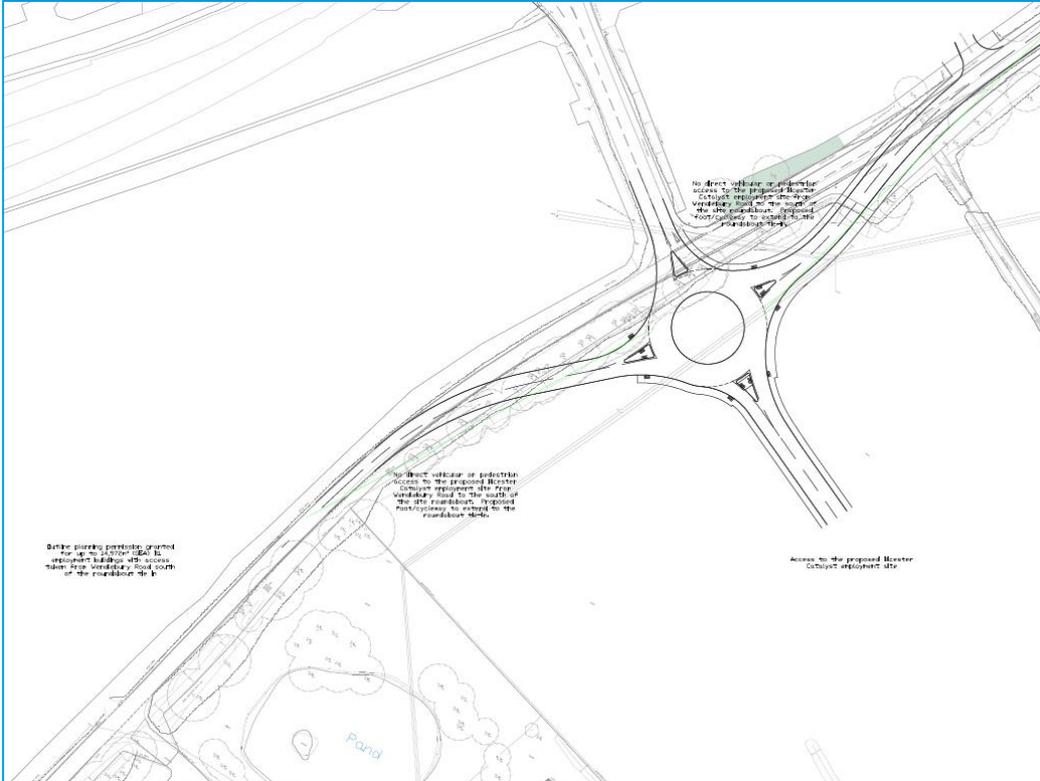
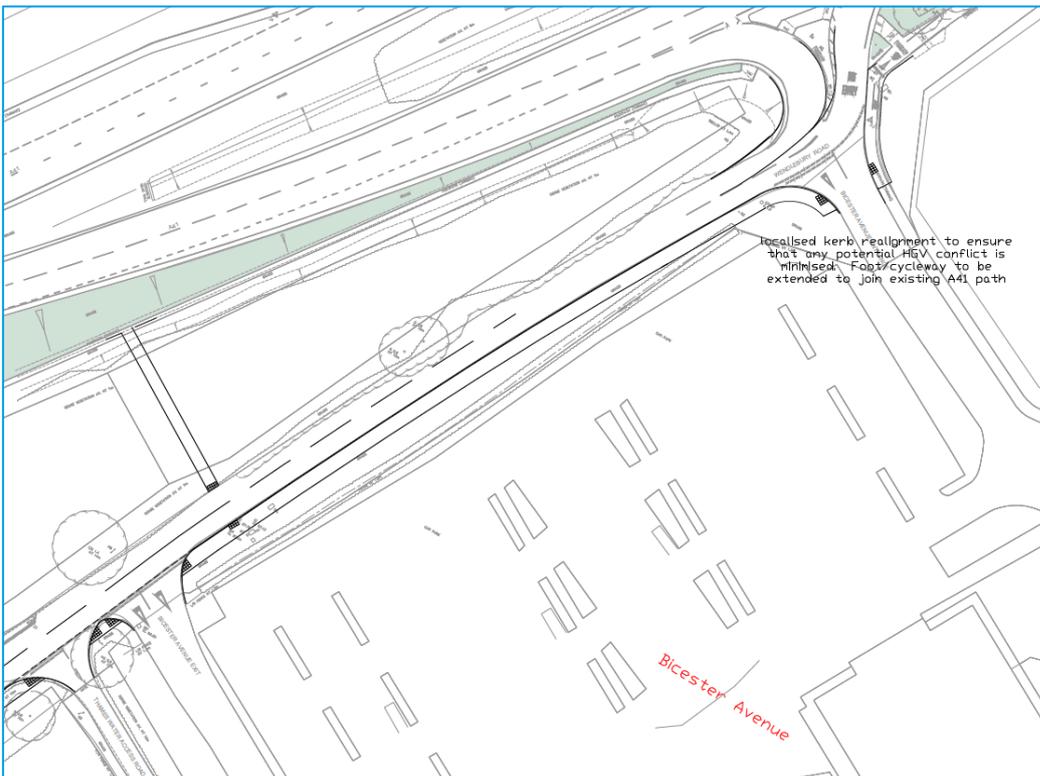


Figure 6 – Proposed Pedestrian Route



- 3.29 Vehicular and pedestrian access for the business park is taken from the A41/Vendee Drive roundabout, via the existing public highway (Vendee Drive) across Phase 1.
- 3.30 A new roundabout is proposed at the junction of Wendlebury Road and Vendee Drive (which is currently a simple T-junction arrangement). The fourth arm of the roundabout will provide access into the business park.
- 3.31 A further footpath connection, providing direct access from Wendlebury Road to the A41, is also proposed.
- 3.32 Access to Site B would be across Site A. The Application Boundary for Site B has been drawn such that there is a degree of flexibility in the exact location of the estate road across Site A. Access and circulation within the Site would be within the zones indicated on Parameter Plans 18022/TP/105 Rev B and 18022/TP/115 Rev B.
- 3.33 A separate access is proposed for the health and racquets club. This would be a simple priority junction with Wendlebury Road.

## 4 Environmental Design Principles

- 4.1 The following environmental design principles have been taken into account as embedded mitigation by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and the Environmental Statement (ES) which accompanies Application 1 and Application 2.
- 4.2 Subsequent Reserved Matters and design work would be required (via planning condition) to demonstrate substantial conformity with the Principles. The Principles are not intended to fix a specific design outcome at outline planning stage but set performance criteria for more detailed design work.

### Drainage and Flood Compensation

#### Flood Risk

- 4.3 Parts of the developable areas are at medium and high risk of flooding from Langford Brook located on the eastern boundary and Promised Land Ditch on the southern boundary. Only employment (Use Class B1) and leisure uses (Use Class D2) are proposed which are classified as ‘less vulnerable’ by NPPF and therefore appropriate for Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3a. Developable areas are located on the eastern part of the Site at least 120m away from the primary source of flood risk, Langford Brook.
- 4.4 The following design measures will be required to mitigate flood risk:
- Ground raising will be undertaken within developable areas to ensure external levels are no lower than 64.15m AOD, the design flood level. This will allow finished floor levels of proposed buildings to be set at a minimum of 150mm above external ground levels to direct overland flows away from buildings;
  - Finished floor levels within developable areas will be raised to a minimum of 64.45m AOD. This allows for the 1 in 100 year plus 35% climate change flood level nearest the Site of 64.15m AOD, plus an additional 300mm;
  - Access and egress will be available from Flood Zone 1 via the new roundabout and estate roads should be constructed above the design flood level of 64.15m AOD with appropriate flood defence and landscaping freeboard; and
  - Public access will not be allowed to the eastern part of the Site (beyond the existing hedgerow to be retained).

#### Flood Compensation

- 4.5 Where ground levels are elevated to raise the Development out of the floodplain, compensatory floodplain storage within areas that currently lie outside the floodplain must be provided to ensure that the total volume of the floodplain storage is not reduced. Compensatory storage must provide the same volume and be at the same level relative to the flood level as the lost storage to be effective.
- 4.6 An Outline Flood Compensation Scheme is included at Appendix G of the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which accompanies Application 1 and Application 2. Details would be developed as part of reserved matters in line with the following principles of the Outline Flood Compensation Scheme.
- 4.7 However, there will be no overall loss of existing floodplain volume storage (calculated to be approx. 43,500 m<sup>3</sup> although this figure will be dependent on the final design of the development). This will be achieved through land re-grading within developable areas and in the north eastern part of the Site outside of the developable area up to 500mm.

- 4.8 The Outline Flood Compensation Scheme submitted with the applications is shown in **Figure 7**. This is a matter of ongoing discussion with consultees and details would be developed with reference to this drawing at reserved matters stage.
- 4.9 An appropriate management and maintenance regime will be in place to ensure the flood compensation scheme continues to function for the design life of the Development.

### Surface Water Drainage

- 4.10 In accordance with current good practice and planning policy, the surface water scheme aims to replicate greenfield run-off rates. Storm water from the Development will therefore be retained within the Site and discharged at greenfield run off rates (calculated at 20.43 litres per second). The strategy will limit and control surface water runoff through hierarchal Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) conveyance which may include (but not be limited to) the following:
- Permeable block paving car parks;
  - Below ground drainage networks with flow controls; and
  - Attenuation swales (likely to be located to the east of the developable area of Application 1 and south of Application 2).
- 4.11 All surface water drainage will be designed to 2016 Environment Agency climate change allowances as design level of 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change storm event. The outline surface water drainage scheme would be developed with reference that included within the FRA (Figure 7) which provides for the following surface water storage volumes:
- Swale 1 – Approximately 2,000 m<sup>3</sup>;
  - Swale 2 – Approximately 4,500 m<sup>3</sup>; and,
  - Subgrade Attenuation - Approximately 1,200 m<sup>3</sup> (permeable paving).
- 4.12 Details of the surface water drainage scheme would be provided at reserved matters.

### Biodiversity

- 4.13 Habitat creation and enhancement measures ensure the Development will be compliant with relevant policies under Bicester 10 and ESD10 of the CLP 2015 and to achieve biodiversity net gain. This includes:

#### Grassland / Wet Meadow

- 4.14 Approximately 5.4ha of grassland/wet meadow will be created as part of the works required for flood compensation and water storage (shown indicatively in **Figure 8**). This area will be re-profiled, providing a mosaic of wet and dry areas of grassland which will be seeded with native species of local provenance to increase the diversity of the species composition creating an area of higher value than that being lost.
- 4.15 This area of grassland/wet meadow is proposed to be managed as supporting habitat to the adjacent Bicester Wetland Reserve Local Wildlife Site. Details will be developed in line with the following principles:
- Provision of a 'wet' area in the north-eastern section which will be planted with reeds;
  - Re-profiling of Ditch D2 (Figure 9) to create shallow fringes for aquatic plants and fauna; and,

- Creation of ‘scrapes’ to provide wetter areas of grassland;
- Retention and protection of the existing hedgerow H3 (**Figure 9**) and the majority of trees present at the southern and eastern boundaries (treeline associated with the Langford Brook) of the Site; and
- Public access will not be allowed to the wetland area (beyond the existing hedgerow to be retained in the eastern part of Site).

#### Other

- Replacement of trees to be lost with an equivalent number of native trees, as a minimum;
- Enhancement of hedgerows to be retained through planting with native species (ideally of local provenance);
- New hedgerow planting (totalling 370m) which will comprise native species (ideally of local provenance);
- Set back from areas planted with trees to protect root zones; and
- Provision of an artificial roost, to mitigate for the loss of the maternity roost for *common pipistrelle* in building B1 (Figure 9), at a suitable location nearby to the retained vegetation in the southern section of the Application 1 site.

4.16 A detailed Landscape and Habitats Management Plan (‘LHMP’) will be prepared and submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to occupation of the Development.

4.17 It will describe measures to maximise the biodiversity potential of retained and newly created habitats through appropriate management, as well as, a programme of monitoring to provide a mechanism to modify the management prescriptions if required.

#### Lighting Design

4.18 Lighting design will be sensitive to the surrounding area and its users. It will seek to:

- enable users to proceed safely, helping to alleviate the fear of crime;
- minimise light spill and glare, to minimise impact on local sensitive receptors (including the adjacent developments, ecological receptors, the setting of heritage assets and local road users) and;
- integrate the Development into the surrounding area as far as practicable.

4.19 Further details will be agreed at reserved matters.

Figure 7: Preliminary Flood Compensation Scheme 1 (Drawing No. S1358-Ext-35A)

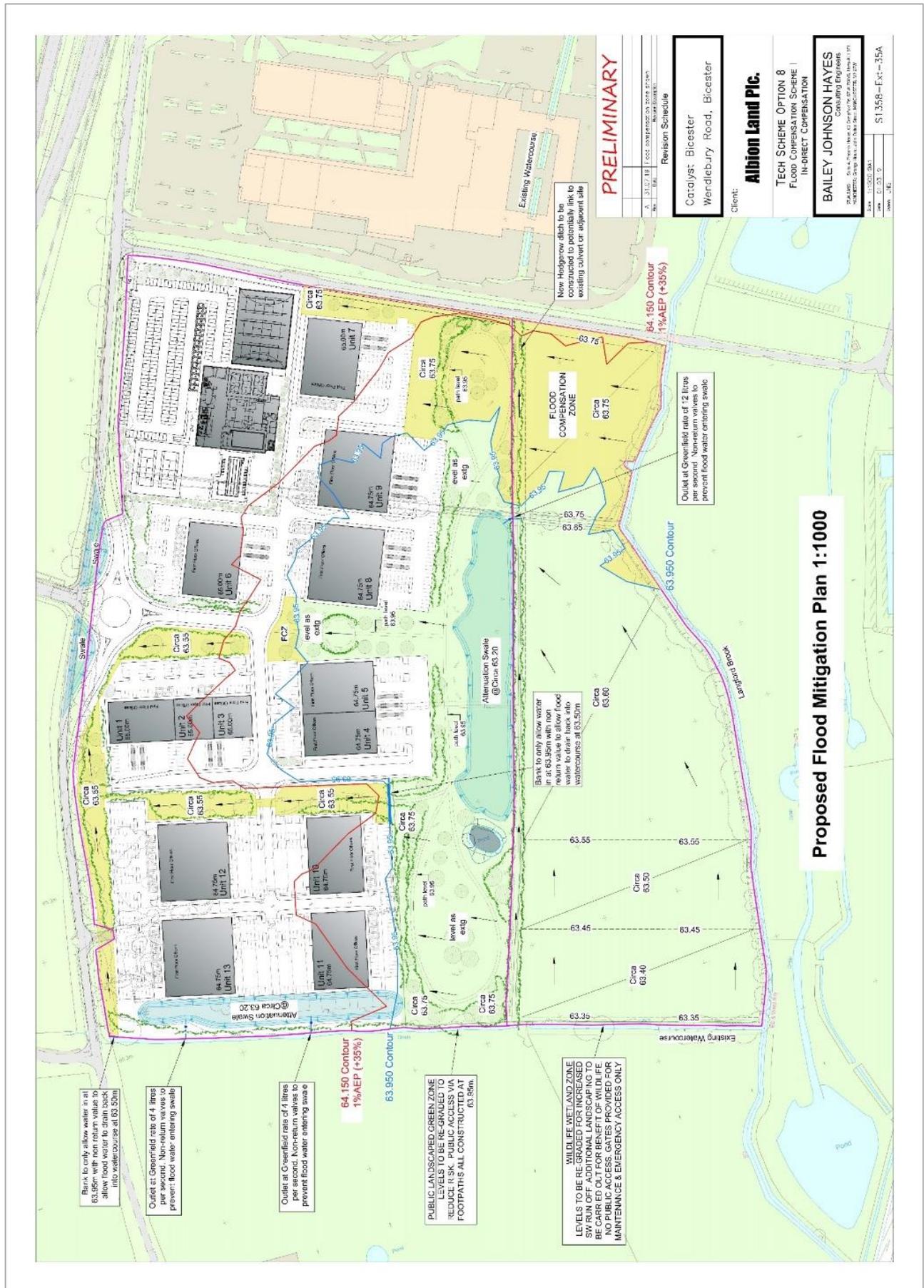


Figure 8: Preliminary Conservation Zone (Drawing No. S1358-Ext-37)



Figure 9: Habitat Features Plan

