



1. Representation have been received from Stantec (Bicester Gateway Phase 1B Residential TN005 dated 28th January 2019 [sic]) and Motion (Catalyst Bicester Transport Review TN1 dated 17th October 2019), representatives of Bicester Gateway Ltd (Bloombridge) and Value Retail Ltd respectively. This note responds to matters raised therein.

BICESTER GATEWAY LTD (BLOOMBRIDGE)

Introduction

2. Bicester 10 is a key employment site identified in the Cherwell Local Plan. To date Bloombridge has promoted part of the allocation for a hotel which is currently under construction and a further part of the allocation for employment but this has not progressed beyond an outline application stage with all matters reserved including access. Albion Land are now promoting the remaining part of the allocation (Phase 2). Albion Land has an exceptional record at delivering employment sites and hence jobs both in Bicester and other local towns where planning consents have been implemented swiftly and end-users sourced.
3. Bicester is a rapidly growing town but to reduce the need for residents to out commute on a daily basis along busy corridors such as the A41, implementation of sites such as Bicester 10 is important. Currently the local journey to work Census data, relied on by Stantec and others including DTA, shows that there is significant out commuting but that a significant proportion (50%) of local employment opportunities are taken up by local residents. This is a significant level of internalisation of trips such that the net effect of employment development in Bicester is neutral i.e. that the inbound commuting into Bicester as a result of employment development is balanced by a reduction in outbound commuting. Such local employment also aids sustainable travel patterns, allowing commuting on foot or bicycle, and thereby reduces reliance on the private car.
4. A reduction in out commuting is not numerically accounted for in the Transport Assessment process as the development trips for the Albion Land site are treated as wholly new for technical robustness. Notwithstanding this, representations have been made on behalf of Bloombridge which suggest that there are traffic grounds to object. This is not justified and the matters raised are addressed below.

Travel Demand

5. The proposed development responds to the market requirements for knowledge industries. There is a requirement for modern structures which combine research and development space or production space with a higher office element than the 10% office space than would typically be considered “ancillary”.
6. The Transport Assessment therefore adopts two approaches to ensure that worst case travel demand is estimated. These are to calculate the demand on the basis of Science Park trip rates, which have been inflated by 10% for robustness; and modified B1 industrial rates to account for 35% office space. Stantec have queried the inclusion in the traffic forecasts of 27.8% B1a office content to achieve 35% total office provision. The reason for this has been done, because adding only traffic from 25% office content to the ancillary 10% office implicit within the B1 industrial rates is not robust. With 25% office space, the 10% would apply to the remaining 75% B1 industrial floorspace i.e. leading to an overall office floorspace of 32.5%



across the site and hence short of the 35% capped floorspace. To address the gap the additional office space must be increased to 27.8% of the total.

7. The resulting trip estimates indicate that the Science Park rates are higher in the AM peak and the knowledge industry rates are higher in the PM peak and as such each higher traffic generating peak period has been tested for robustness. Stantec have calculated that there is a minor difference in the AM knowledge industry trip rates. This appears to be a very small rounding issue and the resulting difference in trips is less than 2 vehicles/hour. It is also not relevant as the AM knowledge industry trip rates are lower than Science Park trips rates and hence not relied upon.

A41 – Vendee Drive Roundabout

8. The A41 – Vendee Drive roundabout has been assessed on the basis of the parameters aligned with other agreed Transport Assessments on the A41 corridor including for the Bicester 4 office site. This includes the use of a flat arrival profile rather than a synthesised arrival profile. Stantec are incorrect to suggest that the flat profile overestimates the capacity of the junction. The capacity of the junction is a function of the geometry of the junction. The difference is how the demand presents at the junction. Within Oxfordshire in general the travel to work peak period has broadened to the extent that a flat profile is considered reasonable. It also allows for comparison with the LINSIG modelling, which does not explicitly synthesis any given arrival profile, but in this case it does not matter either way. Under a synthesised arrival profile the junction would operate within capacity in 2026 with some increased queuing on Vendee Drive in 2031 without the South East Perimeter Road (SEPR) albeit this dissipates quickly. This level of queuing in isolation does not warrant further intervention however the development will be contributing to the SEPR which would be in place by 2031. Within the shoulder periods the junction is operating much better than presented although in anticipation that future peaks will remain or further flatten this is benefit is not asserted.
9. With respect to the road safety implications of the proposed development on the operation of the roundabout, there have been a number of incidents recently with relatively high degree of severity. The additional traffic does not present any specific new concerns but there will be a general increase in traffic using the junction. As a result a scheme of revised line marking and upgraded signing has been proposed to reflect the current guidance in DMRB CD116. These works are considered to be appropriate to the scale of development and a commensurate contribution if favoured by OCC would allow these to be implemented in full or be put towards alternative measures. This will not preclude other developers such as Bloombridge coming forward with additional measures as appropriate to support their own proposals.

Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure Improvements

10. A 3m combined foot/cycle way will be constructed from the site access roundabout to the toucan crossing at A41/Pioneer Way providing a direct link into the Kingsmere housing and linking up with the cycle path improvements secured by the Bicester 4 consent for onwards connections to the north. Any narrowings to address localised constraints will be short and maintain at least 2.5m in full accordance with best practice guidance. At present it is anticipated that such as narrowing will only be required near the entrance to Bicester Avenue



for a distance of <10m. Where appropriate cycle priority measures will be provided at accesses and local junctions.

11. With respect to cyclists on Wendlebury Road to the south of the site access roundabout towards Wendlebury, this road is part of the National Cycle Network. Whilst it is understood that the Bloombridge Phase 1B development is likely to load all its vehicular traffic onto this link, the Albion Land employment will be accessed solely from the site access roundabout which will link across directly to the A41. As such it is likely that the only additional traffic using this road will be local traffic e.g. residents from Wendlebury and Chesterton who want to use the gym or work on the site. Ideally the existing character of the road south of the site access would be maintained in so far as is possible. Whilst the independent Road Safety Audit recommended stopping the off-road cycle provision at the site access roundabout, OCC has reviewed this and requested that it be extended a short distance to the south before rejoining the carriageway. Ultimately Bloombridge can link their pedestrian and cycle accesses to these paths when their accesses are determined in any future planning application. For northbound cyclists it is proposed that a path along the current Wendlebury Road road alignment would be retained to link up to a splitter island on the Vendee Link Road arm of the site access roundabout and this would connect to the existing foot/cycle path. This would be facilitated by the localised re-alignment of Wendlebury Road to the south of the site access.
12. Stantec has suggested that the Vendee Link Road will be an important route for vulnerable road users. There is however no basis for this. The geographical location of the site to the south of Bicester means that main desirelines for non-car users including vulnerable users, to and from the site are on a north-south axis, a route that is being comprehensively improved in accordance with current best practice. Whilst some bus users may use the Vendee Link Road to access services on the A41, the existing provision is wholly appropriate.
13. The Bloombridge Phase 1B site has outline consent for B1 employment but with all matters reserved including access. Within the outline application it is suggested that a pedestrian/cycle route will be created along the western side of the A41. This is reliant on an uncontrolled crossing of the Vendee Link which will be circa 13m wide (11 seconds + crossing time) with no median island. This is a long uncontrolled crossing for any road user not just vulnerable road users. Whilst the paths either side could be diverted to the splitter island or the splitter island extended, the Wendlebury Road facility proposed by Albion Land is clearly superior in relation to pedestrian desirelines, pedestrian amenity and pedestrian safety. With respect to A41 bus services there is an existing footway on the northern side of the Vendee Link Road which is wholly appropriate and safe crossings have been provided at the site access roundabout to cater for these movements. A further connection is provided to the north of the hotel site.

Public Transport

14. However, the public transport strategy for the site is not reliant on the inter-urban bus services on the A41. In line with Stantec's own forecasts a significant proportion of employees are likely to live and work within Bicester. There is therefore a clear rationale in linking the site into a local town bus service as proposed by OCC. This bus service would ultimately be sustained from fare revenue but 'pump priming' whereby developers support the cost in the short term so that the services can be provided for during the early stages of development.



This is common practice. Albion Land support this and agree to the funding basis as set out in the OCC consultation response dated 23rd October 2019. This funding is clearly related to a bus service to serve the site and therefore wholly in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

15. A suitable location for a bus stop and shelter is proposed on the Wendlebury Road site frontage. It has been agreed that the actual stop and shelter would be implemented by OCC, with the works funded via a S106 contribution. This supports an anti-clockwise circular service which would also benefit the Bicester 4 site (which have also agreed to contribute on an equivalent basis), Bicester Avenue and indeed Bloombridge's development (albeit with no contribution to be provided as part of their consent) in particular the hotel site.
16. The proposed location on Wendlebury Road is significantly better related to the hotel, proposed David Lloyd club and proposed Albion Land employment than a location on the Vendee Link Road. There is no footway on the southern side of Vendee Link Road at present nor safe and suitable crossings to this parcel of land. This will improve (at the eastern end) at the site access roundabout but the location will still be indirect and hence suboptimal. This does not preclude Bloombridge from providing a further stop in association with their Phase 1b implementation.

Vendee Link Road

17. The Vendee Link Road is a 7.3m single carriageway road with excellent vertical and horizontal alignment. Stantec report that their client Bloombridge feels that it should be widened 'to send a message about the type of place that Bicester 10 should be', a message of 'quality and sustainability'. There is no technical justification for this. In terms of quality the geometry accords with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, the national standard for roads of strategic importance, and the road is of contemporary construction with significant residual life. There is no justification on capacity grounds as even in the future years only a fraction of the link capacity will be used. Widening cannot be reconciled with any sustainability criteria.
18. The proposed development does however offer a significant enhancement in terms of the junction of the Vendee Link Road and Wendlebury Road. This will be upgraded to a roundabout with entry path curvature and visibility in accordance with standards and pedestrian and cycle facilities to ensure that the requirements of all road users are met. This will be a significant benefit to all road users, including those accessing the Bloombridge site, given the limited capacity of the existing layout. It also avoids implementation of the mini-roundabout scheme previously proposed by Bloombridge which (as indicatively proposed) is poorly suited to commercial traffic, does not meet the standards set out in CD116 including departures on minimum visibility requirements and made no provision for pedestrians or cyclists. The proposed Phase 2 roundabout not only enables the Albion Land development but it is unclear how the Bloombridge phase 1b site could come forward without it.

VALUE RETAIL LTD

Employment Travel Demand

19. As set out above, the proposed development responds to site's allocation and known market requirements for knowledge industries; these users typically require a higher office element than the 10% ancillary office space that would typically be allowed. The Transport Assessment



therefore adopts two approaches to ensure that worst case travel demand is estimated. These are to calculate the demand on basis of science park trip rates, which have been inflated by 10% for robustness, and modified B1 industrial rates to account for 35% office space. The office element of the development will be controlled by condition.

20. It is unnecessary to test 100% B1a use on the site because this is not what is proposed by the planning application (and nor is it what is sought by the allocation). The application must be considered on the basis of the submitted scheme.
21. The Science Park trip rates have been calculated on a park comprising 92 independent businesses. The vehicle trips have been uplifted by 10% to reflect differences in the baseline mode share. These have been further cross checked and shown to be robust based on other B1b consents in Oxfordshire including the Begbroke Science Park and against likely employment densities based on the HCA employment density guidance.

David Lloyd Travel Demand

22. To inform the travel demand forecasts for the health and racquets club a review of available information (including TA data used for other sites) was undertaken. The TRICS database is the industry standard travel demand tool. It allows a common and transparent basis for Local Authorities and consultants working on behalf of developers. The TRICS sites selected are considered directly comparable and a further review of the more recently published data further support these forecasts. Given the consistency of the available data set it is not considered that further surveys are required. Note that whilst a significant proportion of the demand for the David Lloyd Club during the peak hours are likely to be secondary trips, the operational appraisals have been undertaken on the basis that these are primary trips making the results more robust.

Trip Distribution

23. The trip distribution has been based on the 2011 Census journey to work data for the Cherwell 015 middle super output area. The site is actually in Cherwell 016. Cherwell 016 is a large rural area including the surrounding villages whereas Cherwell 015 covers the southeast quadrant of the existing built up area of Bicester. Cherwell 015 is therefore clearly a far more representative proxy. This was also used by PBA (Stantec) in their appraisal on behalf of Bloombridge for Bicester Gateway Phase 1.
24. In terms of assignment of traffic Motion assigned 27% traffic to A41 South, i.e. toward A34 and M40. DTA assign 28% traffic to A41 South (as did PBA on behalf of Bloombridge). It may be that the small difference is solely down to rounding but it is clear the implications on the road network to the south are not downplayed within the TA.

Committed Development Sites

25. The committed development sites relevant to the Bicester Catalyst site were agreed at the scoping stage with CDC and OCC. It would be wholly reasonable for OCC to request that Motion consider different committed development sites for other sites such as their 'Great Wolf' site in Chesterton where these directly relevant. This however is not the case for the Bicester Catalyst site



Strategic Transport Modelling

26. Motion assert that the Bicester Traffic Model is flawed in that it has 'lost' traffic. On receipt of the data from OCC, DTA reviewed the data and some anomalous patterns were identified. The modelling was subsequently refined by WYG on behalf of OCC and reissued to DTA by OCC. On this basis DTA are content that the data is fit for purpose.
27. With respect to the variation in the modelling compared to the Bicester 4, there are clearly two effects here neither of which can be characterised as flaws:
- The strategic modelling has rebalanced the origin destination matrices. The Bicester 4 TA was based on a model run without Bicester 4 on which Motion added the employment development without constraining the residential trip ends. This is not a criticism as the same approach has been adopted by DTA for the Bicester 10 site. It does however mean that there is no commensurate reduction in out-commuting. Had Motion constrained their matrices the impact on the A41 corridor would be less and this is now reflected in the strategic modelling where Bicester 4 is a committed development.
 - The second difference is that there is a reassignment within the model with traffic switching to Vendee Drive. This may be a sensitivity within the model but more likely reflecting the impact on the Bicester 4 development locally on the A41 corridor.

Saturday Peak Period

28. The Saturday peak period is not critical as the travel demand related to the employment development will be significantly reduced. Moreover whilst the health and racquets club will generate travel demand on Saturdays the level of demand (will be similar to the weekday AM peak at circa 1-2 vehicles per minute two-way) will not be material in the context of the wider flows on the A41 corridor. The TA as presented is therefore proportionate.

Conclusion

29. DTA has considered the detailed points raised by Stantec and Motion in their respective technical notes and has responded to each. The TA as submitted, and supported by additional clarification where requested by OCC, is an appropriate basis to consider the transport impacts of the proposed development.