

PLANNING STATEMENT

CATALYST BICESTER

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Executive Summary

Albion Land is seeking planning consent for the second phase of development at Bicester Gateway, which is allocated for knowledge economy development in Cherwell District Council (“CDC”)’s adopted Development Plan (“DP”).

Their proposals for “Catalyst Bicester” will develop the remaining area of the allocation in full, alongside redevelopment of the poultry farm adjacent to it. The proposal is for B1 uses and a health and racquets club in a high quality, landscaped setting, and creation of an ecological wetland area.

The Vision

The DP promotes Bicester Gateway as a prime location for science and research, technology transfer and commercial application of knowledge and innovation within Cherwell.

Catalyst Bicester has the potential to help realise CDC’s ambition for the town by enabling businesses which either have or want links to the Oxford cluster, as well as spin-out companies, to locate in the town. It will also complement other existing and proposed development within the technology corridor from Oxford to Northamptonshire and “the Arc” between Oxford and Cambridge.

The Arc is of vital economic importance in the UK. Driven by sectors such as biopharma, tech and aerospace, the Arc contributes £111 billion a year to the UK economy¹. This disaggregated cluster of high-growth industries has the potential to expand and evolve to deliver a far greater contribution to the wealth of the region and the rest of the UK.

Being part of the knowledge economy “revolution” will enable Cherwell to reap some of the economic benefits of this unprecedented growth and diversification. To deliver transformational growth, Catalyst Bicester will need to build on the breadth of existing assets and strengths of the local area; these include globally renowned life sciences businesses, high-performance technology and motorsport engineering, advanced manufacturing, future mobility technologies, and creative and digital industries².

There is a substantial body of evidence that demonstrates knowledge-based companies prioritise the availability of high-quality, flexible commercial floorspace³. This needs to have good access to a range of well-being contributors, including opportunities for active travel, recreation and health and wellness. These are all critical factors in decisions about where they should (re)locate their business.

Demand is usually for a variety of workspaces encompassed in single buildings. These workspaces may need to incorporate (inter alia) wet and dry labs, offices for computer modelling, space for product development and testing, and specialised industrial floorspace for precision engineering and high-tech manufacturing.

Development Response

B1 Development

Albion Land has a proven track record of successful commercial development in Bicester. Through delivery of these sites and advice from their professional team, they have acquired in-depth knowledge and

¹ MHCLG: The Oxford-Cambridge Arc, Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners (March 2019)

² HM Government: Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (July 2019)

³ Bidwells: Oxford-Cambridge Arc (May 2019)

understanding of the local economic market. Via investment in several strategic sites in the town, Albion Land has an ongoing, long-term commitment to the town's economic success.

Catalyst Bicester will be in a class of its own, unlike any other existing or proposed business parks in the town or immediate vicinity.

The scheme is brought forward as a direct response to known market demand for flexible accommodation in a high-quality environment, capable of meeting the rapidly evolving requirements of the high-technology and science sectors and realising the Government's ambitions for commercialisation of research and development. The development proposals are a sensitive, yet imaginative response to the opportunities (and challenges) presented at Bicester Gateway.

They have been shaped by market research⁴, discussions with key stakeholders, CDC Officers and, critically, potential occupiers. They have also been informed by comprehensive technical and environmental investigations at the Site.

The scheme will deliver up to 33,600 sq.m of floorspace, for a range of uses falling within Use Class B1. This component of the development has the prospect of delivering up to 1,750 permanent new jobs at the Site.

Health and Racquets Club

The health and racquets club proposed alongside the employment floorspace, along with the intended approach to the design and landscaping of the Site, directly addresses the health and well-being priorities of high-technology and knowledge-based businesses and their employees.

It also aligns with the commitment to promote workplace health and well-being which is embedded in the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy.

This is in addition to the contribution they will make to the health and well-being of the wider Bicester community. The public benefits of improving health and wellness provision within the town are substantial in their own right.

It is acknowledged that such a proposal does not fully accord with the DP allocation for the Site. However, this submission demonstrates that there are no alternative suitable sites in Bicester to accommodate this component of the scheme and it will not harm the town centre, nor affect planned investment elsewhere.

In fact, the opposite is true. Rather than conflicting with the objective of job creation, the proposed health and racquets club will have a symbiotic relationship with the employment development and the proposed hotel in the first phase of development at Bicester Gateway, which will also provide business amenities including meeting spaces and conference facilities.

It has the potential to accelerate take-up (and therefore delivery) at the Site, whilst maximising the prospects of attracting "best in class" industries to Bicester who know that their staff prioritise quality of life and well-being when making decisions about where they want to work.

⁴ VSL and Partners: Market Report (June 2019)

The proposed health and racquets club will also generate employment and, even after considering the area of the allocation already set aside for the hotel use, in the order of 80% of the developable area of the allocation will remain available for employment development.

Redevelopment of Poultry Farm

The redevelopment of the poultry farm, whilst beyond the allocation boundary, will also contribute towards the achievement of the Development Plan objectives for Bicester Gateway. It represents a logical, self-contained extension to Catalyst Bicester and provides additional developable area at the Site, which is constrained by a range of factors, including flood risk. Cessation of the poultry farm operations will also improve the environmental quality and amenity of the Site.

Ecological Wetland Area

An ecological wetland area, which will act as a buffer to the watercourse to the south-east of the Site, will be created alongside the business park. It will comprise an area of species-rich grassland which will contribute towards the achievement of net biodiversity gain at the Site. This makes best use of land within flood zone 3, where built development is restricted, and will provide a valuable area of additional habitat that is attractive to a range of priority species. The wetland area will be transferred to Banbury Ornithological Society in due course. The proposals for this part of the scheme have been developed in consultation with them.

Development Management

The proposals comprise business park development, that will be set alongside a new area of ecological wetland and within a landscaped setting that will be punctuated by tree and shrub planting and swales.

The development management considerations set out in the DP, including aspirations for high-quality design befitting of this gateway location on the edge of Bicester, have been considered in the detailed design of the health and racquets club and the indicative proposals for the rest of the scheme.

The potential impacts of development on highways and transport, flood risk and drainage, biodiversity, designated heritage assets, trees, landscape and visual amenity, noise, air quality and odour have all been assessed as part of the Applications. It is demonstrated that the development would not have any adverse effects on the built or natural environment that cannot be minimised and mitigated to an acceptable level.

In conclusion, the delivery of Catalyst Bicester will have a transformational effect on the local economy and will enable the successful establishment of a technology, science and innovation-focussed knowledge cluster at Bicester.

The proposals capitalise on the opportunities for economic growth that come from the town's location in the Arc and could lead to the creation of up to 1,750 new jobs depending on the final mix of occupiers. They will deliver truly sustainable development in the form of bespoke commercial buildings in a high-quality landscaped setting and which benefit from access to a range of amenities. This will be attractive to knowledge economy occupiers and will directly and indirectly support their business operations.

The proposals, for the most part, accord with the DP allocation for Bicester Gateway. Taken as a whole, they are entirely consistent with CDC's aims and objectives for supporting the knowledge-based economy. They are also aligned with the Government's strategic focus and ambitions for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Albion Land (the “Applicant”), in support of their proposed development at land at Promised Land Farm, Wendlebury Road, Bicester (the “Site”), shown at **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1 – Site Location and Extent



- 1.2 It supports two planning applications (“The Applications”) (described below) which are submitted concurrently.
- 1.3 Together, the Applications seek to deliver a high-quality business park, comprising flexible buildings and floorspace which is ideally suited to a full range of B1 uses (i.e. B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c).
- 1.4 The principle of developing the allocated part of the Site for the B1 uses proposed via Application 1 is supported by Cherwell District Council (“CDC”) through its allocation in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2015 (“CLP 2015”).
- 1.5 The health and racquets club also proposed by Application 1 will complement and catalyse the delivery of B1 uses across the remainder of the Site.

- 1.6 The land the subject of Application 2 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.
- 1.7 The Applications are made separately in recognition that the majority, but not all, of the Site is allocated for uses falling within Use Class B1 in CLP 2015. The Applications disaggregate the proposals for the allocated and un-allocated parts of the Site.
- 1.8 All the proposed buildings will be in a high-quality, landscaped setting. They benefit from proximity to several amenities, including a hotel on Phase 1 of the allocation (which is currently being delivered and is expected to be complete in early 2020) and Bicester Village. Additionally, the scheme will deliver a large area of species-rich wetland.

Application 1

- 1.9 Application 1 comprises the allocated part of the Site only, shown in **Figure 1.2**, hereafter referred to as “Site A”.

Figure 1.2 - Site A

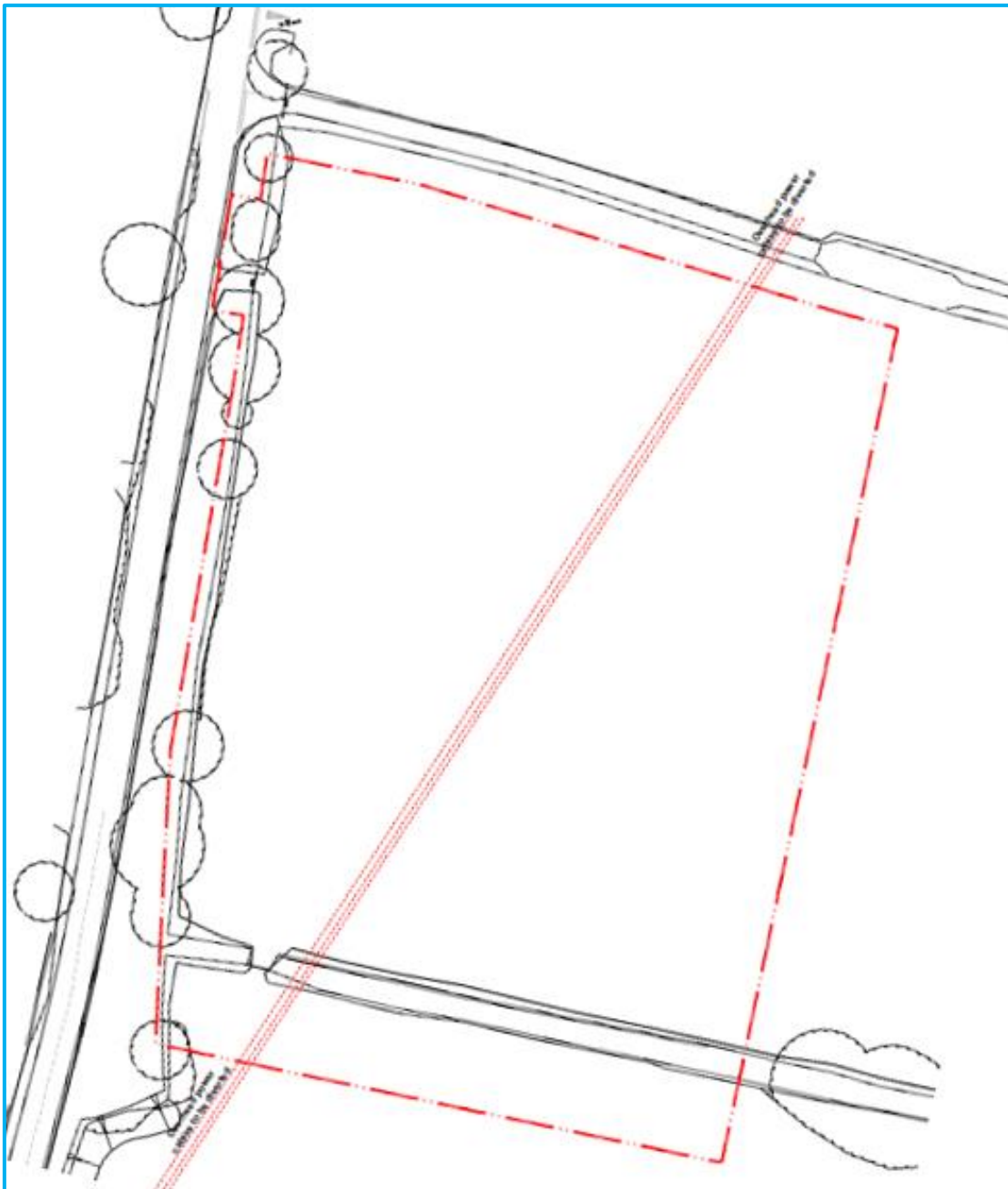


1.10 Application 1 is submitted in hybrid form and seeks:

- Outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for access) for up to 23,400sq.m of B1 development (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c); highway works (including provision of a new roundabout at the junction between Vendee Drive and Wendlebury Road); creation of a wetland and landscaped areas; and associated infrastructure works.
- Full planning permission for a health and racquets club, associated access and car parking, outdoor tennis courts, air dome, outdoor swimming pool, spa garden and terrace, and associated landscaping.

1.11 The health and racquets club is proposed in the northernmost part of Site A (see **Figure 1.3**), with direct vehicular access from Wendlebury Road.

Figure 1.3 – Health and racquets club



1.12 It is intended to be operated by, and has been designed specifically for, David Lloyd Clubs. The focus of the David Lloyd Clubs operation is on facilities for the enjoyment of tennis year-round, providing indoor, outdoor and covered courts. Though the best-in-class tennis facilities go hand in hand with a full-service gym, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and spa, and a host of facilities aimed at the discerning family fitness market.

1.13 It will therefore comprise:

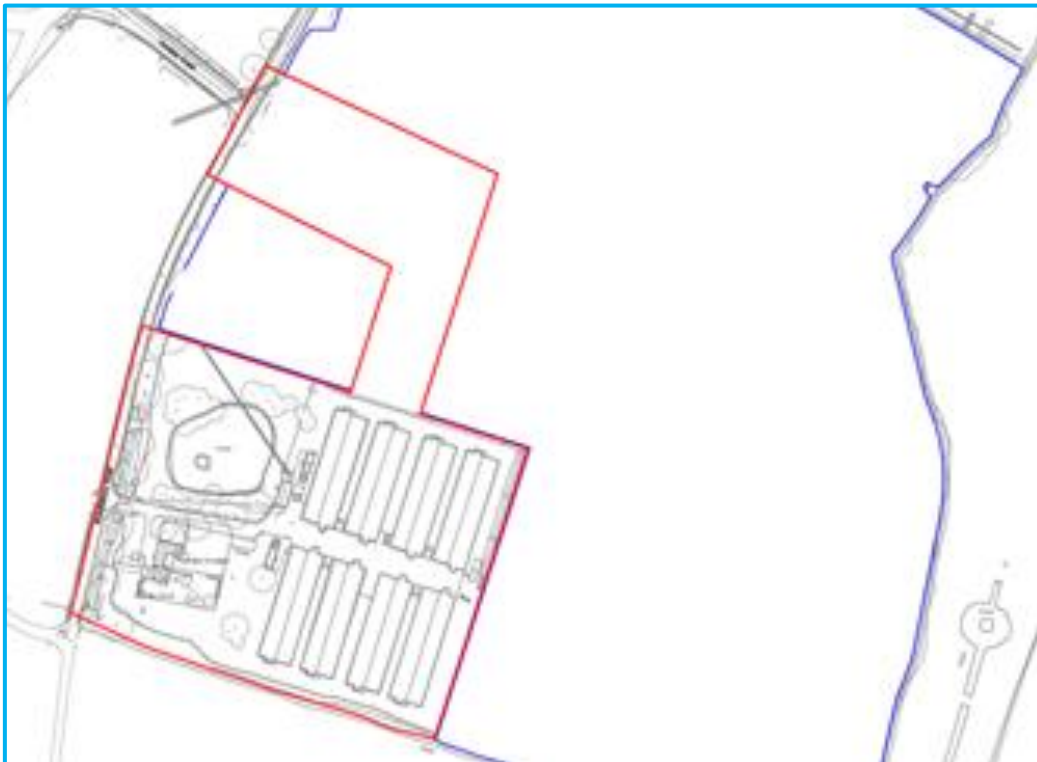
- Clubhouse building, incorporating sports hall, indoor tennis courts, fitness studios, fully equipped gym, indoor swimming pool, café/restaurant and member lounge areas, changing facilities, spa, ancillary offices and staff facilities;
- 2 no. outdoor tennis courts and a further 3 no. tennis courts within a permanent air dome;
- Outdoor swimming pool;
- Car parking (246 spaces), external plant and servicing areas.

Application 2

1.14 Application 2 comprises the unallocated part of the Site, namely the poultry farm, shown in **Figure 1.4**, hereafter referred to as “Site B”. It is submitted in outline, with all matters reserved except for access. It seeks permission for up to 10,200sq.m of B1 development (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c); access and associated landscaping and infrastructure works.

1.15 Access would be via the development proposed by Application 1. As such, no development would take place on Site B unless planning permission was granted for the employment development proposed on Site A. The Applicant is willing to accept a planning condition which restricts commencement of development pursuant to Application 2 until development has commenced on Site A.

Figure 1.3 – Site B



Planning Submission

- 1.16 This submission follows pre-application discussions with officers of CDC and Oxfordshire County Council (“OCC”) taking place since mid-2018.
- 1.17 During those discussions, CDC indicated it considers the development to be EIA Development with reference to the Environmental Impact Regulations 2017. The Applications are therefore accompanied by an Environment Statement (“ES”), the scope of which has been informed by advice from CDC.
- 1.18 The scope of the rest of the planning submission has also been agreed with CDC. A “Rochdale Envelope” approach⁵ has been adopted for the outline planning applications. Parameter Plans therefore fix a series of development parameters which control subsequent reserved matters applications.
- 1.19 This approach allows for a reasonable, worst case assessment of the potential environmental effects of the development, whilst maintaining flexibility in the outline consent to allow the development to be tailored to suit the specific needs of occupiers. Illustrative Masterplans and accompanying 3D images demonstrate a possible interpretation of the Parameters.
- 1.20 This Statement should be read alongside the other documents which make up the planning submission (see Schedule included at **Appendix 1**).
- 1.21 The Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** – explains the knowledge economy;
 - **Section 3** – provides a factual account of the Site, including a description of the Site and its surrounds, and a summary of relevant planning history;
 - **Section 4** – provides a summary of the stakeholder engagement undertaken prior to submission of the planning application;
 - **Section 5** – describes the proposed development;
 - **Section 6** – sets out planning policy relevant to the determination of the planning applications;
 - **Section 7** – considers the principle of the various components of the development;
 - **Section 8** – provides an assessment of the proposals against relevant development management policies;
 - **Section 8** – summarises the planning benefits of the proposals under the headings of the three components of sustainable development;
 - **Section 9** – sets out conclusions regarding the appropriateness of the proposals and the planning balance.

⁵ 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].

2 The Knowledge Economy

2.1 CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 (which allocates Site A and additional land to its west for B1 uses) describes the type of development sought as:

“Knowledge economy development... B1 business uses: high tech knowledge industries.”

What is the Knowledge Economy?

2.2 Whilst there is no definitive definition of the “knowledge economy”, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) defines knowledge-based economies in very general terms, as meaning:

“...those which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information.”

2.3 Knowledge is a critical driver of productivity and economic growth, leading to a focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance. The term therefore stems from this fuller recognition of the place of knowledge and technology in modern economies and encompasses (OECD 1996, OECD 2013):

- High-technology industries, such as computers and other information and communications technologies (both hardware and software), electronics, aerospace, automotive technologies, low and zero carbon technologies;
- Precision engineering and advanced manufacturing;
- Research and development activities, including technology and product testing, development and application;
- Creative and digital industries;
- Chemical engineering and life sciences, including biomedical sciences, biology, biotechnology and pharmacology; and
- Knowledge-intensive service sectors such as education, finance, communications and information.

2.4 The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, which sets out a plan to build on the region’s existing knowledge-intensive economic assets, confirms (Foreword):

“... ground breaking R&D is driving the creation of new, dynamic businesses hungry to grow and scale up; cutting edge products and services are solving the challenges in healthcare, mobility, energy and communications; and commercialisation of these new ideas is delivering manufacturing and supply chain opportunities...”

2.5 Knowledge-based operations therefore *“traverse both the office and industrial sectors”*⁶ but generally fall into Use Class B1, and are a mix of B1a, B1b and B1c uses.

⁶ Bidwells (March 2019) What Makes Science and Technology Firms Tick?

2.6 CDC has sought to promote the growth and reinforcement of a modern knowledge economy for Cherwell through the CLP 2015.

2.7 The preamble to Policy Bicester 10 consequently seeks to secure (Paragraph C.96):

“...a location for science and research and technology transfer and commercial application.”

2.8 It identifies (Paragraph C.98) that:

“There is an opportunity to encourage the knowledge economy in Cherwell by enabling businesses which have or want links to the Oxford cluster, as well as direct spin out companies from successful research and development, to locate in Bicester.”

Knowledge Economy Jobs

2.9 Given the breadth of the knowledge economy, a wide range of jobs will be created by knowledge economy development that provides for businesses operating in the above noted sectors.

2.10 Knowledge-workers are defined as:

“High level employees who apply theoretical and analytical knowledge, acquired through formal education, to develop new products or services”⁷.

2.11 Knowledge workers are those who acquire, manipulate, interpret, and apply information in order to perform multidisciplinary, complex and unpredictable work. They analyse information and apply expertise in a variety of areas to solve problems, generate ideas, or create new products and services.

2.12 Most of these jobs will therefore be highly skilled, though the skills and competencies required vary from business to business.

Accommodating the Knowledge Economy

2.13 The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development confirms:

“The term ‘knowledge economy’ may conjure up images of Silicon Valley, hi-tech start-ups and ‘digital natives’ living their lives online via citywide Wifi. But those are just some aspects of a concept that includes a wide range of activities that foster growth.”

2.14 The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy confirms that the region’s existing hubs are struggling to respond to demand for new premises. If this shortage of suitable accommodation is not addressed, it will constrain the knowledge industry’s potential to commercialise and innovate. It identifies that there is a particular lack of *“flexible laboratory and innovation space”*, both of which are critical to attracting investment.

2.15 The knowledge economy, by nature, evolves rapidly and is nascent. Science and technology encompass many diverse industries across the UK economy, each with their own complex set of characteristics and property requirements⁵.

⁷ Drucker, P. (1959) The Landmarks of Tomorrow

- 2.16 Many knowledge economy businesses require a range of different workspaces under one roof, incorporating office and administrative functions, studio and design spaces, research and product development/testing areas, manufacturing space, and storage and distribution.
- 2.17 At the start of their journey, companies tend to prefer flexible space but want to know that in time they can grow into new properties⁵. This is confirmed by the **Market Report** prepared by VSL and Partners which accompanies these applications, as well as the “business lifecycle” which is described in the Local Industrial Strategy.
- 2.18 The Market Report has been informed by several local case studies and considers the wider environmental characteristics that knowledge-based industries seek in order to support the attraction and retention of a highly skilled workforce.
- 2.19 Its conclusions are also supported by those of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, which confirms (inter alia) access to readily available lab space is a key constraint to growth in the biotechnology industries.
- 2.20 Flexibility is therefore required in any planning permission such that buildings and spaces built speculatively can be tailored to meet specific occupier requirements, or development which suits occupier needs can be delivered quickly and without the need to seek further consents from CDC.
- 2.21 It is also crucial that business park locations engender collaboration and make places that people can mix and talk. The shared spaces and overall amenities within and close to the business park are therefore critical⁵, with companies seeking buildings in landscaped settings that allow employees access to outside spaces and a range of on-site amenities, including opportunities for exercise, coffee shops/cafes and shared meeting facilities. In combination with the approved hotel, the proposed development will deliver these key spaces and amenities.

Why Bicester Gateway?

- 2.22 Bicester Gateway is located at a major gateway into the town, which has Garden Town status.
- 2.23 It is accessed directly from the A41, which is a key arterial route into Bicester and provides access to the M40 at Junction 9, less than 2 miles from the Site. The M40 is a critical corridor for the onward distribution of technologies that would be developed and commercialised at the Catalyst Bicester.
- 2.24 The Site is also within walking distance of Bicester Village Rail Station, which provides regular connections to Oxford and London.
- 2.25 Whilst much of the high-technology, knowledge-based economy is focussed on Oxford and Cambridge, Oxford is significantly constrained by its historic environment and Green Belt.
- 2.26 Bicester Gateway is located just 10 miles from Oxford, with good transport links between the two. It is also within the “technology corridor” that runs from Oxford to Northamptonshire and Oxford to Cambridge.
- 2.27 It also benefits from proximity to a range of amenities at Bicester Village and, in due course, the Holiday Inn Express under construction to the west of Wendlebury Road.

2.28 CLP 2015 (Paragraph C.99) confirms that economic development at the Site would:

1. Provide employment in Bicester, helping to reduce the number of people out-commuting to Oxford and London;
2. Complement the proposed employment development at Silverstone (which is focussed on high-technology engineering and provides industrial units and workshops to meet their needs⁸);
3. Form part of the Oxford/Northampton/Cambridge technology corridor.

The knowledge economy and its industries are not tightly defined. However, knowledge-based business do have a set of commonly shared characteristics and these dictate the types of development which are suitable to accommodate them.

For development at Bicester Gateway to be suitable for knowledge-based companies, buildings must provide flexible floorspace that can be fitted out and arranged internally to provide a range of different workspaces under one roof.

The wider business park must also provide a range of amenities on-site that make it an attractive place to work, and support aspirations for innovation and collaboration.

⁸ www.silverstone-park.com

3 Factual Account

- 3.1 This Section describes the Site and surrounding area. A detailed analysis of the Site and its context is provided in the Design and Access Statement (“DAS”).
- 3.2 This Section also summarises relevant planning history for the Site and its vicinity.

Site Description

- 3.3 The Site is shown in context at **Figure 3.1**. It comprises agricultural land, with an operational poultry farm within its south western corner.

Figure 3.1 – Site Context



- 3.4 The Site is relatively flat, and low-lying. It adjoins the south-western edge of Bicester. It is located to the east of Wendlebury Road, and the eastern end of Vendee Drive and near the A41/Vendee Drive junction.
- 3.5 Bicester Avenue Retail Park is to the north; a water course and open space to the east, with the railway line beyond; and agricultural land to the south. Vehicular access is from Wendlebury Road.

- 3.6 Site A comprises approximately 15.8ha of agricultural land, with hedges along the field boundaries and its borders.
- 3.7 Site B is approximately 4.6ha. It comprises a series of 8 poultry sheds, smaller scale ancillary buildings and a dwelling. A pond is located within the farm complex.
- 3.8 The western part of the Site is situated within Flood Zone 2/3, whilst the eastern part is within Flood Zone 1.

Surrounding Context

- 3.9 The surrounding area is undergoing significant change, with large swathes of neighbouring land allocated for development in CLP 2015
- 3.10 Immediately to the north of the Site is Bicester Avenue Home and Garden Centre, constructed in 2007. The Centre comprises retail stores set out in a U-formation, with car parking to the west and north east. To the north is open space (albeit with an application pending for an office park (see below)), beyond which lies an existing Tesco Superstore.
- 3.11 Bicester Town Centre is situated to the north of this. Sewage treatment works lie to the east of the Home and Garden Centre and north east of the Site.
- 3.12 A stream forms the eastern boundary of the Site, with an area of open space, and then railway tracks beyond. Beyond the railway tracks lies the former Ministry of Defence site (Graven Hill), which is allocated for mixed employment and housing uses by CLP 2015.
- 3.13 To the south of the Site lies a Scheduled Monument, Alchester Roman Site. The Scheduled Monument covers a large area of land, extending down to Langford Lane at its southern boundary.
- 3.14 To the south east of the Site, beyond Wendlebury Road, is Bicester Park Homes. This is a small residential caravan park.
- 3.15 Immediately to the west of the Site, on land between Oxford Road (A41) and Wendlebury Road, planning permission has been granted for B1 employment floorspace plus a hotel. This comprises Phase 1 of the CLP 2015 Bicester 10 allocation.
- 3.16 To the north west of the site, beyond the A41, land is allocated for residential development by CLP 2015.

Planning History

- 3.17 The only site-specific planning history relates to the poultry farm operations on Site B.
- 3.18 Several sites surrounding the Site have recently been developed, are currently under construction, or benefit from planning permission.
- 3.19 **Figure 3.2** identifies the location of these key surrounding sites, with further information provided below.

Figure 3.2 – Surrounding Sites Development Boundaries



1. Land North West of Bicester

- 3.20 To the north west of the Site, beyond the A41, land is allocated for residential uses. An outline planning permission (reference 06/00967/OUT) was approved in 2008 for up to 1,585 dwellings, plus other uses including secondary school, primary schools, hotel, employment uses and retail uses. Delivery is well underway across the site, with more than 1,000 of the residential units occupied.

2. Graven Hill (Former Ministry of Defence Site)

- 3.21 To the east of the Site, beyond the railway line, the former Ministry of Defence site (Graven Hill) is allocated for mixed employment and residential uses. An outline planning application (reference: 11/01494/OUT) was approved in August 2014 for up to 1,900 dwellings, along with a primary school, community uses, retail uses and employment uses. The first phase of development is underway.

3. Bicester Gateway Phase 1

- 3.22 Immediately to the west of the Site, on land between Oxford Road (A41) and Wendlebury Road, outline planning permission (ref: 16/02586/OUT) was granted in July 2018 for 14,971sq.m (GEA) of B1 employment floorspace, plus a hotel. This comprises Phase 1 of development at allocation Bicester 10. In March 2018, reserved matters were approved for the hotel. Construction of the hotel has commenced, with completion anticipated in early 2020.

3.23 The hotel use does not explicitly accord with Policy Bicester 10, but in granting planning consent CDC considered that its delivery would support and catalyse the development of the remainder of the Bicester 10 allocation.

3.24 It is material to the proposals that are the subject of Application 2 that the application also included land beyond the allocation boundary and the settlement limits. CDC accepted development here on the basis that the additional land formed a logical and self-contained extension to the site.

4. Bicester Office Park

3.25 Allocation Bicester 4 is located to the north of the Home and Garden Centre. This site is allocated for Use Class B1a employment development (up to 6,000 jobs). It benefits from an extant planning permission (ref: 07/01106/OUT) for 60,000 sq.m of office, a hotel and car parking and other associated infrastructure.

3.26 An outline planning application (ref: 17/02534/OUT) for most of this site was submitted in December 2017 and is currently pending determination. It benefits from a Planning Committee resolution to grant planning permission.

3.27 The application proposes up to 60,000sq.m of Class B1 development across primarily office floorspace (Use Class B1a) and up to 15,000sq.m of research and development floorspace (Use Class B1b).

The Site comprises relatively flat, low-lying agricultural land and buildings on the south-western edge of Bicester.

The town will grow substantially over the period of CLP 2015 (which runs to 2031), with several large-scale allocations for development on land in the vicinity of the Site. Development is already coming forward on many of these allocations. The character of the area is in transition and there will shortly be a substantial area of new homes and employment in this part of the town.

Through determination of the planning application for Phase 1 of development at Bicester 10, CDC has accepted that:

- “Other” uses are appropriate as part of B1-led development at Bicester Gateway, where these would support and catalyse wider delivery of employment development at the allocation;
- Commercial development on land adjacent to, but beyond the boundary of the allocation, is supported where (inter alia) that development would comprise a logical extension to it and its use would support the overriding policy objectives of Policy Bicester 10.

4 Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

- 4.1 Pre-application, the Applicant has engaged with Officers of CDC and OCC, local stakeholders and the local community via Members and the Parish Councils.
- 4.2 This Section provides a summary of the engagement, the scope of which was discussed and agreed with CDC Officers prior to submission of the Applications.

Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council

Engagement

- 4.3 Several pre-application meetings were held with Officers at CDC to discuss and consider all aspects of the proposed development. These meetings were planning led, but the planning officer drew on relevant technical and design expertise as required.
- 4.4 OCC, in their role as highways authority and lead local flood authority, were party to these and additional meetings with the highways and transportation consultants acting on the project (David Tucker Associates).
- 4.5 Various members of the consultant team also engaged directly with their peers at CDC to confirm the scope of their respective survey work and assessments, this included CDC's Landscape Architect and Biodiversity Officer.

Advice - CDC

- 4.6 CDC Officers confirmed that CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 seeks to secure delivery of *"B1 floor space (i.e. a, b or c)... for high tech knowledge industries"* and that it was accepted *"not all high tech businesses will be office based and that therefore a B1a scheme across the site is not likely to meet the overall site intentions of the site being for high tech knowledge industries"*.
- 4.7 CDC Officers also agreed that *"flexible space is likely to be optimum in trying to attract the types of occupiers that are within the high tech knowledge industry"*.
- 4.8 They went on to indicate their preference for the delivery of *"an integrated juxtaposition of uses rather than a range of similar buildings and that... there should be the ability for some office space to be provided without this necessarily being linked to a larger format building"*.
- 4.9 They requested that market evidence be included within any planning submission to demonstrate that the scheme was a direct response to known market requirements from the knowledge-based industries. This is included in the submitted **Market Report** and, as considered elsewhere in this Statement, the proposed development parameters are sufficiently flexible to enable a range of building formats and scales to come forward at the Site in response to occupier requirements in due course.

Advice – OCC

- 4.10 The scope of the Transport Assessment was agreed with OCC Officers. As part of pre-application discussions it was also confirmed that some of the impacts of the development on the highway network would require mitigation.

- 4.11 OCC suggested this should be achieved through a proportionate contribution towards the South East Perimeter Road ("SEPR"), the scale of which would be determined with reference to the number of peak-hour trips generated by the development.

CDC Members

- 4.12 It was the Applicant's intention to present the proposals to CDC Members via a Pre-Application Presentation to the Planning Committee and other local Ward Members.
- 4.13 This approach had been adopted on other schemes in the local area previously, for example at North West Bicester. However, Officers advised that such a presentation would not be permissible in this case.
- 4.14 Instead, alongside the submission of the Applications the Applicants have provided Members with information about the proposed development in the form of a Vision Document (a copy of which is included at **Appendix 4**).
- 4.15 This was accompanied by an invitation to contact the development team with any questions about the proposals, and the offer of a meeting should Members wish.
- 4.16 The same document (and offer of contact/a meeting) has also been circulated to the Parish Councils.

Public Consultation

- 4.17 It was agreed with the Planning Officer that, given the relatively recent allocation of the Site for employment development (which the proposals generally accord with) a public consultation event to inform Bicester residents and businesses of the proposals was not necessary in this case.
- 4.18 As described in the **Market Report**, some consultation with local businesses has been undertaken to inform the development proposals.
- 4.19 The submission of the Applications has also been publicised via a News Release to the Bicester Advertiser, directing members of the public and other interested parties to the project website.

The Site is allocated in for employment development by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10. CLP 2015 was adopted relatively recently and, as such, CDC Officers confirmed that extensive public engagement prior to submission of the Applications was unnecessary. The Applicant has consulted with knowledge economy businesses to inform the development proposals.

The Applicant has, however, had a series of pre-application discussions with CDC and OCC Officers prior to submitting the Applications. The scope of the Applications, and the proposed development itself, has been shaped by the advice that has been received.

The Applicant has sought to inform Members and the Parish Council of the proposals prior to submission and would welcome the opportunity to engage with them further during the post-submission stage of the Applications.

5 Proposed Development

5.1 The development proposals are presented in two planning applications:

- **Application 1** - Hybrid planning application for a health and racquets club (full) and for B1 (B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c) employment floorspace;
- **Application 2** – Outline planning application for B1 (B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c) employment floorspace.

5.2 The detailed consent for the health and racquets club (forming part of Application 1) would sit on top of, and overlap, part of the area which would also be subject to the outline permission. It would be an alternative development for that part of Site A, with either the health and racquets club or employment floorspace being deliverable in due course.

5.3 Each of the Applications can be determined independently. The development proposed by Application 2 would, however, only come forward if Application 1 was approved. The Applications therefore result in four potential development scenarios, summarised at **Table 5.1** and illustrated by **Figure 5.1**. Whilst presented in this way, it is the Applicant's preference for the health and racquets club to be an integral part of the business park environment which is created at the Site.

Figure 5.1 – Potential Development Scenarios

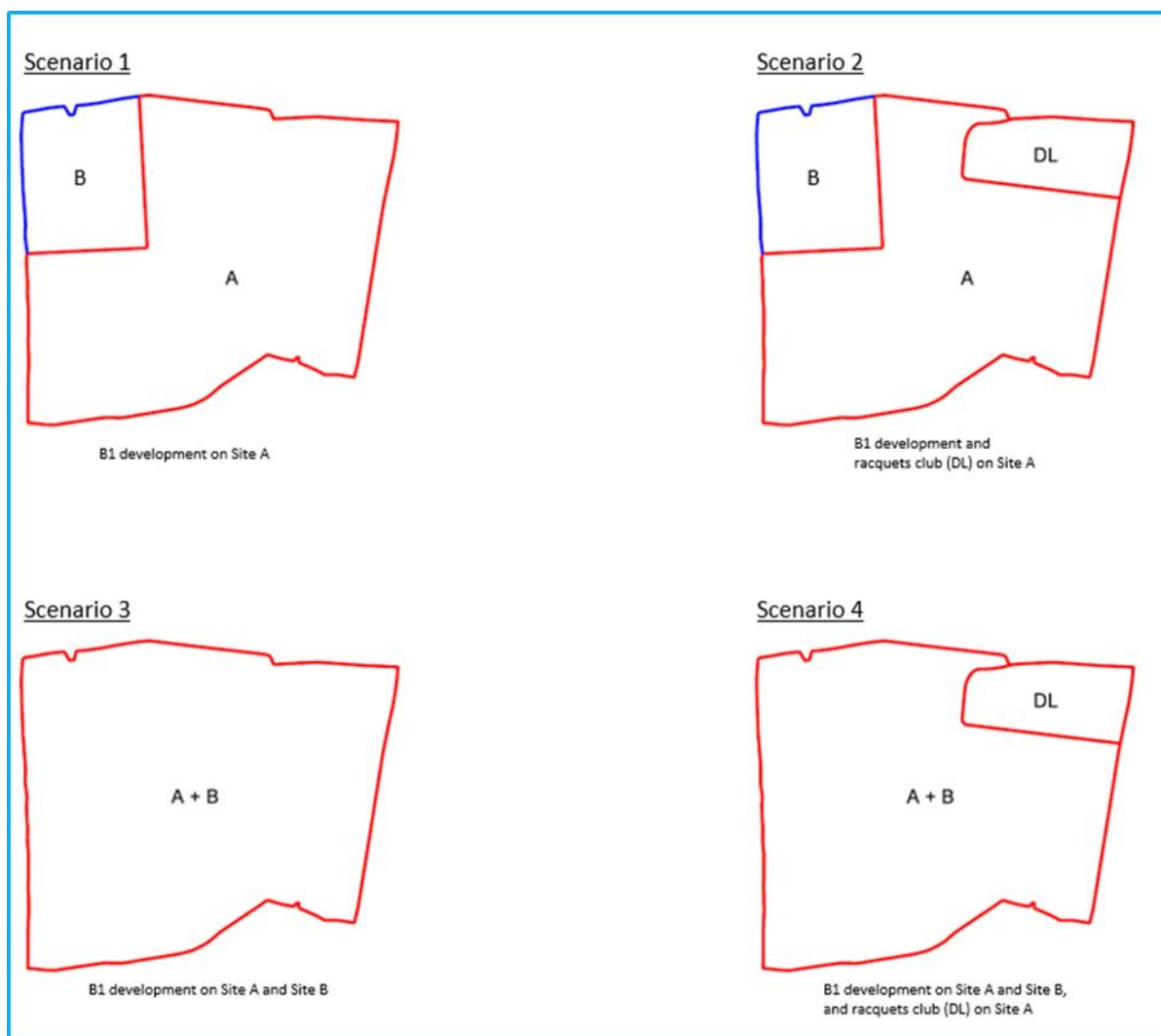


Table 5.1 – Development Scenarios

Planning Application Outcomes	Scenario	Development Description	Gross B1 Floorspace (sq.m)
Application 1 Approved	1	B1 development on Site A	23,400
	2	B1 development and health and racquets club on Site A	16,800
Application 1 and 2 Approved	3	B1 development on Site A and B	33,600
	4	B1 development on Site A and B, health and racquets club on Site A	27,000

- 5.4 A detailed description of the development proposals is set out within the **Development Specification** and **Design and Access Statement**, both forming part of this submission, and summarised below.

Application 1

- 5.5 Application 1 seeks outline planning permission for employment floorspace in outline (all matters reserved except for access) and full planning permission for a health and racquets club.

Outline Application

- 5.6 The outline application seeks permission for up to 23,000sq.m of for employment floorspace (Use Class B1a and/or Use Class B1b and/or Use Class B1c) across the whole of Site A, with the exception of an area of ecological wetland which covers the eastern part of the Site. This will be species-rich grassland alongside the existing watercourse along this boundary.
- 5.7 The total amount of B1a floorspace for Site A will be capped at 35%, i.e. 8,190sq.m. This B1a floorspace could be delivered either as part of flexible B1 floorspace and/or as standalone offices/office buildings depending on occupier requirements.
- 5.8 Whilst some speculative development may take place at the Site, reserved matters applications are for the most part expected to be developed and submitted in response to specific occupier requirements.
- 5.9 A Parameter Plans approach has therefore been adopted, which confirms a development “envelope” via a series of drawings. Reserved matters would be brought forward within this envelope. This is explained in the **Development Specification Document**. Strategic areas of landscaping are fixed via this approach, with drainage and flood risk compensation/mitigation features set within them.
- 5.10 The proposed means of access into the Site from the A41/Vendee Drive is submitted in detail as part of the outline component of Application 1.
- 5.11 A four-arm roundabout is proposed at the junction of Vendee Drive and Wendlebury Road. The junction requires the realignment and minor widening works to Wendlebury Road along part of the Site frontage.

- 5.12 Neither widening nor realignment of Vendee Drive is required as part of the works. No works to the Vendee Drive/A41 roundabout are proposed as part of the development. A footpath connection to the A41 is proposed within highway land, to the north-east of the hotel development within Bicester Gateway Phase 1 to improve pedestrian access to the bus stop facilities on the A41.
- 5.13 A zone within which internal vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access will be formed within the Site is shown as part of 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. These internal roads will remain private.
- 5.14 Application 1 is accompanied by an Illustrative Masterplan and visuals (**Figure 5.2**) which shows one way in which development could be brought forward in Scenario 1.

Figure 5.2 – Illustrative Masterplan (Scenario 1)



Full Application

- 5.15 Full planning permission is sought for the health and racquets club (use Class D2). The health and racquets club has been designed for and is intended to be occupied by David Lloyd Clubs.
- 5.16 The health and racquets club will comprise a clubhouse, full-service gym and fitness studios, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, all-weather tennis court enclosure, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, spa, terrace areas and associated parking and landscaping.
- 5.17 The facilities are all integrated with one another to form a high-quality health, recreation and sports facility which is aimed at the discerning family fitness market. The David Lloyd Clubs approach to health and fitness is explained more fully in the **Operator Statement** submitted as part of Application 1.
- 5.18 The health and racquets club has its own, dedicated access from Wendlebury Road. This will lead to a member car park with 246 car parking spaces. A cycle shelter is also provided at the front of the building, providing 20 cycle spaces.

- 5.19 The boundaries of the health and racquets club site are landscaped, and there is some incidental landscaping proposed within the car parking areas and outdoor member spaces. The form and massing of the building, and the overall layout of the site, is dictated by its function, the spatial requirements of each component, and the need to move easily between some of these spaces. The materiality of the building has been carefully considered. It is intended to use a variety of high-quality materials, including feature cladding and glazing materials, to reduce it to a more human scale.

Figure 5.3 – Health and racquets club



- 5.20 Scenario 2 would involve the delivery of the health and racquets club alongside the proposed B1 development. An Illustrative Masterplan for this development scenario is shown at **Figure 5.4**.

Figure 5.4 – Illustrative Masterplan (Scenario 2)



Application 2

- 5.21 Application 2 seeks outline planning consent for up to 10,200sq.m of employment floorspace (Use Class B1a and/or Use Class B1b and/or Use Class B1c) at Site B.
- 5.22 As with Application 1, the total amount of B1a floorspace for Site B will be capped at 35% of the gross floorspace, i.e. 3,570sq.m. Again, this floorspace could be delivered within flexible buildings, as standalone offices, or a combination of both. The detailed design of buildings will generally be developed and submitted in response to specific occupier requirements.
- 5.23 A Parameter Plans approach has been adopted with Application 2 (like Application 1), which confirms a development “envelope” within which reserved matters would be brought forward.
- 5.24 Site B is accessed via Site A. An access zone within which the access across Site A will be formed is included within the application boundary.
- 5.25 Since development pursuant to Application 2 would only ever come forward in combination with development permitted by Application 1, the application is accompanied by two Illustrative Masterplans which show the two ways in which development could be brought forward (Scenarios 3 and 4).
- 5.26 Scenario 3, which shows B1 development across Site A and Site B is shown at **Figure 5.5**. Scenario 4 would include the health and racquets club in place of some of the B1 development.

Figure 5.5 – Illustrative Masterplan (Scenario 3)



Outline planning permission is sought for up to 33,600 sq.m of B1 development, via two planning applications. Development proposed by Application 2 would not be delivered unless development proposed by Application 1 is also being delivered.

A flexible planning permission is sought to enable a mix of B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c uses to be delivered at the Site in buildings which directly respond to the requirements of knowledge-economy occupiers in terms of their design, form, scale, configuration and relationship with one another. A Parameter Plans approach has therefore been adopted that will enable detailed proposals for the Site to be brought forward in due course. The provision of a high-quality landscaped setting, flood risk compensation and mitigation features and creation of a species-rich wetland area are fixed via this approach.

Illustrative materials have been provided but these show just one possible interpretation of the Parameter Plans. Whilst the overall office content of the development is capped in recognition of highways capacity constraints, a wide range of buildings are likely to be developed at the Site. This could potentially include standalone office buildings should the market require it.

Full planning permission is also sought for a health and racquets club (D2 use) on part of the Site. The design and layout of the proposal is dictated by the proposed use and the intended occupier's business model. The Applicant wishes to deliver the health and racquets club as a complementary and catalysing component of the wider business park development.

6 Relevant Planning Policy

Introduction

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 This Section provides the national and local planning policy context relevant to the proposals, and describes the designations affecting the Site.
- 6.3 In this instance, the adopted Development Plan (“DP”) comprises:
- Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (July 2015) (“CLP 2015”);
 - Saved, retained policies of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (1996); and
 - Saved policies from Oxfordshire County Council’s Minerals and Waste Local Plan 1996.
- 6.4 In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (February 2019) sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions that carries significant weight.
- 6.5 A full schedule of the planning policies relevant to the determination of the Applications is included at **Appendix 2**.
- 6.6 In summary:
- Site A is allocated for B1 development by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10;
 - Site B is beyond the allocation boundary and the town’s settlement limits but the DP (Policies PSD1 and SLE1) and NPPF (Paragraphs 80-82) support proposals for employment development where certain criteria are met. The NPPF affords “significant weight” to the need to support economic growth (Paragraph 80) and in this case, relevant policy criteria are satisfied and there is a compelling case in favour of allowing additional B1 development beyond the allocation boundary;
 - The proposed health and racquets club would not directly accord with the requirements of the allocation but the DP (Policy BSC10) and NPPF (Paragraphs 91 and 96) are supportive of development that will give rise to health and wellbeing benefits, or improve access to opportunities for sport and physical activity. It would also accord with the spirit of DP and NPPF policies aimed at supporting economic growth and prosperity.

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 6.7 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, meaning that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay (Paragraph 11c).
- 6.8 Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations indicate that the plan should not be followed (NPPF Paragraph 12).

- 6.9 Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF state that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This will be achieved through three overarching objectives:
- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
 - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities;
 - An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.
- 6.10 This Statement demonstrates how the development proposals achieve sustainable development, contributing to all three of these objectives through the proposed development mix and its design approach.

Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

- 6.11 Section 6 of the NPPF expands the economic objective, with Paragraph 80 stating that:

“Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.”

- 6.12 Local planning policies are required to be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices, and to enable a rapid response to the changes in economic circumstances (Paragraph 81).
- 6.13 Paragraph 82 requires planning decisions to:

“Recognise and address the specific requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries.”

- 6.14 The primary objective of the development proposals is to respond to the needs of the knowledge-based industries in this part of Oxfordshire.

Vitality of Town Centres

- 6.15 Health and fitness clubs (Use Class D2) are defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF as a “*main town centre use*”.
- 6.16 Paragraph 86 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre, nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan.
- 6.17 Paragraph 89 requires an impact assessment for leisure development outside town centres over a floorspace threshold of 2,500sq.m of gross floorspace.
- 6.18 The proposed health and racquets club is, by design, a less intensive D2 use than typical health and fitness clubs. It is generally accepted that such less-intensive uses would not be appropriate in town centre locations.
- 6.19 National Planning Practice Guidance (“the PPG”) (Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 2b-011-20190722) is also clear that the sequential test (whilst demonstrating flexibility on format and scale) should have regard to the intended occupier’s business model. It also recognises that certain main town centre

uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations.

- 6.20 Nevertheless, this submission demonstrates that (i) there is no other suitable or available sites in the town centre (nor other allocated sites) which could accommodate this component of the scheme and (ii) the proposed health and racquets club would not harm the vitality and viability of Bicester Town Centre.

Healthy Communities

- 6.21 The NPPF (Paragraph 96) confirms the importance of opportunities for sport and physical activity for the health and well-being of communities.
- 6.22 The proposed wetland area and the health and racquets club would directly address this policy, as would the wider intended landscape setting of the proposed business park.

Sustainable Transport

- 6.23 The NPPF (Paragraph 108) requires safe and suitable access to development to be achieved for all users and that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network or highway safety can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.
- 6.24 Paragraph 109 makes clear that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.25 The impacts of the development proposals on the local highway network have been considered as part of the Applications and it is demonstrated that all impacts could be appropriately mitigated.

Flood Risk

- 6.26 The NPPF requires the application of a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development in the preparation of plans and determination of applications (Paragraph 157). The aim is to steer development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding (Paragraph 158).
- 6.27 The sequential test is not, however, required where development is proposed on sites allocated in the development plan unless relevant aspects of the proposed were not considered at the plan-making stage (Paragraph 162).
- 6.28 Where it is not possible to located development in areas at lower risk of flooding, the exception test is to be applied.
- 6.29 The employment development proposed by Application 1 was sequentially tested at the plan-making stage, but the employment development proposed by Application 2 and the health and racquets club have been considered as part of this submission.

The Natural Environment

- 6.30 The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural environment through (amongst others) providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks (Paragraph 170d).

6.31 This policy requirement is directly addressed through the provision of the wetland area as part of Application 1, which will give rise to significant biodiversity gains.

Heritage Assets

6.32 When considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Any harm to significance should require clear and convincing justification (NPPF Paragraph 193-194).

6.33 To this end, NPPF Paragraph 196 states:

“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.”

6.34 The proposed development is located in proximity to the Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument. As such, whilst development of the type proposed by the Applications was always envisaged by virtue of the Bicester 10 allocation, the impact of the development on the asset’s significance is considered as part of the submission.

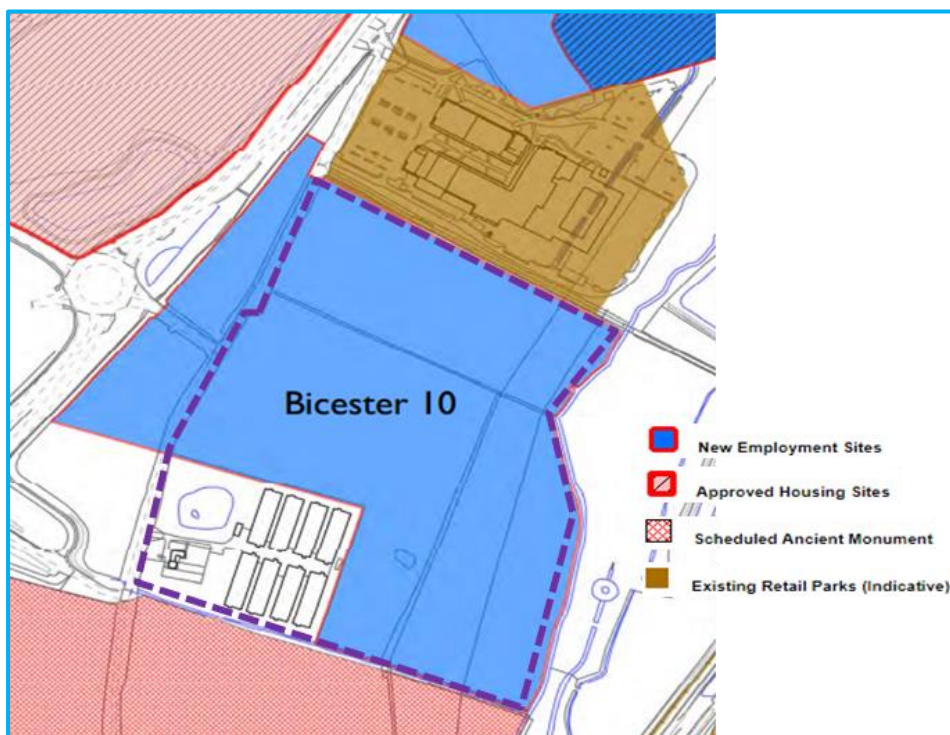
Local Planning Policy

Site Allocations

6.35 The Site falls within, or adjacent to, the following policy designations, as defined by the Adopted Policies Map, an extract of which is provided in **Figure 6.1**:

- Within a New Employment Site;
- Adjacent to an Existing Retail Park (immediately to the north);
- Adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (immediately to the south); and
- Adjacent to an Approved Housing Site (to the north west, beyond the A41).

Figure 6.1 – Policy Map Extract (Site shown in dashed purple line)



Key Policies

Policy Bicester 10

- 6.36 CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 relates to the New Employment Site as defined on the Policy Map Extract at **Figure 6.1**, which covers most of the Site (all of Site A).
- 6.37 Policy Bicester 10 allocates land for knowledge economy employment development in Use Class B1.
- 6.38 It suggests that the allocation site may be able to deliver approximately 3,500 jobs, albeit notes site constraints (for example flooding) may reduce numbers.
- 6.39 The policy also sets out:
- Infrastructure needs, including open spaces to provide a strong landscape setting and provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) and improvements to the local and strategic road networks;
 - Site-specific design and place shaping principles. **Appendix 2** of this Statement sets out how these are addressed by this application.
- 6.40 The proposed development is brought forward in direct response to Policy Bicester 10.

Other Relevant Planning Policies

- 6.41 CLP 2015 Policy SLE 1 supports the delivery of employment development on new sites allocated within the Plan for such uses. It requires the development to be of the type specified within each site-specific policy, but confirms:
- “Other types of employment development (B Use Class) will be considered in conjunction with the use(s) set out if it makes the site viable.”*
- 6.42 CLP 2015 Policy BSC 10 seeks to ensure access to sufficient quantity and quality of sport and recreation provision, whilst CLP 2015 Policy BSC 12 supports the provision of community facilities (which the supporting text confirms includes facilities for indoor sport and recreation, of which there will be a shortage by 2031, particularly around Bicester) to enhance the sustainability of communities.
- 6.43 CLP2015 Policies ESD 1 – ESD 5 relate to energy and sustainability, and in summary require new developments to:
- Include measures to mitigate against the impact of climate change;
 - Achieve carbon emission reductions;
 - Achieve ‘Very Good’ BREEAM for non-residential development;
 - Be encouraged to use decentralised energy systems; and
 - Be encouraged to use renewable energy provision.
- 6.44 CLP 2015 Policy ESD 10 relates to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment. It seeks, amongst other criteria, a net gain in biodiversity.
- 6.45 CLP 2015 Policy ESD 15 relates to the character of the built and historic environment. It requires new development to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout

and high-quality design. Furthermore, new development proposals are required to conserve, sustain and enhance designated heritage assets and their settings.

6.46 The development proposals respond to all these policies, as considered later in this Statement.

Emerging Planning Policy

6.47 At a regional level, the Oxfordshire authorities are preparing a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan: The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (“the JSSP”).

6.48 It is intended this will reflect the policies of currently adopted Local Plans but going forwards it will be used to shape Local Plans.

6.49 The core objective of the JSSP is a more collaborative, strategic approach to delivering growth across Oxfordshire.

6.50 This Plan is at the start of the plan making process, having recently undergone a non-statutory “visions and aspirations” consultation. Regulation 18 consultation is targeted for summer 2019. As such, no weight can be afforded to the JSSP at present.

Other Material Considerations

6.51 Along with the DP, regard should also be had to relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents, which are material considerations for determining the application.

6.52 Of relevance is the Developer Contributions SPD (February 2018). It is anticipated that the development will be subject to obligations relating to:

- Apprenticeships and Skills; and
- Transport and Access.

6.53 Several evidence base documents which supported the preparation of CLP 2015 and government statements are of relevance to the proposals:

- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: The Oxford-Cambridge Arc:** This Government policy paper confirms the Governments ambitions to deliver the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, first and foremost, as a location for world-leading science and technology clusters for emerging transformative technologies and sectors.
- **Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan 2014:** This Plan sets out the ambition for Oxfordshire to 2030 to drive economic growth to meet the needs of the science and knowledge rich economy.
- **Employment Land Review Update (February 2012) and Updated Employment Land Forecasts (May 2014):** These documents provide update to the employment land forecasting to meet the local plan identified needs for employment accommodation.

6.54 The Applications are also submitted in the context of the very recent publication of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (July 2019). This sets out a plan to build on the region’s existing economic strengths and assets and support the objectives of the national Industrial Strategy.

6.55 Key to this plan is creating a business environment which enables Oxfordshire to become a *“powerhouse for commercialising transformative technologies”*.

- 6.56 The proposed employment component of the scheme directly responds to this objective, and therefore the overarching emphasis of the Industrial Strategy (at both the national and regional level).

The Applications are submitted in the context of a planning policy framework which seeks to support sustainable economic growth and the creation of healthy, vibrant communities in ways which protects the quality and character of the natural and built environment.

These overarching policy objectives are expressed in national planning policy and traced through local planning policies which are set out in the adopted Development Plan for the area. They are reinforced in the Industrial Strategy, which is a very recent expression of Government ambitions and priorities.

The Development Plan is explicit in its support for B1 development on Bicester Gateway and the proposals seek to deliver just that, together with ecological enhancements and a health and racquets club which will complement and catalyse the achievement of economic success at the Site.

7 Principle of Development

Application 1 - B1 Class Uses

Allocated Use

- 7.1 Site A is part of a site allocated for knowledge economy and high-tech knowledge industry development falling into Use Class B1 by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10.
- 7.2 Unlike other CLP 2015 allocations (for example Bicester 4), the policy supports the full range of B1 uses and does not require a particular type of B1 development to be delivered at the allocation.
- 7.3 Application 1 therefore seeks outline consent for the delivery of flexible Class B1 employment floorspace that can accommodate B1a (offices) and/or B1b (research and development) and/or B1c (light industrial) uses.
- 7.4 Reflecting the Applicant's understanding of the knowledge economy, B1a (office) floorspace will still be delivered as part of the development, but this has been capped at 35% of gross floorspace in order to limit the effects of the development on the strategic and local highway networks.
- 7.5 This cap would not, however, constrain the use of the Site for the types of employment development sought by the allocation and (in view of the Council's evidence-base and the **Market Report** submitted with the Applications, considered further below) nor would it limit interest in the Site from potential knowledge industry occupiers.
- 7.6 The proposed flexibility is cognisant of a range of factors, including:
- (i) CDC's evidence base in support of CLP 2015 (the Cherwell Economic Analysis Study (August 2012) ("CEAS")), which:
 - Recommends that CDC *"seek to encourage advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors rather than competing with areas for office development"* (Paragraph 5.12); and
 - Confirms that Cherwell *"does not have a strong office base and it is difficult to see how it can establish a traditional office market in the face of competition from surrounding centres. We can still expect to see some growth in professional, scientific and technical services but we expect this to predominantly be accommodated in a combination of Science Park, workshop and homework premises rather than traditional office centres... We see no merit in trying to promote large scale office development..."* (Paragraph 6.17).
 - (ii) CDC's Employment Land Review Update (February 2012), which forecast demand for between 14.9 and 20.1ha of office employment land in the period to 2026; CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 4 allocates 29.5ha of land for B1a office development at Bicester Business Park alone.
 - (iii) Pre-application advice from CDC Officers, which confirmed that:
 - Not all high-tech businesses will be office-based;
 - A scheme which only provided for B1a office accommodation would not meet the intention of the allocation to cater for knowledge industries;

- Provision of flexible spaces is likely to be key to attracting the types of occupiers that CLP 2015 intended.
- (iv) The priorities of the Local Industrial Strategy, which promotes opportunities for the commercialisation of the “products” of knowledge transfer and research and development activities.
- (v) The **Market Report**, in combination with the market insights considered earlier in this Statement, demonstrate that such occupiers are diverse in their accommodation requirements, often require a range of workspaces within a single building, and their operations can evolve over time as the company matures.
- 7.7 The B1 development proposed by Application 1 is therefore in complete accordance with the requirements of Policy Bicester 10; has had appropriate regard for the evidence which supported the preparation of the CLP 2015; and has duly considered evolving economic objectives at the national and regional level.
- 7.8 Notably, the Parameter Plans approach that has been adopted will enable any of the uses within Use Class B1 to be delivered, either in combination with one another or as standalone uses, dependent on specific occupier requirements that come forward.
- 7.9 The Illustrative Masterplans and other materials are just one possible interpretation of the Parameter Plans and do not rule out a wider range of buildings in terms of format, scale or design in due course if this is what the market requires.
- 7.10 The flexibility sought by the Applications will therefore enhance the Site’s attractiveness to high-tech, knowledge-intensive industries.
- 7.11 An additional benefit of the proposals is that providing employment accommodation which is well-suited to meet the needs of the high-tech and knowledge industries, rather than the general B1a office market, will avoid the delivery of the other key employment locations in Cherwell being stifled through dilution of the market.
- 7.12 Whilst submitted in outline, it is intended that the development would create a high-quality business park in a landscaped setting. This would further enhance its attractiveness to high-technology businesses and the wider knowledge economy.
- 7.13 There is, therefore, a plan-led presumption in favour of this part of the development. In such circumstances, planning permission should be granted without delay in accordance with Paragraph 11c of the NPPF unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.14 One such material consideration is the NPPF, which seeks to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy which supports growth, innovation and improved productivity. The NPPF affords significant weight on the need to support economic growth.
- 7.15 Another is the Industrial Strategy and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, both of which seeks to capitalise on existing strengths of the knowledge industries in the region. They identify that enabling the commercialisation of the “products” of research and development is key to this, and that a critical barrier is the availability of appropriate, flexible accommodation. The proposed development would address this constraint.

Job Creation

- 7.16 Notwithstanding that Table 5.1 of the CEAS suggested that the allocation would only deliver 900 jobs, Policy Bicester 10 suggests that approximately 3,500 jobs will be created at the allocation.
- 7.17 This was predicated on several factors (set out in CLP 2015 Employment Trajectory, which notably anticipated employment development to have been delivered in full at Bicester 10 over the period 2016-2021):
- (i) The developable area of the allocation was 18ha; and
 - (ii) 63,000 sq.m of employment floorspace would be delivered.
- 7.18 As considered elsewhere in this Statement, the allocation is constrained by flood risk. Its developable area is closer to 15ha as a result. This inevitably means that the capacity of the allocation (and therefore the number of jobs which will be delivered) will be less.
- 7.19 In any event, this amount of floorspace could not have been achievable at Bicester 10 unless high density, multi-storey development came forward.
- 7.20 This type of development would be unlikely to meet the wide-ranging needs of the high-tech knowledge industries, where space for research and development plus manufacturing and storage is often required. This type of development, which is already being delivered by Phase 1 (and on other sites in and around Bicester), would only cater for a specific element of the high-tech market, effectively ruling out the wide range of occupiers sought by CDC at this allocation.
- 7.21 It would also fail to address the shortfall in accommodation which can help facilitate commercialisation of research and development, as identified by the Local Industrial Strategy.
- 7.22 Considering the site constraints, a proportionate approach to recalculating the floorspace capacity of the allocation and the jobs target would result in an employment floorspace figure of 52,500 sq.m and jobs target of approximately 2,900 jobs.
- 7.23 However, as noted earlier in this Statement, part of the Phase 1 land has been given over to a hotel development, which has further impacted upon the amount of land available for B1 employment development. CDC granted planning permission for the hotel development in the full knowledge it would have this effect.
- 7.24 A similar situation has arisen at Bicester 4, where part of the allocation has been developed for alternative uses (the Tesco superstore and Bicester Village surface water attenuation). In that case, whilst CDC has sought to ensure the remainder of the allocation is developed as efficiently as possible, it also accepted that the jobs target in the DP would not be met in full.
- 7.25 Nevertheless, in combination with the development approved on the Phase 1 land, the proposed development is such that the Bicester 10 allocation would still deliver in the order of 38,500 sq.m of employment floorspace in addition to the hotel development, and up to 2,911 jobs⁹.

⁹ Jobs potentially created in Phase 1 calculated using employment density matrix, Homes and Communities Agency Employment Densities Guide (2015): 14,972sq.m of tech B1a office floorspace would give rise to 1,361 jobs; a mid-scale 149-bedroom hotel would create 50 jobs.

7.26 The new jobs created will make an important contribution towards addressing the significant levels of out-commuting from Cherwell, which the allocations in CLP 2015 were intended to reduce (CLP 2015 Paragraph C.15).

Deliverability

7.27 Given CDC anticipated that the employment development at Bicester 10 would have been fully delivered by 2021 (see CLP 2015 Employment Trajectory) but no development (other than the hotel) has commenced, it is also particularly relevant that the proposed development is deliverable.

7.28 The Applicant has a track-record of successfully delivering employment development proposals in Cherwell, including Bicester. This is a direct consequence of their approach to tailoring development to meet the needs of the market, which is precisely what they intend to do here.

7.29 For knowledge-economy employers to be attracted to Cherwell, a “critical mass” of development is required. This enables the “clustering” that fosters innovation and drives productivity. Early development at Bicester 10 is therefore essential if CDC is to succeed in its aspiration to develop its knowledge economy over the Plan Period.

Application 1 – Health and Racquets Club

Impact on Allocation

7.30 Application 1 seeks detailed consent for the delivery of a health and racquets club on part of Site A. This is an alternative proposal for a relatively small area of the allocation, but the health and racquet club has the potential to make a significant contribution towards the delivery of the wider business park and its environs.

7.31 The use of the land for a non-B1 use will have only a modest impact upon the amount of B1 floorspace which can be delivered on Site A (circa 6,600 sq.m). Given that CDC has “over allocated” land for employment uses via CLP 2015, this will have no material impact on its ability to achieve its economic growth aspirations.

7.32 Furthermore, as demonstrated by the market analysis that has been considered earlier in this Statement, when making decisions about where to locate their business knowledge-economy occupiers prioritise access to a range of amenities.

7.33 Health and fitness clubs feature highly in their requirements for new sites and are often found as part of the overall offer of business parks aimed at this market (see, for example, Silverstone Park and Cambridge Science Park).

7.34 In this case, the health and racquets club will also provide an area for mobile working and a café area for the use of Members. These are also desirable uses as part of a business park environment which targets delivery of knowledge-based industries.

7.35 As with the hotel development approved on Phase 1 of the allocation, the health and racquets club would also complement and catalyse the delivery of employment development at the allocation. The hotel use can only reasonably be a part of the overall amenity offer at the business park, not all of it.

7.36 In this context, rather than undermining the objective of the DP to deliver knowledge-economy development at Bicester 10, the provision of a health and racquets club as part of the development proposals would demonstrably support it.

Job Creation

- 7.37 The health and racquets club proposals, being aimed at the discerning family market, will generate in the order of 110 jobs.
- 7.38 These would comprise a wide range of job opportunities (both full and part time) and skills requirements in roles which will include personal training, sports coaching and fitness instruction; health, beauty and well-being; childcare; sales, marketing and administration; food and drink preparation and service; cleaning, grounds-keeping and maintenance; and facilities management.
- 7.39 By enhancing the attractiveness of the wider business park, the health and racquets club will also indirectly lead to job creation elsewhere at the Site.
- 7.40 These benefits were acknowledged by CDC in determining the acceptability of the hotel development within Phase 1.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits

- 7.41 The supporting text to CLP 2015 Policy BSC12 identifies a deficiency in swimming pool provision by 2026, and sports hall provision by 2031.
- 7.42 Swimming pool deficiencies are anticipated to be addressed through CDC's sports centre modernisation programme but in the case of the latter, there are no commitments to address this and it states (Paragraph B.169) that unmet demand will be "*particularly noticeable*" around Bicester.
- 7.43 However, qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in health and fitness facilities exist now.
- 7.44 There are just 3 health and fitness clubs¹⁰ in Bicester. The two privately owned and operated facilities are both aimed at the budget health and fitness market. They each operate from units which are of limited scale and offer a limited range of facilities, which do not include (for example) sports halls/courts, swimming pools or other wellness facilities (for example sauna, spa, beauty treatments). Choice is therefore limited, and there is a clear qualitative deficiency in provision.
- 7.45 The 2018 *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report* confirmed that, on average, 1 in every 7 UK residents are members of gyms. In Bicester, with a population of circa 32,642 (2011 Census), this equates to a potential gym member pool of circa 4,700. The "average" gym has a gross membership of circa 1,400¹¹.
- 7.46 Bicester has grown significantly since 2011 and further, exponential growth is proposed over the Plan Period.
- 7.47 However, even based on its 2011 population, Bicester's existing health and fitness facilities are either already over-subscribed; gym penetration is being constrained by lack of capacity/facilities; or Bicester residents are being forced to commute out of the town to access health and fitness provision.

¹⁰ Anytime Fitness, Evolve Health and Fitness, Bicester Leisure Centre.

¹¹ Lange, D (2019) Fitness industry in the United Kingdom (UK) - Statistics & Facts

7.48 The proposed health and racquets club would directly address this gap in the local market, addressing health and wellbeing needs of the community and reducing long-distance travel to facilities in other settlements.

7.49 Therefore, in addition to its catalysing and complementary effect on the employment development proposed (which would give rise to various social benefits in their own right by virtue of increased employment), the health and racquets club would improve access for business park employees and the general public to opportunities for sport and physical activity.

7.50 The NPPF (Paragraph 96) emphasises the importance of access to such opportunities to secure the health and well-being of communities. This is a critical component of supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, which is key to achieving the social objective of sustainable development (NPPF Paragraph 8b).

Sequential and Impact Test

7.51 By virtue of its inherent characteristics, which include the need to provide outdoor and indoor tennis courts, the health and racquets club is not an intensive leisure use. It therefore does not fulfil the definition of a typical a main town centre use set out at Annex 2 of the NPPF and it would not be appropriate in a town centre.

7.52 It does, however, fall into Use Class D2 and will be located within an out-of-centre location. CDC has therefore insisted upon consideration of the sequential and impact tests as part of the planning submission. This has been undertaken by the Applicant on a without prejudice basis and is considered in full in **Appendix 3** of this Statement.

7.53 In summary, it is shown that:

- There are no suitable or available alternative sites located within the Town Centre;
- There are no suitable or available alternative sites within the Town Centre Area of Search;
- Other sites allocated by CLP 2015 for employment and mixed-use development that CDC requested be considered by the Applicant are neither suitable or available for the proposed health and racquets club use;
- The sequential test is therefore passed;
- The health and racquets club will not directly compete with any existing health and fitness offer in the Town Centre (see above) or elsewhere in the town. Instead, it will improve access to health and recreation facilities and improve choice for local residents. As a consequence, it will have no material or unacceptable impact on the vitality or viability of Bicester Town Centre.

Application 2

Benefit to Delivery of B1 Uses

7.54 Like the outline component of Application 1, Application 2 seeks outline consent for the delivery of Class B1 employment floorspace that can accommodate the full range of uses across B1a and/or B1b and/or and B1c.

- 7.55 The development would form part of the wider proposals included in Application 1, to create a high-quality employment accommodation suitable for high-technology business and the wider knowledge economy. It would not be delivered in isolation to the B1 development which is proposed on Site A.
- 7.56 As noted above, the provision of a range of employment floorspace accords with the objectives of the NPPF, specifically the core principles under paragraph 8 which seek to deliver a strong, responsive and competitive economy to support growth, innovation and improved productivity. Indeed, the NPPF places significant weight on the need to support economic growth taking into account wider opportunities for development.
- 7.57 B1 floorspace which is aimed at meeting identified needs of the knowledge-based industries would also directly align with the objectives of the Local Industrial Strategy, which are fully cognisant of the aims of the Industrial Strategy.
- 7.58 It is acknowledged that Site B currently comprises a poultry farm which lies beyond the development limits defined in CLP 2015 and outside of the Policy Bicester 10 site allocation.
- 7.59 However, if retained, the farm would potentially be unsuited to their location adjacent to the proposed business park. The existing buildings within Site B are not of particularly high quality, and (as a consequence of their intended use) appear distinctly agricultural. Such a limitation would not be compatible with the objective of creating a high-quality, high-tech business park on the allocated land and may undermine the creation of a distinctive and attractive environment.
- 7.60 Incorporating Site B into the business park also provides the opportunity to increase the total number of jobs which could be achieved across the Site, as identified within **Table 7.1**.
- 7.61 These additional job opportunities would help to mitigate the more limited developable area of the allocation (which was anticipated by CDC to be 18ha but is actually closer to 15ha), as well as the area of Site A which may be given over to the health and racquets club.

Table 7.1 – Additional Jobs

Development	Proposed B1 floorspace	Jobs Potentially Created¹²
Phase 1 (B1 Development and Hotel)	14,972sq.m	1,411
Application 1	23,400	1,049
Application 2	10,200	458

¹² Calculated using Homes and Communities Agency Employment Densities Guide (2015). For the proposed development, it is assumed that 35% of proposed floorspace is B1a and the remaining floorspace is a 50/50 blend of B1b and B1c uses.

Application 2 – Principle of B1 Use beyond Allocation

- 7.62 It should also be noted that Site B was intended to form part of the Bicester 10 allocation. It formed part of the main modifications to CLP 2015 during the examination, which the inspector judged to be acceptable. However, it was not incorporated into the final adopted CLP 2015 by CDC Officers in error.
- 7.63 The principle of incorporating additional and logical extensions to the site allocation has already been accepted by CDC Officers through their approval of the planning application for Phase 1. The principle was also accepted in that case on the basis described above.
- 7.64 Furthermore, Site B would form a logical extension to the proposed B1 development at Bicester 10 by virtue of it being self-contained with defensible boundaries on the southern and western borders. It will give rise to an improved layout to the business park, which will help to attract the types of occupiers sought for the Site.

Application 1

B1 Development

The proposal for flexible floorspace and a mix of B1 uses on Site A has been informed by market research. This is evidenced within the planning submission and fully aligns with commentary in CDC's own evidence base documents. It is deliverable now, and the Applicant is committed to delivering it quickly should planning permission be granted.

CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 places no limitation whatsoever on the type of B1 uses that can come forward at the allocation, other than the requirement that the employment development be suitable for high-tech and knowledge-based industries. The indicative material provided in support of the Applications, together with the parameters which will guide the detailed design of the scheme, demonstrates that this is the Applicant's intention.

The development will make efficient use of land within the allocation and is anticipated to deliver up to 1,050 jobs depending on the final mix of B1 uses that come forward (which will be dependent upon the occupiers which are attracted to the Site).

The B1 development proposed by Application 1 therefore fully accords with the requirements of CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10, giving rise to a plan-led presumption in favour of development, to which the NPPF and other material considerations add further weight in favour in the planning balance.

Health and Racquets Club

The proposed health and racquets club would catalyse and support the proposed B1 development at the Site, to the benefit of the wider economy and achievement of the objectives of the Site's allocation and the national and regional Industrial Strategies. Therefore it has been included as an important component of the overall business park proposal. It would additionally give rise to a range of employment opportunities in the operational phase of the development.

It would not be appropriate to deliver the health and racquets club in the Town Centre but a sequential assessment has been undertaken nonetheless, which has been passed. It has also been shown that the

health and racquets club would not compete with any existing health and fitness provision in the Town Centre and, as a consequence, would have no perceptible or unacceptable impact on its vitality or viability.

The health and racquets club would additionally help to address qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in health and fitness provision in the town, to the benefit of the health and well-being of the Bicester community, and with the potential to reduce unsustainable patterns of travel to provision outside of the town. It would therefore make a significant contribution towards the achievement of truly sustainable development at the Site and the creation of a “Healthy Town” at Bicester.

Application 2

B1 development on Site B would remove an incompatible use (the poultry farm) from the Site, supporting the objective of delivering a high-quality business park environment at Bicester 10 and attracting knowledge-based industries to the town. Site B was always intended to form part of the allocation, and the principle of B1 development on logical and defensible extension land has already been accepted via the grant of planning permission for Phase 1.

8 Development Management

8.1 This Section provides an assessment of the appropriateness of the proposals against the relevant development management policies and guidance set out at **Section 6**.

Design

B1 Development

8.2 The proposals for B1 development are submitted in outline, with matters of scale, layout, appearance and landscaping reserved for later consideration. This is to enable buildings to be brought forward at the Site in response to specific occupier requirements and in recognition of the rapidly evolving nature of knowledge economy industries, whereby the nature, form and layout of buildings is dictated by their intended use.

8.3 A Parameter Plans approach, which has been described fully elsewhere in this Statement, has been adopted. The Design and Access Statement (“DAS”) prepared by the project architects, Cornish Architects, explores this more fully.

8.4 Whilst some illustrative materials have been submitted, including masterplans for each of the development scenarios which could arise at the Site and 3D sketches, these give an indication of just one possible interpretation of the development parameters which are fixed by the Parameter Plans.

8.5 The key masterplanning principles that are fixed through the Applications are:

- A single point of vehicular access into the B1 development, via a new roundabout at the junction of Vendee Drive and Wendlebury Road;
- Creation of an ecological wetland area to the east of the Site;
- Generous landscape buffers surrounding and connecting the development zones within the Site;
- Maximum building heights of circa 12m above existing ground levels (equating to a maximum of 3-4 storey buildings).

8.6 It is intended that the development will be of high-quality character and appearance, making use of architectural detailing and materiality to break up the mass of any larger buildings.

8.7 The detailed design of the scheme brought forward at reserved matters will, through adherence to the above design principles, accord with the requirements of CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 and the DP’s other design requirements, including (inter alia):

- Efficient design which is resilient to climate change impacts and sustainable construction to reduce carbon emissions associated with the construction and operation of the development and achieves BREEAM “Very Good” (Policy ESD 1, ESD 2, ESD 3);
- Minimise risk of flooding via the use of sustainable drainage methods (Policy ESD 1, ESD 3, ESD 7);
- Contribute positively to the area’s character and identity (Policy ESD 15).

Health and Racquets Club

8.8 Detailed planning permission is sought for the health and racquets club. The scheme has been developed by the operator (David Lloyd Leisure)’s architects, Hadfield Cawkwell Davidson (“HCD”), who previously have worked on a number of their other schemes for health and racquets clubs.

8.9 A DAS for the health and racquets club is appended to the DAS for the rest of the development proposals but is summarised below. Whilst not a B1 use, the design approach to the health and racquets club has sought to address the development management principles of CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10.

The Brief

8.10 HCD's brief from David Lloyd Leisure ("DLL") was to develop a proposal for a premium facility that delivered a comprehensive range of active and leisure pursuits. Essential facilities to be included were as follows:

- Tennis
 - 3 court permanent tennis air-dome enclosure;
 - 2 show courts;
- Swimming
 - 5 lane, 20m internal pool;
 - 400/800mm deep learner pool;
 - 4 lane, 25m outdoor pool;
 - Outdoor children's pool;
- Health and fitness
 - 3 court sports hall
 - 100 - 120 station gym
 - 3 studio spaces - spin, high impact and mind & body studios
 - Children's soft play and activity space
- Spa
 - Internal spa - pool, relax, sauna and steam
 - External spa garden - pool, sauna and relax
- Leisure
 - Lounge including adult lounge/business hub
 - External lounge terrace
- Ancillary
 - Reception, changing, staff, catering kitchen/cafe bar
- External
 - Circa 250 car spaces including 10 disabled and 6 parent & child
 - 20 cycle parking spaces
 - Delivery area

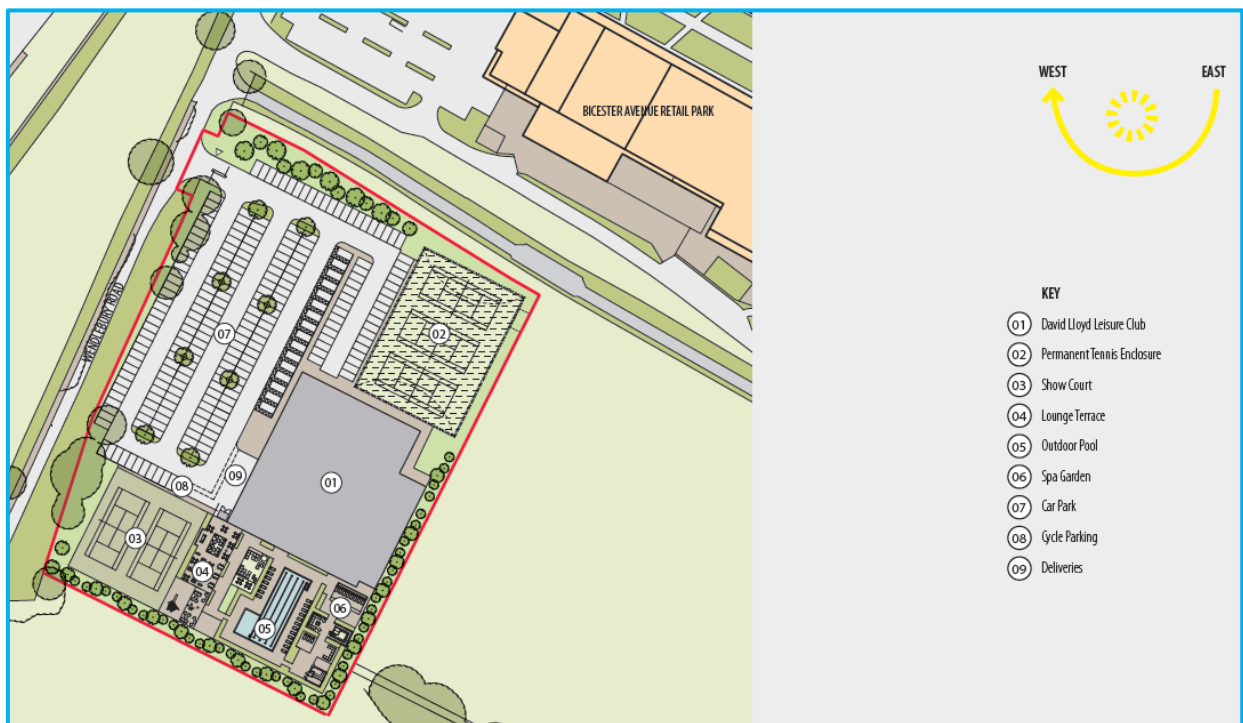
Layout

8.11 Key to realising the DLL Club concept are the relationships between the interior spaces and adjacencies of interior and exterior functions. All activities are typically organised around the main reception and lounge.

8.12 Following consideration of the Site's context and the above brief, HCD developed the proposed scheme. The site layout (**Figure 8.1**) has been derived from the following considerations:

- Space planning efficiency has been maximised so that the gross area of the allocation potentially given over to non-B1 uses has been minimised without compromising the overall quantitative or qualitative quality of the health and racquets offer at the Site;
- The leisure club has been positioned centrally within the site plan, with the external tennis courts, terraces and outdoor pool utilising the space between the building and the site perimeter;
- The pool terrace is orientated south to maximise the number of usable hours and enhance the amenity value of the space;
- The principal lounge area and internal pool open onto this space, forming interconnecting views and linking internal / external uses;
- The main entrance to the building is orientated towards the site access point and is clearly visible to visitors upon arrival;
- In order to organise vehicular movement around the site, the vehicular access has been located to the north, and is via Wendlebury Road.

Figure 8.1 – Health and racquets Club Layout



Landscaping

8.13 HCD has sought to design the landscaping for the health and racquets club such that this component of the scheme can be assimilated into the existing landscape and its impact on surrounding views is minimised.

Form and Massing

8.14 The form of the building is derived from both the building's function and the spatial requirements of the internal spaces.

- 8.15 Many of these have precise criteria for their specifications / dimensions, both in terms of area and clear height. The spaces which have influenced the massing of the building are the sports hall, pool hall and fitness suite.
- 8.16 The sports hall is arranged along the elevation parallel to the inflatable tennis dome and gradually increases in height towards the centre of the building.
- 8.17 Spaces with similar requirements such as the gym and studios have been grouped together to simplify and organise the composition.
- 8.18 Spaces which provide glazed facades have been positioned along the West and South elevations, ensuring that these elevations remain as active as possible on the approach to the building and from the outside lounge and pool.

Materials

- 8.19 A range of high-quality materials have been used to break up otherwise large elevations and create a building of more human scale (see **Figure 8.2**).

Figure 8.2 – Proposed North West (Front) Elevation



Environmental Impact Assessment

- 8.20 The Applications are accompanied by an Environmental Statement (“ES”) which includes technical chapters on highways and transportation; ecology; and flood risk and drainage. The ES was the subject of informal discussions with CDC Officers regarding its scope.

Highways and Transportation

Sustainable Transport

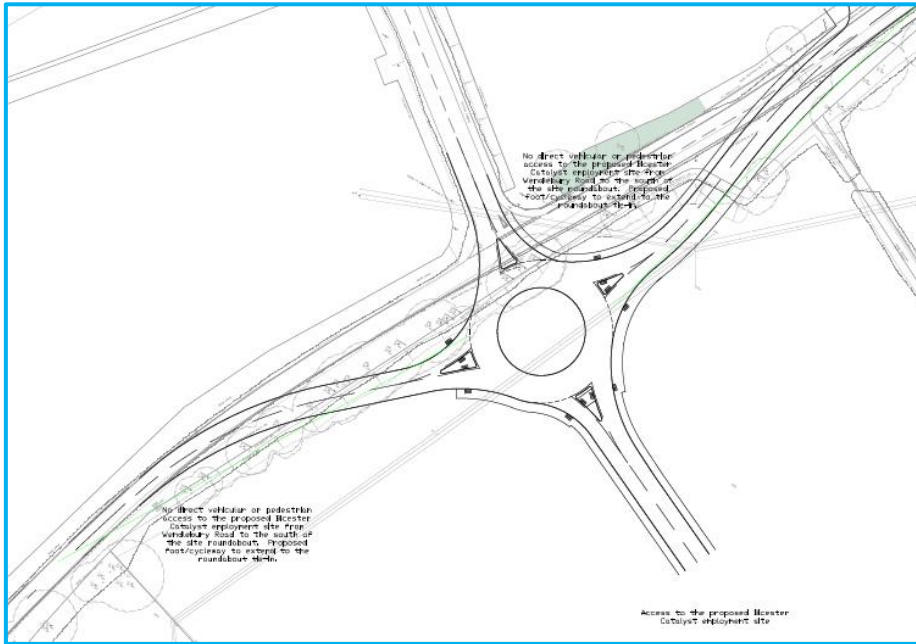
- 8.21 The Site is well integrated with the pedestrian and cycle networks. Additional linkages from the allocation will be delivered in connection with the consented Phase 1 development (by others). These will be enhanced with an off-road cycle path (combined path to be shared with pedestrians) along the eastern side of Wendlebury Road as part of the proposed development. An appropriate level of cycle parking will be provided on-site.

- 8.22 The site is well located with respect to public transport, with the key bus routes operating along the A41 corridor providing inter-urban and local accessibility. These can be improved and it is proposed to integrate the Site with emerging town-based bus services. The details of these will be agreed with OCC, however the site layout makes provision for services to operate along Wendlebury Road.

Access

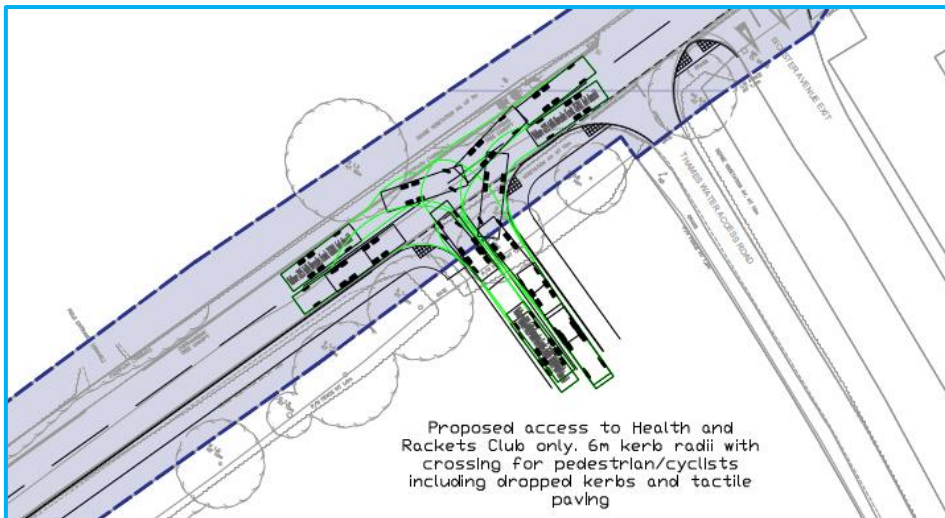
- 8.23 A single point of vehicular access, via new roundabout at the junction of Vendee Drive and Wendlebury Road is proposed to serve the B1 development (**Figure 8.3**).

Figure 8.3 – New Roundabout Junction



- 8.24 Should the health and racquets proposal be delivered, this will be served via new, dedicated priority controlled junction onto Wendlebury Road in the northern-most corner of the Site (**Figure 8.4**). In all scenarios, a footpath link to the north-east of the hotel (also shown on Figure 8.4) is proposed to provide a convenient additional connection between the A41 and Wendlebury Road.

Figure 8.4 – Access to Health and racquets Club



Transport Effects

- 8.25 The highways and transportation chapter of the ES has been informed by a Transport Assessment (“TA”), the scope of which was agreed with OCC during pre-application discussions, and is supported by a Travel Plans (a Framework Travel Plan in the case of the B1 proposals, and a detailed Travel Plan in the case of the health and racquets proposal).
- 8.26 The TA considers the likely significant environmental effects from construction traffic and development-generated traffic on the capacity and safety of the surrounding road network. The assessment also considers the implications for public transport and pedestrian and cycling movements.
- 8.27 As noted elsewhere in this Statement, there is significant planned development within Bicester and therefore traffic flow patterns have been established from OCC traffic models, which account for committed developments.
- 1.4 The TA assesses the four possible development scenarios that could arise from the Applications for three assessment years (which were requested by OCC: 2026 and 2031 with and without the South East Perimeter Road “SEPR”).
- 8.28 In terms of direct impact, there is only modest difference between the four development scenarios on the operation of the local road network.
- 8.29 The development will result in a relatively small change in demand on the A41 corridor, the greatest change is predicted to occur on A41 – Vendee Drive roundabout.

Mitigation

- 8.30 There is an appropriate level of capacity at A41/Vendee Drive roundabout to meet the forecast demand in all scenarios. Therefore, no works to the junction are required.
- 8.31 Based on pre-application discussions, it is anticipated that the development will however be required to make financial contributions towards the SEPR to mitigate its other effects. Calculation of the contribution will be based on the number of peak-hour trips generated by the development.

Ecology

- 8.32 The ecology chapter of the ES has been informed by a Phase 1 walkover survey, protected species surveys (bats, great crested newts, reptiles) and a botanical survey.
- 8.33 The survey work confirmed that the Site is of limited value to protected species, except for bats. The flora and fauna interest of the Site is also limited.

Bats

- 8.34 The development involves the demolition of buildings on Site B which are currently used for bat roosting. Both Site A and B are used for foraging and commuting.
- 8.35 A licence will be required for the demolition stage, which will be applied for in due course, and mitigation will be built into the development proposals. This will include (inter alia) bat tubes and a sensitive approach to external lighting proposals.

Habitats

- 8.36 The proposed development will involve the creation of a wetland / species rich wet grassland mitigation area in the eastern section of the Site. This provides water attenuation for the proposed development whilst creating a series of habitat mosaics which would be contiguous with and provide supporting habitat to those present on the adjacent Bicester Wetland Reserve.
- 8.37 Whilst the habitats created would not directly reproduce those that would be lost as a result of development elsewhere on the Site, they would include grassland habitat of equal or higher value than that which would be lost. The habitat mosaics that would be created and their proximity to the Bicester Wetland Reserve would strengthen the wetland corridor along the watercourse which feeds the pools on the Reserve, thereby enhancing an important wildlife corridor.
- 8.38 In combination this will result in biodiversity net gain, in accordance with CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 and ESD10. The social and environmental benefits of this component of the proposal are significant in their own right.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 8.39 As illustrated by the Environment Agency's flood map for planning (**Figure 8.5**), a significant area of the Site is at risk of flooding.

Figure 8.5 – Flood Map for Planning Extract



Sequential Test

- 8.40 The NPPF (Section 14) seeks to direct development away from areas at the highest risk of flooding. Where development is necessary in such areas, it requires that development is made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 8.41 CDC has taken a sequential approach at the plan-making stage. As such, sites which are allocated for development by CLP 2015 have already been subject to the sequential test and do not need to be retested at the application stage (where the proposals are consistent with the allocation).
- 8.42 The B1 development proposed on Site A is in this category (albeit Policy Bicester 10 still requires a sequential approach to site design, which is considered below).

- 8.43 The health and racquets club is not located in an area at risk from flooding, and as such does not need to be considered via the sequential test process.
- 8.44 Part of Site B is, however, in flood zones 2 and 3. The NPPF states that development should not be permitted “*if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding*” (Paragraph 158).
- 8.45 In this case, whilst there may be other sites which are available to accommodate the quantum of B1 development proposed on Site B, the development which is proposed has a unique locational requirement. This could not be satisfied through delivery of B1 development elsewhere in the town since it is intended to be functionally linked to the B1 development on Site A.
- 8.46 Furthermore, only development on the site of the poultry farm would give rise to the same benefits (i.e. removal of an incompatible use, to the benefit of the character of the proposed development).
- 8.47 The sequential test is therefore judged to have been passed.

Approach to Site Design

- 8.48 A sequential approach to site design has been adopted so far as possible, balancing the objectives of CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10. This seeks to avoid built development in the functional flood plain (the extent of which has been informed by CDC’s Strategic Flood Risking Assessment) whilst also delivering a significant quantum of B1 floorspace and jobs.
- 8.49 Development in the parts of the Site at highest risk from flooding is generally avoided. The proposed development, however, involves the creation of flood compensation areas. Provision of these compensation areas (which take the form of lagoons) results in the re-zoning of parts of the Site, enabling them to be safe from flooding and therefore developable.
- 8.50 The eastern area of the Site is set aside as part of this mitigation strategy and will provide an area of species rich wetland, capable of delivering significant biodiversity gains (as considered above).

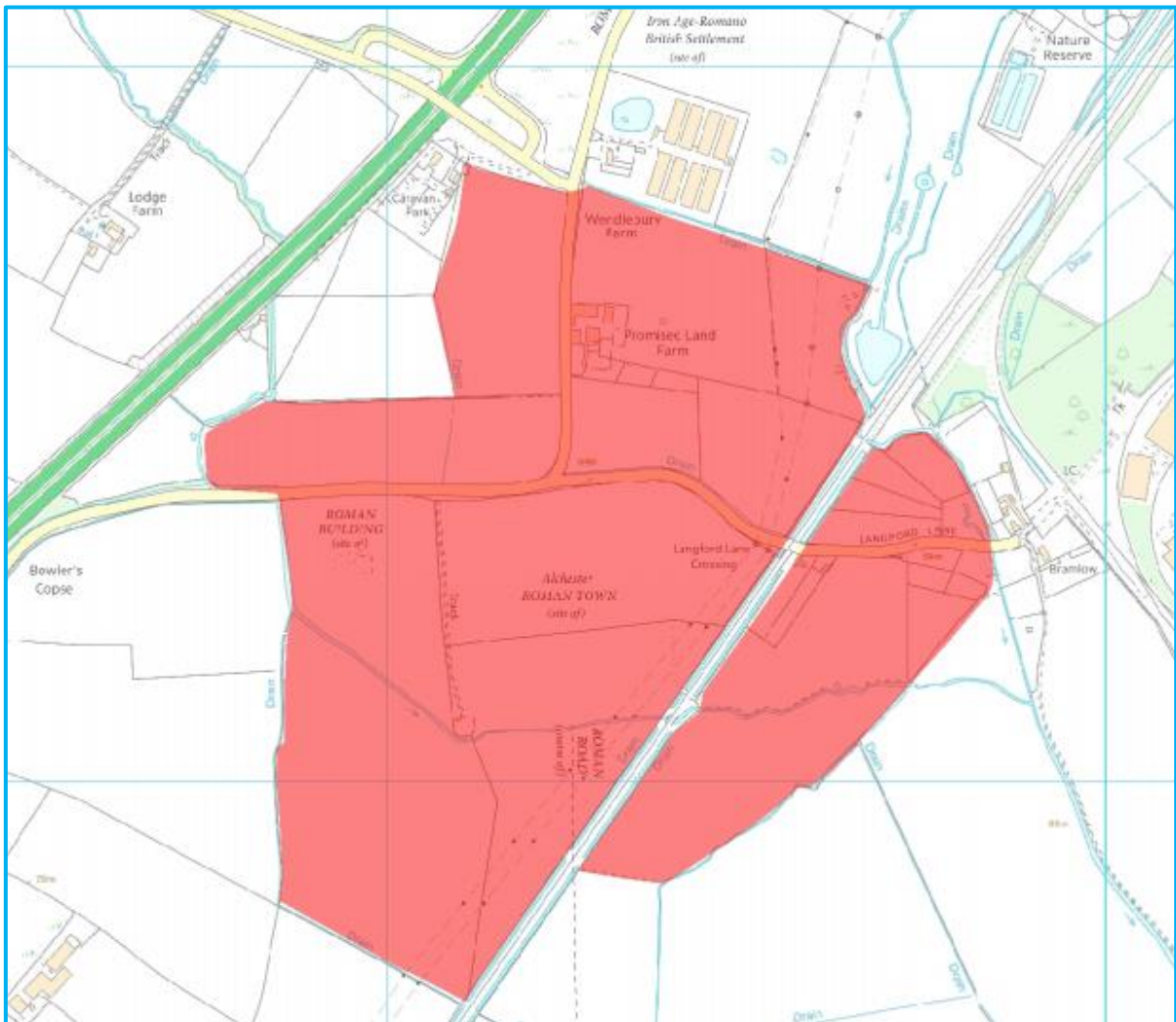
Other Environmental Considerations

Heritage

Designated Assets

- 8.51 The Site is located adjacent to the Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument (“the Alchester SAM”). The location and extent is shown at **Figure 8.6**.
- 8.52 CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10 acknowledges the allocation’s relationship with the Alchester SAM and requires development proposals to preserve and enhance its setting and consider opportunities for better revealing its significance.
- 8.53 The existing poultry farm buildings, which are of significant scale and mass, are located up against the northern boundary of the Alchester SAM. The development proposed by others as part of Phase 1 at Bicester Gateway will also take development of significant scale (potentially 4-5 stories) close to this boundary.
- 8.54 The proposed B1 development on Site B will be sited further away from the northern boundary of the Alchester SAM than the existing poultry sheds.

Figure 8.6 – Alchester SAM



- 8.55 Its height is also limited via Parameter 02, meaning (in combination with the intended design approach) buildings will be of a more human scale than the existing poultry sheds. No built development is proposed on the part of Site A which adjoins the Alchester SAM.
- 8.56 The significance of the Alchester SAM relates to its underground features and its setting comprises its urban fringe location, which is already punctuated by buildings of varying scale and type.
- 8.57 The development will not harm either the setting or the significance of the Alchester SAM, nor any other heritage assets.
- 8.58 As part of detailed proposals for landscaping at the Site, the Applicant will consider opportunities for interpretive material to be provided.

Archaeology

- 8.59 The potential archaeological interest of the Site itself has been considered by the Applicant.
- 8.60 A **Heritage Desk-Based Assessment** confirmed that there was significant evidence of later pre-historic and Roman-period activities in the vicinity of the Site. On this basis, it was concluded that there was

potential for there to be significant interest at the Site itself, as well as archaeological associations with the Alchester SAM.

- 8.61 A programme of staged archaeological investigation was recommended prior to any development at the Site.
- 8.62 A magnetic survey was undertaken, which informed a **Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Investigation**. Trial trenching was subsequently undertaken at the Site, the results of which have informed the development proposals.
- 8.63 It has been confirmed that Archaeology is not a constraint to development.

Landscape and Visual Effects

- 8.64 A **Strategic Landscape Assessment**, the scope of which was agreed with CDC's Landscape Architect prior to submission, supports the Applications.
- 8.65 It determines the Site's capacity to accept development through consideration of existing landscape features including vegetation, topography and built form; assessment of landscape character and the wider visibility of the Site in the landscape.
- 8.66 The assessment concludes with a strategic landscape framework that has assisted the development of indicative proposals for the Sites and, ultimately, the Parameters for which consent is sought.
- 8.67 The Site has a relatively open character, particularly from views to the west. The Site boundaries are well defined with vegetation, though the proposed removal of some and the height of some hedgerows does not allow complete screening of the proposed built form.
- 8.68 However, the visual effects of the development are likely to appear in the context of currently consented and under construction development and would read as a natural extension to these wider cumulative development proposals. From closer viewpoints, the encroachment of built form would appear more noticeable.
- 8.69 Any development of the Site will inevitably influence the landscape character. The resultant landscape and visual effects of development on the site can however be reduced and mitigated through an appropriate strategy of high-quality design and the incorporation of well-connected green infrastructure in accordance with the policies of the CLP 2015. These will help assimilate development to the urban-rural fringe setting and address the wider context.
- 8.70 Development which accords with the Strategic Landscape Framework would be an attractive and healthy place to work; have a strong sense of place; be well assimilated into the local context and will give rise to a range of ecological benefits.

Noise

- 8.71 A **Noise Assessment** has been undertaken in support of the development proposals.
- 8.72 This considers the existing noise environment and goes on to predict the worst case possible short- and long-term effects of noise associated with the development.

8.73 No significant adverse effects on noise sensitive receptors are anticipated either in connection with plant, operations within “workshop” spaces, or general comings and goings associated with the operation of the Site.

8.74 Any impacts during construction will be minimised via an appropriate Construction Management Plan.

Air Quality and Odour

8.75 An **Air Quality Assessment** has also been conducted.

8.76 The potential effects during the construction phase include fugitive dust emissions from site activities, such as demolition, earthworks, construction and trackout.

8.77 During the construction phase, the potential effects from construction on air quality will be managed through best practice mitigation measures, all of which can be secured via a Construction Management Plan. With these mitigation measures in place, the effects from the construction phase are not predicted to be significant.

8.78 The impacts during the operational phase take into account the exhaust emissions from additional road traffic generated by the proposed development. The assessment of the effects associated with both the committed and proposed developments with respect to NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} exposure is determined to be ‘negligible’ for all existing receptors.

8.79 The Site is in proximity to a sewage treatment works and an operational poultry farm. An **Odour Assessment** has therefore been undertaken, which considers whether the future amenity of the development would be adversely impacted by odour.

8.80 If Application 2 is approved then the operation of the poultry farm would be extinguished via implementation of that consent, but its potential effects have been considered to ensure that its relationship with development in Scenarios 1 and 2 would be acceptable.

8.81 The Odour Assessment confirms that the eastern part of the Site is adversely affected by odour associated with the treatment works. However, no development is proposed in this area of the Site and, as such, mitigation will not be required.

8.82 Without mitigation, the poultry farm would adversely affect development on the part of Site A which is closest to it. In Scenarios 1 and 2 mitigation would therefore be required in the form of mechanical ventilation.

Lighting

8.83 The proposed development will require the installation of luminaires that have the potential to increase existing light levels at sensitive locations within the vicinity of the Site.

8.84 A **Lighting Strategy** considers the potential impact of light pollution from the development on nearby light sensitive receptors, such as residents. The Strategy provides design guidance and identifies potential constraints and set parameters for all future lighting designs to consider a reserved matters stage.

8.85 For the full element of Application 1 (the health and racquets club), a lighting design has been produced and assessed.

- 8.86 The risk of the proposed development resulting in exceedances obtrusive light limitations at local residential receptors will be low. As such, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any significant adverse impacts with respect to local sensitive residential locations or ecological receptors, and nor will it have a significant impact on the dark-sky landscape.

There is a plan-led presumption in favour of majority of the proposed development, subject to a range of development management criteria being satisfied.

These criteria have been considered by the Applicant's team and it shown that they are all fully addressed as part of the scheme. Where the development would result in impacts on the Site or its vicinity, these impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated to an acceptable level.

Whilst there may not be such a plan-led presumption in favour of B1 development on Site B or the proposed health and racquets club on Site A, these development management considerations have still been considered and it has been shown that the development would otherwise accord with the Development Plan and would not have any unacceptable impacts on the local area.

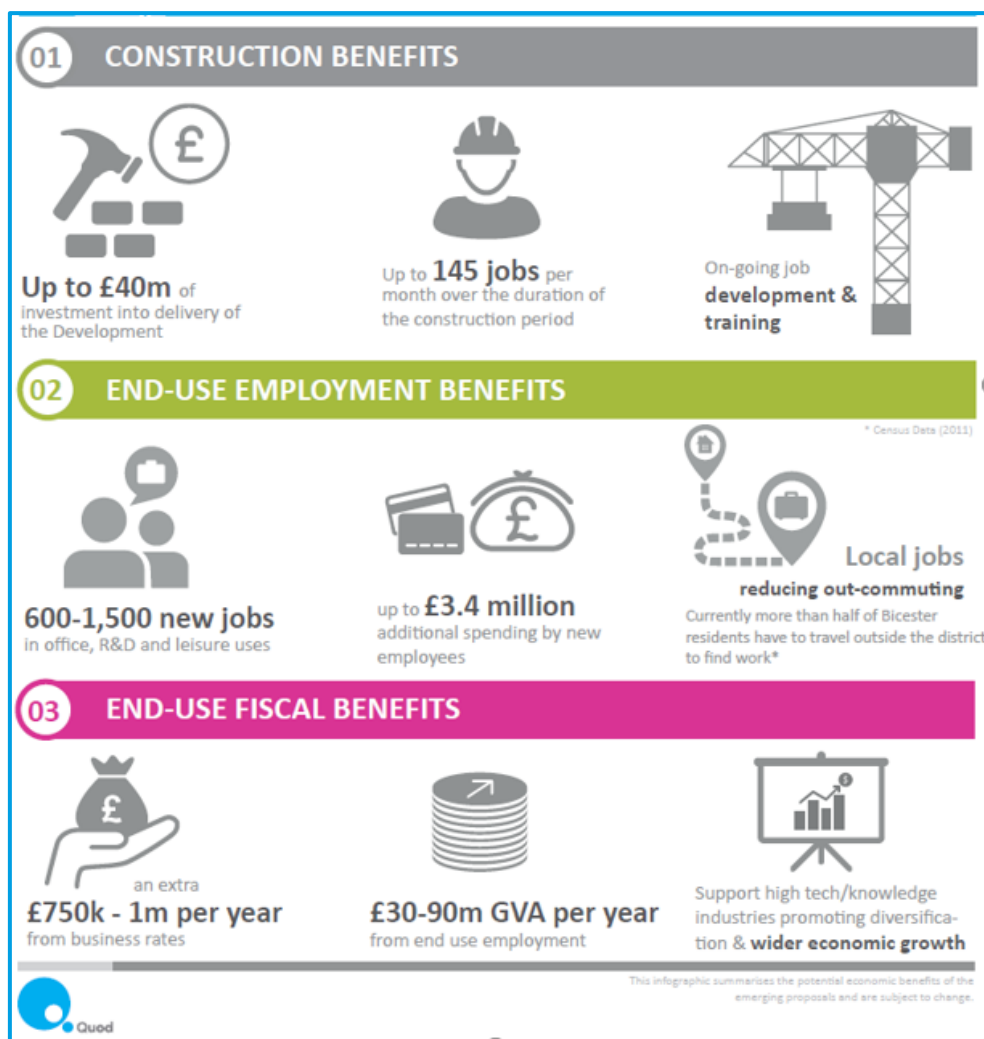
9 Sustainable Development

- 9.1 In addition to the Site being suitable to accommodate the proposed uses as discussed above, a range of benefits will accrue as a direct result of the proposed development.
- 9.2 The headings below consider the cumulative benefits of Application 1 and Application 2 in the context of the three dimensions to sustainable development set out by the NPPF (Paragraph 8).

The Economic Dimension

- 9.3 The proposed development has the potential to have a transformational effect on the Bicester economy.
- 9.4 In a class of its own, Catalyst Bicester will be a unique development in Cherwell. It has been specifically designed to suit the known market requirements of the high-tech knowledge economy industries and maximise the opportunities for growth of the knowledge sector which are presented by the Site's strategic location in the Arc and on the A41 corridor.
- 9.5 Headline economic benefits of development at Catalyst Bicester are summarised in the infographic at **Figure 9.1** and considered further in the sections below.

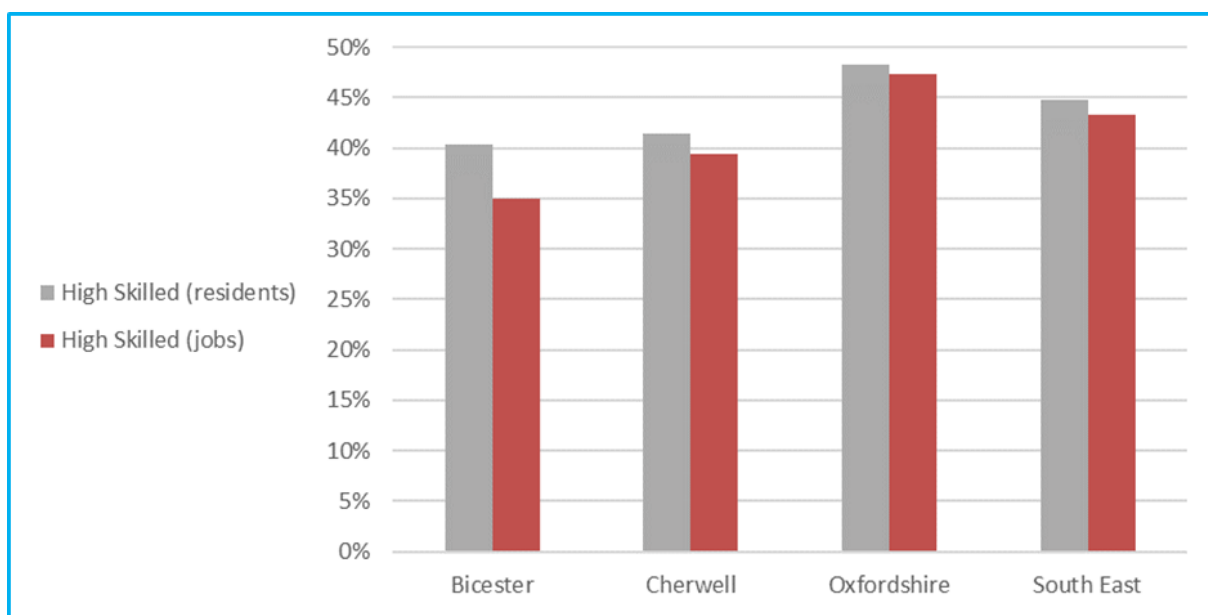
Figure 9.1 – Headline Economic Benefits



Redressing the Balance

- 9.6 Analysis of economic data from the 2011 Census reveals that Bicester leads in a range of economic indicators when compared to its Local Context¹³. Bicester has the highest economic activity and employment rate when assessed against the district, county, region and nation.
- 9.7 In Bicester, 75% of residents are in employment. This compares to an employment rate of 70% and 66% in Cherwell and Oxfordshire respectively. Of those Bicester residents in employment 40% hold positions in high skilled jobs¹⁴, which is in line with Cherwell (41%).
- 9.8 This is, however, towards the lower end of the range when compared to Oxfordshire and the south east at 48% and 45% respectively.
- 9.9 Comparing skills and occupations held by residents and jobs available in Bicester there is an unbalance. As shown at **Figure 9.2**, while there is a high proportion of residents in high skilled occupations there are not enough roles within Bicester to support these residents. This compares to Cherwell, Oxfordshire and the south east where the gap is less pronounced.

Figure 9.2 – Skills Gap



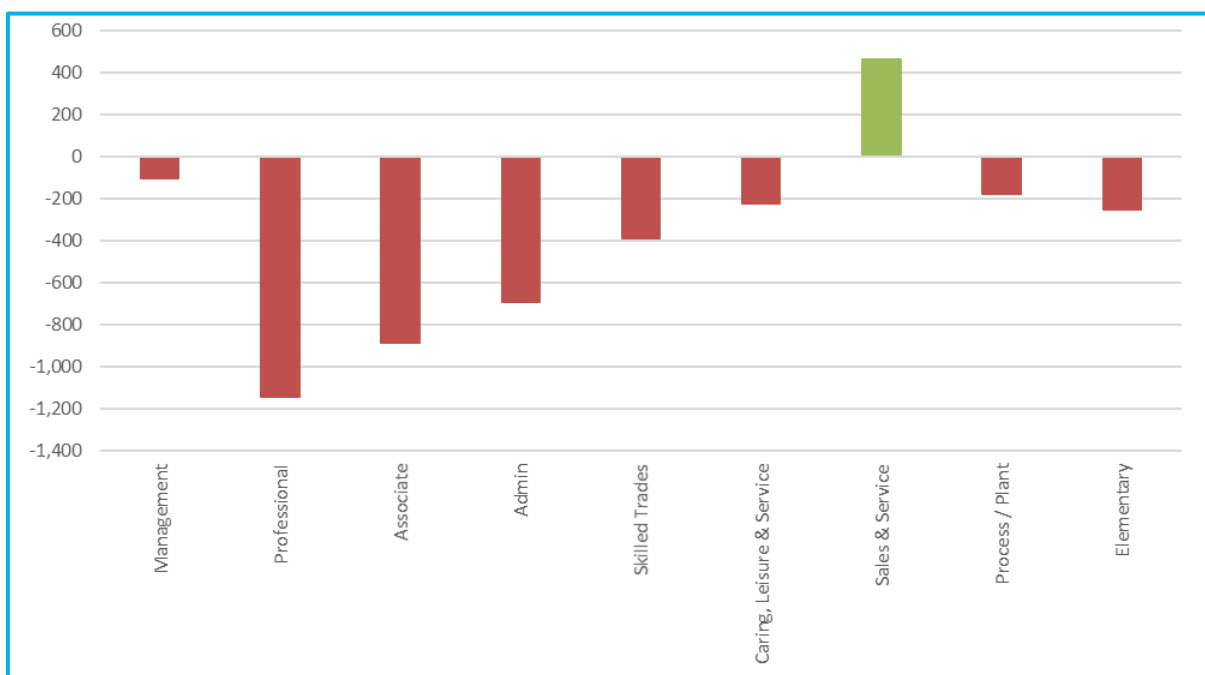
- 9.10 According to the Business Register and Employment Survey (2017) only 5% of employees in Bicester work in the professional, scientific and technical industries. This is a stark under-representation of these industries in Bicester compared with the rest of the nation, but the proportion of Bicester residents which work in this sector is in line with national averages.

¹³ Compared to district level – Cherwell, county level – Oxfordshire, regional level – south east and national level – England.

¹⁴ Defined as: Managers, directors and senior officials; Professional occupations; and Associate professional and technical occupations

- 9.11 This suggests there are residents living in Bicester who are appropriately qualified and trained but seek employment elsewhere because of a lack of suitable opportunity in Bicester.
- 9.12 Analysis confirms Bicester exports many of its residents (circa 3,400) for work. Using data from the 2011 Census, **Figure 9.3** shows Bicester exports workers in all occupational categories, only importing employment in sales and service occupations (reflecting the town's role in the retail industry).
- 9.13 The greatest proportion of out-commuters hold high-skilled jobs (management, professional or associate levels) illustrating, again, the loss of high-skilled residents to other business centres.

Figure 9.3 – Jobs Balance



- 9.14 Travel to work data shows that 55% of Bicester residents commute out of Bicester for work. Almost a quarter of these travel to Oxford for work (**Figure 9.4**).
- 9.15 Therefore, not only will the proposed B1 development assist in reducing current patterns of out-commuting (which is one of the underlying objectives of CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10), but by providing appropriate accommodation for the knowledge economy businesses it will also enable knowledge and talent to be retained in the town.

Business Growth

- 9.16 The development has the potential to provide a range of buildings, providing a mix of accommodation that could be suitable for start-ups and spin-off companies but also offering more established businesses the opportunity to expand and/or or commercialise their products.

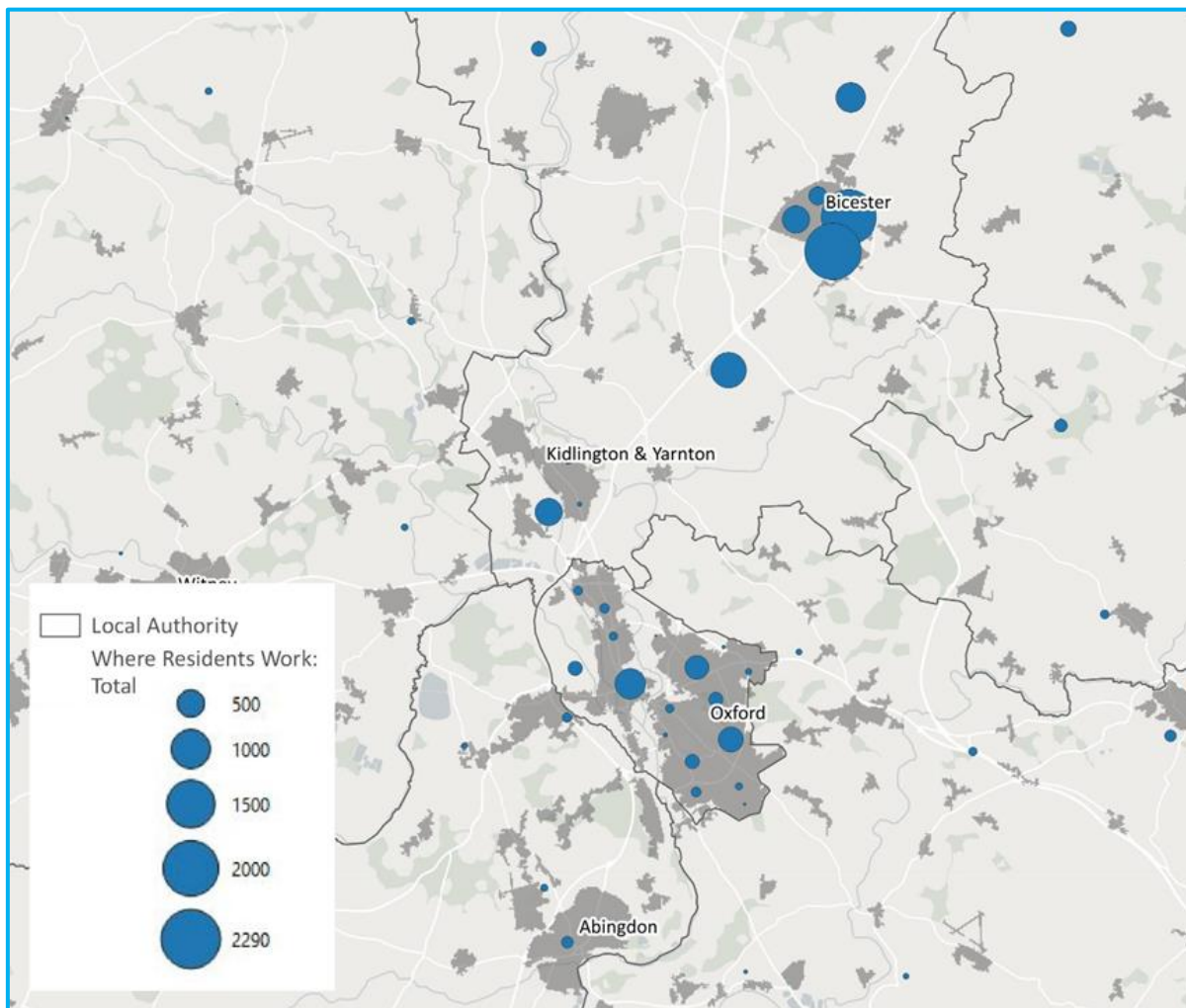
Construction Employment and Supply Chain Benefits

- 9.17 Construction related employment expected to be generated by the Development is assessed using the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) Labour Forecasting Tool . This tool estimates an average

number of jobs over the duration of the construction phase based on the total construction value of the project, duration/start/finish dates, location and type of construction.

- 9.18 It is estimated that the construction works would generate an approximate monthly average of up to 145 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs over the duration of the two to three-year construction programme.

Figure 9.3 – Where Bicester Residents Work



End-Use Employment

- 9.19 The Development would create end-use job opportunities through a mix of commercial uses including B1 and D2 floorspace. B1 floorspace will include a mix of B1a – offices, B1b – research and development space and B1c – light industrial. The D2 floorspace will comprise of a health and racquets club, intended to be operated by David Lloyd Leisure.
- 9.20 Since the proposals for the B1 development are submitted in outline, there are a range of development scenarios across the Site. These scenarios are dependent on the delivery of the leisure uses and whether Application 2 is also approved alongside Application 1. The four scenarios set out in Section 5 of this Statement have been modelled with regards to employment to account for these potential outcomes.

- 9.21 Overall the development could support an estimated 600 to 1,500 jobs on-site in B1 and D2 uses depending on how the floorspace is occupied and by whom. This employment equates to 42% of the employment suggested across the full CLP 2015 Bicester 10 allocation (target of 3,500 jobs).
- 9.22 These new employees could generate up to £3.4 million per annum in local spending based on an average spend of £11 per day on food and drink¹⁵.
- 9.23 Spending would have wider benefits for the surrounding area as a significant proportion of expenditure by employees can be expected to be captured locally. Given the location of the development near Bicester Village and Bicester Town Centre, it is entirely reasonable to expect local businesses to benefit.

Gross Value Added (GVA)

- 9.24 The increase in employment through construction and end-use would make an economic contribution in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA).
- 9.25 GVA is the value generated by economic activity; for example, the value generated in the economy from construction activity. GVA associated with construction jobs is based on GVA per workforce job estimates by region¹⁶.
- 9.26 The increase in employment from end-users from the B1 floorspace proposed would make an economic contribution in terms of GVA of £30 million to £90 million per year depending on how it is occupied.

Planning Obligations

- 9.27 It is anticipated that the development will contribute towards the delivery of the SEPR. This is a strategic project, promoted by OCC as a solution to congestion on the A41 corridor in particular.
- 9.28 Through relieving congestion along this route, the SEPR will enable businesses and residents alike to move more freely around the town. In turn, this will result in tangible benefits in terms of productivity and increase the attractiveness of Bicester as a destination for (inter alia) shopping and leisure.
- 9.29 The scheme may also be able to support other local public transport improvements, as considered in the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.

Business Rates

- 9.30 Business rates are another way in which the scheme would contribute to local finances. Business rates are a tax on non-domestic properties. Rates are levied on business properties based on their rateable value and the national multiplier. The amount payable may then be subject to several reliefs or exemptions.
- 9.31 Research through the Valuation Office Agency¹⁷ provides information on the rateable value of similar uses within the surrounding areas. Applying these values to the proposed uses (B1a, B1b, B1c and D2

¹⁵ Visa Europe (2014) UK Working Day Spend Report.

¹⁶ GLA Economics (2012) Gross Value Added per Workforce Job in London and the UK

¹⁷ Valuation Office Agency (2018) Business Rates [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/correct-your-business-rates>

Uses) under each scenario for the development would result in a gross business rate revenue of £750,00 to £1 million per year depending on how floorspace is used.

Wages and Income

- 9.32 Based on the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2018)¹⁸, it is estimated that the employment accommodated by the Proposed Development would support in the region of £21 million to £53 million in wages annually depending on the number of jobs accommodated.

The Social Dimension

- 9.33 The economic benefits considered above will give rise to a wide range of social benefits through increased employment opportunities for the local population.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing

- 9.34 The proposals include provision of a David Lloyd Leisure Club as part of Application 1. The health and racquets club would offer (inter alia) a gym, tennis courts, swimming pools, spa, café/restaurant and ancillary offices and staff facilities.
- 9.35 The provision of a new health and racquets club would support healthy lifestyles and improved wellbeing within the surrounding community. Regular physical activity is associated with improved health outcomes; a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and cancers and improved mental health. In older adults, physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities. There is an evidenced qualitative and quantitative deficiency of health and fitness provision in the town, that this component of the proposals will address.
- 9.36 The café/restaurant within the centre would also support social activities, further contributing to the social wellbeing of the local community.
- 9.37 Furthermore, businesses themselves are keen to encourage healthy lifestyles to keep employees energised, engaged and motivated to perform their best.

Quality of the Workplace Environment

- 9.38 In turn, the health and leisure club would also attract businesses to the adjacent employment uses. Businesses often find themselves competing with other companies to recruit and retain staff, particularly within the high-tech knowledge sector.
- 9.39 Having amenities like the David Lloyd Leisure Club on their doorstep would put nearby businesses at an advantage when trying to attract employees looking beyond the immediate workplace environment to support their quality of life.
- 9.40 The same is true for the proposed landscape setting of the business park, which will double as a recreational area for staff.

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics (2018) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Table 5.7a

Wetland Reserve

- 9.41 As well as supporting the creation of a high-quality landscaped setting, the proposed wetland area will provide recreational benefits to the business park and wider community.
- 9.42 Through Banbury Ornithological Society, it will also have the potential to give rise to educational opportunities.

The Environmental Dimension

- 9.43 The proposals will give rise to a range of environmental benefits, considered below.

High-Quality Design

- 9.44 The proposal is for the creation of a high-quality business park which has a strong sense of place, created through the delivery of bespoke buildings of varying scale and character, designed and constructed to achieve BREEAM “Very Good”, and making use of a palette of high-quality materials.
- 9.45 The buildings will all be in a landscaped setting which retains the majority of existing trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of and within the Site and delivers significant areas of new landscaping, comprising a mix of native and non-native species.

Wetland Creation

- 9.46 The proposed development includes an area of species-rich wetland. In combination with other green infrastructure and open drainage features on-site as part of the proposals, this will give rise to a net biodiversity gain.

Flood Compensation

- 9.47 The proposals make best use of land through flood water compensation/storage, which will enable the developable area of the Site to be maximised whilst also appropriately managing flood risk to the Site.

Commuting

- 9.48 The business park will provide accommodation suitable for the knowledge-based industries. Occupation by these employers will generate employment in this sector, addressing the current shortage and, in doing so, reduce the need for Bicester residents to travel out of the town for work. The carbon emissions reductions that will arise as a consequence are not yet quantifiable but are notable.

Heritage Assets

- 9.49 The proposals preserve the significance and setting of nearby heritage assets and will give rise to opportunities for increasing the community’s knowledge and understanding of the Roman heritage of the area.

The proposed development directly addresses all three of the dimensions of sustainable development. It will deliver transformational change at Bicester, put it firmly on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc “map” and, in the process, giving rise to a wide range of substantial economic, social and environmental benefits.

It will provide business accommodation and a high-quality environment, which will include a range of amenities and features (including a health and racquets club), in response to known market requirements in the high-tech knowledge-based sector. In doing so, it will support economic growth, innovation and improved productivity.

The proposals support the creation of strong, vibrant and healthy communities at Bicester via delivery of a well-designed and safe business environment, with sports and recreation facilities and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support the community's health, social and cultural well-being.

The development will protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment, making effective use of land; delivering biodiversity improvements; reducing out-commuting and making use of sustainable construction techniques.

10 Planning Balance and Conclusions

- 10.1 These Applications relate to development of land allocated by the adopted Development Plan for B1 development, known as Bicester Gateway, and a relatively modest area of land immediately adjacent to it that would form a logical extension to it.
- 10.2 The proposals, which have been informed by market research, will deliver a unique business park environment, known as Catalyst Bicester. Catalyst Bicester will be ideally suited to the needs of high-tech knowledge economy businesses and will enable Cherwell to capitalise on the town's location in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the technology corridor between Northamptonshire and Oxford.
- 10.3 To ensure the development can cater for a wide range of knowledge-intensive businesses, a range of buildings will be delivered. These will have the capacity to incorporate a full range of B1 uses, from offices to labs for research and development and workshop space for application and commercialisation of knowledge, which is a critical ambition of the Local Industrial Strategy. They will also range in size, such that spaces for start-ups and spin-out companies are provided as well as space for established businesses.
- 10.4 Through high-quality design and an attractive landscaped setting, which includes an ecological wetland reserve area to be managed by Banbury Ornithological Society, the development seeks to directly address the requirements of the Development Plan allocation.
- 10.5 The Council has accepted the principle of delivering catalysing development elsewhere on the allocation via the consenting of the hotel development, which is underway. The health and racquets club, whilst not a B1 use, will generate employment and will have the effect of catalysing the delivery of B1 uses on the remainder of the Site by addressing known health and wellbeing priorities of knowledge-economy businesses and their employees. It will also address identified deficiencies in the health and leisure sector in this part of Cherwell, giving rise to wider public benefits for the local community.
- 10.6 B1 development on the site of the existing poultry farm will necessitate the removal of a nuisance/conflicting use and further support the Council's aspirations for delivery of a high-quality business park in this location which is attractive to best-in-class knowledge industries.
- 10.7 There is, therefore, a plan-led presumption in favour of most of the proposed development. Where there is no such presumption, it has been demonstrated that no material policy or environmental harm would arise as a result of these components of the development.
- 10.8 In fact, there are substantial planning benefits that would accrue, and they would catalyse the delivery of the wider business park by enabling the creation of a more attractive business environment. These factors weigh heavily in favour of the proposals in the planning balance.
- 10.9 In conclusion, there is a clear and convincing case in favour of the development. The proposals for Catalyst Bicester would be deliverable and would comprise sustainable development capable of realising the Council's, and the Government's, ambitions for commercialisation of the knowledge industries in this area.



APPENDIX 1

SCHEDULE OF PLANS AND DOCUMENTS COMPRISING THE APPLICATIONS

NOTE

PLANS AND DOCUMENTS COMPRISING THE APPLICATIONS

Application 1: Submission Documents and Drawings

Document Title	Author
Application Form and Notices	
Cover Letter	Quod
Planning Statement	Quod
Design and Access Statement (July 2019)	Cornish Architects
Flood Risk Assessment including Drainage Strategy (included as Appendix 8.1 in the EIA) (Issue 2 July 2019)	Bailey Johnson Hayes
Ground Conditions Report (included as Appendix 8.2 in the EIA) (November 2018)	Applied Geology
Botanical and Protected Species Survey Results (included as Appendix 8.2 in the EIA) (November 2018)	Tyler Grange
Biodiversity Impact Calculation	Tyler Grange
Transport Assessment (included as Appendix 9.1 in the EIA) (August 2019)	David Tucker Associates
Framework Travel Plan (included as Appendix 9.2 in the EIA) (July 2019)	David Tucker Associates
Strategic Landscape Assessment (May 2019)	Reform
Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation	Cotswold Archaeology
Archaeological Evaluation	Cotswold Archaeology
Magnetometer Survey Report (November 2018)	Cotswold Archaeology
Noise Assessment (July 2019)	WYG
Air Quality Assessment (July 2019)	WYG
Lighting Assessment (July 2019)	WYG
Odour Assessment (August 2019)	WYG
Heritage Desk-Based Assessment	Cotswold Archaeology
Preliminary Arboricultural Impact Assessment (August 2019)	Tyler Grange
BREEAM NC 2018 Pre-Assessment (July 2019)	ESC
BREEAM NC 2018 Action List	ESC

NOTE continued

Proposed Knowledge Economy Development Market Report	VSL
Environmental Statement Volume 1 – Main Text	Quod
Environmental Statement Volume 2 – Appendices	Quod
Environmental Statement – Non-Technical Summary	Quod

Application Drawing	Drawing Reference	Revision
Application 1 Site Location Plan	18022-TP-101	-
Outline Planning Application Drawings		
Application 1 Parameters Plan 01 Land Use	18022-TP-102	-
Application 1 Parameters Plan 02 Building Height	18022-TP-103	-
Application 1 Parameters Plan 03 Vegetation Retention and Removal	18022-TP-104	-
Application 1 Parameters Plan 04 Site Access	18022-TP-105	-
Detailed Planning Drawings		
Existing Site Plan	A-PL-09-000	-
Proposed Site Plan	A-PL-09-010	P01
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	A-PL-04-010	-
Proposed First Floor Plan	A-PL-04-011	-
Proposed Roof Plan	A-PL-04-012	-
Proposed GA Elevations	A-PL-05-010	-
Proposed Air Dome Elevations	A-PL-05-020	-
Proposed Sauna Elevations	A-PL-05-030	-
Proposed GA Sections	A-PL-06-001	-
Proposed Site Sections	A-PL-06-010	-
Proposed Site Tracking	A-PL-09-020	P01
Proposed Tree Pit Detail	A-PL-09-100	-
Proposed Entrance Barrier Detail	A-PL-09-101	-
Proposed Bike Shelter Detail	A-PL-09-102	-
Proposed Surfacing Plan	A-PL-95-010	P01
Proposed Boundary Treatment	A-PL-97-010	P01
Wendlebury Road Foot/Cyclepath Enhancement with Health and Racquets Club	19539-12-01	B
Wendlebury Road Site Access Roundabout	19539-12-02	B

NOTE continued

Wendlebury Road Site Access Roundabout Vehicle Tracking	19539-12-03	B
Wendlebury Road Foot/Cyclepath Enhancement Employment only Scenarios	19539-13-01	A
Illustrative Drawings (for information only)		
Catalyst Bicester Illustrative Masterplan Scenario 01	-	-
Catalyst Bicester Illustrative Masterplan Scenario 02	-	-
Illustrative Elevations	-	-

NOTE continued

Application 2: Submission Documents and Drawings

Document Title	Author
Application Form and Notices	
Cover Letter	Quod
Planning Statement	Quod
Design and Access Statement (July 2019)	Cornish Architects
Flood Risk Assessment including Drainage Strategy (included as Appendix 8.1 in the EIA) (Issue 2 July 2019)	Bailey Johnson Hayes
Ground Conditions Report (included as Appendix 8.2 in the EIA) (November 2018)	Applied Geology
Botanical and Protected Species Survey Results (included as Appendix 8.2 in the EIA) (November 2018)	Tyler Grange
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BREEAM NC 2018 Pre-Assessment (July 2019)	ESC
BREEAM NC 2018 Action List	ESC
Environmental Statement Volume 1 – Main Text	Quod
Environmental Statement Volume 2 – Appendices	Quod

NOTE continued

Environmental Statement – Non-Technical Summary | Quod

Application Drawing	Drawing Reference	Revision
Application 2 Site Location Plan	18022-TP-111	-
Application 2 Parameters Plan 01 Land Use	18022-TP-112	-
Application 2 Parameters Plan 02 Building Height	18022-TP-113	-
Application 2 Parameters Plan 03 Vegetation Retention and Removal	18022-TP-114	-
Application 2 Parameters Plan 04 Site Access	18022-TP-115	-
Wendlebury Road Foot/Cyclepath Enhancement Employment only Scenarios	19539-13-01	A
Illustrative Drawings (for information only)		
Catalyst Bicester Illustrative Masterplan Scenario 03	-	-
Catalyst Bicester Illustrative Masterplan Scenario 04	-	-



APPENDIX 2

PLANING POLICY SCHEDULE

1 Bicester Gateway – Development Plan Policy Matrix

1.1 This Note sets out the policies of the Development Plan, and supplementary planning guidance that will be material to the determination of Albion Land’s applications at Bicester Gateway.

Table 1: Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway

Development description: Knowledge economy employment development to the south of the existing retail area (Wyvale Garden Centre), adjacent to the A41.

No.	Policy Requirement
1. Employment	
1.1	<i>Jobs created – approximately 3,500. Site constraints may reduce numbers slightly</i>
1.2	<i>Use classes – B1 Business uses: high tech knowledge industries.</i>
2. Infrastructure Needs	
2.1	<i>Open Space – structured open spaces and planting that provide a strong landscape setting, support SUDs and improvements to the microclimate</i>
2.2	<i>Access and Movement – M40, Phase 2 improvements to Junction 9. Contributions to improvements to the surrounding local and strategic road networks, including safeguarding land for future highway improvements to peripheral routes on this side of the town.</i>
3. Key Specific Design and Place Shaping Principles	
3.1	<i>Proposals should comply with Policy ESD15.</i>
3.2	<i>A well designed modern area with the provision of high quality property to attract and retain ‘best in class’ technology companies.</i>
3.3	<i>A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, architecture, materials and colourings and careful consideration given to building heights to reduce overall visual impact.</i>
3.4	<i>Conservation and enhancement of the setting of Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument and the setting out of opportunities to better reveal its significance.</i>

3.5	<i>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</i>
3.6	<i>Provision of opportunities for Green Infrastructure links beyond the development site to the wider town and countryside.</i>
3.7	<i>Provision and encouragement for sustainable travel options as the preferred modes of transport rather than the private car, and provision of a Travel Plan. Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for.</i>
3.8	<i>The provision of a detailed transport assessment tailored to assess in detail the impact of the proposed use class and floorspace on the strategic road network.</i>
3.9	<i>Provision for safe pedestrian and cyclist access from the A41 including facilitating the provision and upgrading of footpaths and cycleways that link with existing networks to improve connectivity generally, to maximise walking and cycling links between this site and nearby development sites and the town centre.</i>
3.10	<i>Accommodation of bus stops to link the development to the wider town.</i>
3.11	<i>Maximisation of walking and cycling links to the adjoining mixed use development at South West Bicester as well as the garden centre to the north.</i>
3.12	<i>Contribution to the creation of a footpath network around Bicester.</i>
3.13	<i>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, in the form of 'blue corridors' which provide open space near watercourses and provide a natural wetland buffer between the development and the adjacent nature reserve.</i>
3.14	<i>Development should not encroach within 8m of the watercourse banks.</i>
3.15	<i>Adequate investigation of, protection of and management of priority and protected habitats and species on site given the ecological value of the site, with biodiversity preserved and enhanced. An ecological survey should be undertaken, investigating the cumulative impacts of development at this site and at other sites on the Local and District Wildlife Sites in the vicinity.</i>
3.16	<i>Provision for a staged programme of archaeological work in liaison with statutory consultees, given the archaeological potential close to the site.</i>
3.17	<i>The provision of public art to enhance the quality of the place, legibility and identity.</i>
3.18	<i>Structural planting and landscape proposals within the site to include retention of existing trees and hedgerows, the enhancement, restoration or creation of wildlife corridors, and to limit visual impact of new buildings and car parking on the existing character of the site and its surroundings.</i>

3.19	<i>Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including exemplary demonstration of compliance with the requirements of policies ESD 1 – 5.</i>
3.20	<i>A sequential approach should be followed; where possible, buildings should be located away from areas at high risk of flooding but where development is necessary, the development should be made safe without measures increasing flood risk elsewhere. Up to date information should be used for a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).</i>
3.21	<i>Adoption of a surface water management framework to reduce surface water run off to greenfield rates.</i>
3.22	<i>Full mitigation of flood risk in compliance with Policy ESD 6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management including the use of SuDS (Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)) specifically infiltration SuDS techniques in the far south western corner of the site, combined infiltration and attenuation techniques in the north western and south eastern areas, and attenuation techniques in the central and north eastern area of the site, taking account of the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. A Flood Risk Assessment should investigate opening the culverted watercourse that crosses through the east of the site to reduce flood risk and improve its ecological value.</i>
3.23	<i>An assessment of whether the site contains best and most versatile agricultural land, including a detailed survey where necessary.</i>
3.24	<i>A soil management plan may be required to be submitted with planning applications.</i>
3.25	<i>Take account of the Council's SFRA for the site.</i>
3.26	<i>No built development will be located in Flood Zone 3b and the principle set out in Policy ESD 6 will be followed.</i>
3.27	<i>Development proposals to be accompanied and influenced by landscape/visual and heritage impact assessments.</i>
3.28	<i>A layout that maximises the potential for walkable neighbourhoods and enables a high degree of integration and connectivity between new and existing communities.</i>
3.29	<i>Planting of vegetation along strategic route ways to screen the noise.</i>

All other Policies Referred to Above

Policy	Policy Requirement
ESD1	<p><u>Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change</u></p> <p>Measures will be taken to mitigate the impact of development within the District on climate change. At a strategic level, this will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributing growth to the most sustainable locations as defined in this Local Plan Delivering development that seeks to reduce the need to travel and which encourages sustainable travel options including walking, cycling and public transport to reduce dependence on private cars Designing developments to reduce carbon emissions and use resources more efficiently, including water (see Policy ESD 3 Sustainable Construction) Promoting the use of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy where appropriate (see Policies ESD 4 Decentralised Energy Systems and ESD 5 Renewable Energy). <p>The incorporation of suitable adaptation measures in new development to ensure that development is more resilient to climate change impacts will include consideration of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking into account the known physical and environmental constraints when identifying locations for development Demonstration of design approaches that are resilient to climate change impacts including the use of passive solar design for heating and cooling Minimising the risk of flooding and making use of sustainable drainage methods, and Reducing the effects of development on the microclimate (through the provision of green infrastructure including open space and water, planting, and green roofs). <p>Adaptation through design approaches will be considered in more locally specific detail in the Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p>
ESD2	<p><u>Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions</u></p> <p>In seeking to achieve carbon emissions reductions, we will promote an 'energy hierarchy' as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing energy use, in particular by the use of sustainable design and construction measures Supplying energy efficiently and giving priority to decentralised energy supply

- *Making use of renewable energy*
- *Making use of allowable solutions*

ESD3

All new non-residential development will be expected to meet at least BREEAM ‘Very Good’ with immediate effect, subject to review over the plan period to ensure the target remains relevant. The demonstration of the achievement of this standard should be set out in the Energy Statement. The strategic site allocations identified in this Local Plan are expected to provide contributions to carbon emissions reductions and to wider sustainability. All development proposals will be encouraged to reflect high quality design and high environmental standards, demonstrating sustainable construction methods including but not limited to:

- *Minimising both energy demands and energy loss*
- *Maximising passive solar lighting and natural ventilation*
- *Maximising resource efficiency*
- *Incorporating the use of recycled and energy efficient materials*
- *Incorporating the use of locally sourced building materials*
- *Reducing waste and pollution and making adequate provision for the recycling of waste*
- *Making use of sustainable drainage methods*
- *Reducing the impact on the external environment and maximising opportunities for cooling and shading (by the provision of open space and water, planting, and green roofs, for example); and*
- *Making use of the embodied energy within buildings wherever possible and re-using materials where proposals involve demolition or redevelopment.*

Should the promoters of development consider that individual proposals would be unviable with the above requirements, ‘open-book’ financial analysis of proposed developments will be expected so that an independent economic viability assessment can be undertaken. Where it is agreed that an economic viability assessment is required, the cost shall be met by the promoter.

ESD4

Decentralised Energy Systems

The use of decentralised energy systems, providing either heating (District Heating (DH)) or heating and power (Combined Heat and Power (CHP)) will be encouraged in all new developments.

A feasibility assessment for DH/CHP, including consideration of biomass fuelled CHP, will be required for:

- All residential developments for 100 dwellings or more
- All residential developments in off-gas areas for 50 dwellings or more
- All applications for non-domestic developments above 1000m² floorspace.

The feasibility assessment should be informed by the renewable energy map at Appendix 5 'Maps' and the national mapping of heat demand densities undertaken by the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base).

Where feasibility assessments demonstrate that decentralised energy systems are deliverable and viable, such systems will be required as part of the development unless an alternative solution would deliver the same or increased benefit.

Renewable Energy

The Council supports renewable and low carbon energy provision wherever any adverse impacts can be addressed satisfactorily. The potential local environmental, economic and community benefits of renewable energy schemes will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Planning applications involving renewable energy development will be encouraged provided that there is no unacceptable adverse impact, including cumulative impact, on the following issues, which are considered to be of particular local significance in Cherwell:

- Landscape and biodiversity including designations, protected habitats and species, and Conservation Target Areas
- Visual impacts on local landscapes
- The historic environment including designated and non designated assets and their settings
- The Green Belt, particularly visual impacts on openness
- Aviation activities
- Highways and access issues, and
- Residential amenity.

A feasibility assessment of the potential for significant on site renewable energy provision (above any provision required to meet national building standards) will be required for:

- All residential developments for 100 dwellings or more
- All residential developments in off-gas areas for 50 dwellings or more
- All applications for non-domestic developments above 1000 m² floorspace.

ESD5

Where feasibility assessments demonstrate that on site renewable energy provision is deliverable and viable, this will be required as part of the development unless an alternative solution would deliver the same or increased benefit. This may include consideration of ‘allowable solutions’ as Government Policy evolves.

Sustainable Flood Risk Management

The Council will manage and reduce flood risk in the District through using a sequential approach to development; locating vulnerable developments in areas at lower risk of flooding. Development proposals will be assessed according to the sequential approach and where necessary the exceptions test as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Development will only be permitted in areas of flood risk when there are no reasonably available sites in areas of lower flood risk and the benefits of the development outweigh the risks from flooding.

In addition to safeguarding floodplains from development, opportunities will be sought to restore natural river flows and floodplains, increasing their amenity and biodiversity value. Building over or culverting of watercourses should be avoided and the removal of existing culverts will be encouraged.

Existing flood defences will be protected from damaging development and where development is considered appropriate in areas protected by such defences it must allow for the maintenance and management of the defences and be designed to be resilient to flooding.

Site specific flood risk assessments will be required to accompany development proposals in the following situations:

- *All development proposals located in flood zones 2 or 3*
- *Development proposals of 1 hectare or more located in flood zone 1*
- *Development sites located in an area known to have experienced flooding problems*
- *Development sites located within 9m of any watercourses.*

ESD6

Flood risk assessments should assess all sources of flood risk and demonstrate that:

- *There will be no increase in surface water discharge rates or volumes during storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year storm event with an allowance for climate change (the design storm event)*
- *Developments will not flood from surface water up to and including the design storm event or any surface water flooding beyond the 1 in 30 year storm event, up to and including the design storm event will be safely contained on site.*

Development should be safe and remain operational (where necessary) and proposals should demonstrate that surface water will be managed effectively on site and that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere, including sewer flooding.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

All development will be required to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off.

ESD7

Where site specific Flood Risk Assessments are required in association with development proposals, they should be used to determine how SuDS can be used on particular sites and to design appropriate systems.

In considering SuDS solutions, the need to protect ground water quality must be taken into account, especially where infiltration techniques are proposed. Where possible, SuDS should seek to reduce flood risk, reduce pollution and provide landscape and wildlife benefits. SuDS will require the approval of Oxfordshire County Council as LLFA and SuDS Approval Body, and proposals must include an agreement on the future management, maintenance and replacement of the SuDS features.

Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment will be achieved by the following:

- In considering proposals for development, a net gain in biodiversity will be sought by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources, and by creating new resources*

- The protection of trees will be encouraged, with an aim to increase the number of trees in the District*

- The reuse of soils will be sought*

ESD10

- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then development will not be permitted.*

- Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of international value will be subject to the Habitats Regulations Assessment process and will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no likely significant effects on the international site or that effects can be mitigated*

- Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of national importance will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site and the wider national network of SSSIs, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity*

- Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of regional or local importance including habitats of species of principal importance for biodiversity will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity, and retain and where possible enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site. Existing ecological networks should be identified and maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation, and ecological corridors should form an essential component of green infrastructure provision in association with new development to ensure habitat connectivity</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Relevant habitat and species surveys and associated reports will be required to accompany planning applications which may affect a site, habitat or species of known or potential ecological value</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Air quality assessments will also be required for development proposals that would be likely to have a significantly adverse impact on biodiversity by generating an increase in air pollution</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Planning conditions/obligations will be used to secure net gains in biodiversity by helping to deliver Biodiversity Action Plan targets and/or meeting the aims of Conservation Target Areas. Developments for which these are the principal aims will be viewed favourably</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A monitoring and management plan will be required for biodiversity features on site to ensure their long term suitable management.</i>
ESD11	<p><u>Conservation target Areas</u> N/A</p>
ESD15	<p><u>The Character of the Built and Historic Environment</u> Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area’s unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District’s distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential. New development proposals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions</i> • <i>Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions</i> • <i>Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity</i>

- *Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting*
- *Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged*
- *Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*
- *Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages*
- *Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette*
- *Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features*
- *Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed*
- *Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space*
- *Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation*
- *Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation*

- Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout
- Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see [Policies ESD 1 - 5](#) on climate change and renewable energy)
- Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see [Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment](#) and [Policy ESD 17 Green Infrastructure](#)). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality
- Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.

The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Local Plan Part 2.

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. Further guidance can be found on the Council's website.

The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites. For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site.

ESD16 Oxford Canal
N/A

ESD17 Green Infrastructure

The District's green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced 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 sustainable 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](#)), Conservation Target Areas ([Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas](#)), heritage assets ([Policy ESD 15](#)) and the Oxford Canal ([Policy ESD 16](#))
- 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 incorporate green infrastructure provision and proposals should include details for future management and maintenance.

Improved Transport and Connections

The Council will support the implementation of the proposals in the Movement Strategies and the Local Transport Plan to deliver key connections, to support modal shift and to support more sustainable locations for employment and housing growth.

We will support key transport proposals including:

- SLE4
- Transport Improvements at Banbury, Bicester and at the Former RAF Upper Heyford in accordance with the County Council's Local Transport Plan and Movement Strategies
 - Projects associated with East-West rail including new stations at Bicester Town and Water Eaton
 - Rail freight associated development at Graven Hill, Bicester
 - Improvements to M40 junctions.

Consultation on options for new link and relief roads at Bicester and Banbury will be undertaken through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) review process. Routes identified following strategic options appraisal work for LTP4 will be confirmed by the County Council and will be incorporated in Local Plan Part 2.

New development in the District will be required to provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to mitigate the transport impacts of development.

All development where reasonable to do so, should facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. Encouragement will be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. Development which is not suitable for the roads that serve the development and which have a severe traffic impact will not be supported.

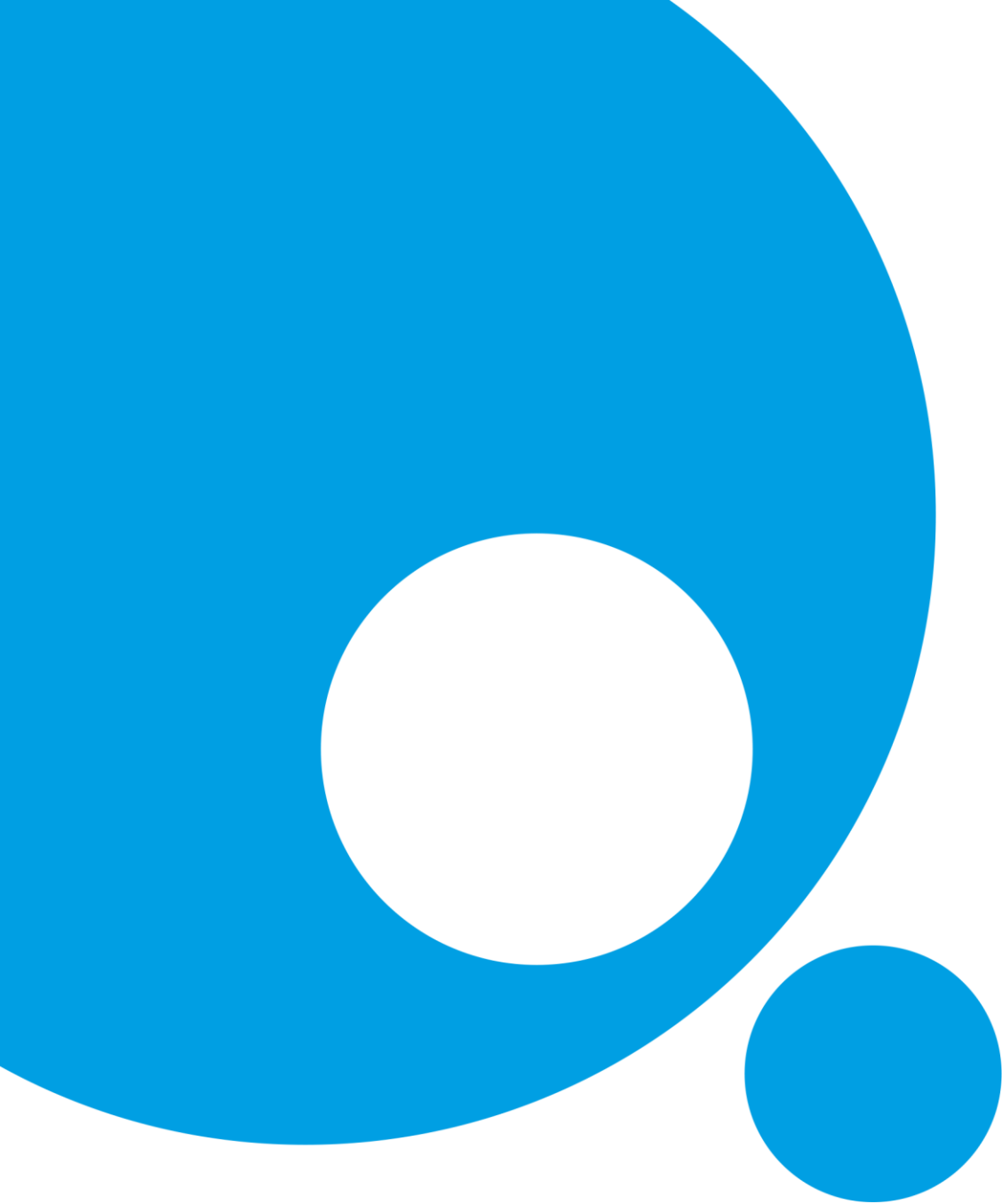
BSC10

N/A



APPENDIX 3

MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES – SEQUENTIAL AND IMPACT TESTS



MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES – SEQUENTIAL AND IMPACT TESTS

CATALYST BICESTER

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1 Introduction

Purpose of Document

- 1.1 This Report has been prepared on behalf of Albion Land (“the Applicant”). It is submitted in support of a proposal for a health and racquets club which has been designed specifically for and is intended to be occupied by David Lloyd Leisure Clubs (“DLL Clubs”).

The Proposal

- 1.2 The health and racquets club will form part of a proposed business park development (“the Application”) at Promised Land Farm, Wendlebury, Bicester (“the Site”).
- 1.3 It is intended to be complimentary to, and catalyse development of, the wider business park proposal. The business park is aimed to cater for the needs of high-technology and knowledge-intensive industries, all of whom value the overall amenity offer when making decisions about where to locate their business.
- 1.4 Like the hotel which is currently being delivered on adjoining land to the north-west of the Site, whilst the health and racquets club may be delivered in the first phase of the proposed development, it is not intended to be delivered in isolation from the rest of the business park environment. Indeed, a key attraction of the Site for DLL Clubs is that there will be a possible member source on the club’s “doorstep” from an early stage.

Need for Assessment

- 1.5 The inherent characteristics of the proposed health and racquets club, being similar to rugby and football clubs and therefore not a “*more intensive sport and recreation use*” defined in the NPPF Glossary, are not considered appropriate to a town centre location.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding this, Cherwell District Council (“CDC”) has, however, requested that the health and racquets club component of the development is assessed against the sequential and impact tests set out in national and local planning policy¹.
- 1.7 This Report has therefore been submitted without prejudice to the intended operator’s view that this is unnecessary.
- 1.8 The Report should be read alongside the rest of the plans and documents forming the planning submission. These are set out at **Appendix 1 to the Planning Statement**, which this Report is appended to.

¹ NPPF Section 7 and Cherwell Local Plan 2015 (“CLP 2015”) Policy SLE2.

2 Context

Proposed Development

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the health and racquets club (use Class D2) which has been designed specifically for and is intended to be occupied by DLL Clubs.
- 2.2 The health and racquets club will comprise a clubhouse, full-service gym and fitness studios, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, all-weather tennis court enclosure, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, spa, terrace areas and associated parking and landscaping.
- 2.3 The facilities are all integrated with one another to form a high-quality health, recreation and sports facility which is aimed at the discerning family fitness market.
- 2.4 The DLL Clubs approach to health and fitness is explained more fully in the **Operator Statement**.
- 2.5 The health and racquets club (**Figure 2.1**) has its own, dedicated access from Wendlebury Road. This will lead to a member car park with 246 car parking spaces. A cycle shelter is also provided at the front of the building, providing 20 cycle spaces.

Figure 2.1 – Proposed Health and Racquets Club



- 2.6 The form and massing of the building, and the overall layout of the site, is dictated by its function, the spatial requirements of each component, and the need to move easily between some of these spaces.
- 2.7 Key to realising the DLL Club concept are the relationships between the interior spaces and adjacencies of interior and exterior functions. All activities are typically organised around the main reception and lounge.

2.8 To achieve the premium, family health and racquets club offer synonymous with the DLL Clubs' brand, the occupier's brief to their architects was that the following essential facilities to be included in the proposals were:

- Tennis
 - 3 court permanent tennis air-dome enclosure;
 - 2 show courts;
- Swimming
 - 5 lane, 20m internal pool;
 - 400/800mm deep learner pool;
 - 4 lane, 25m outdoor pool;
 - Outdoor children's pool;
- Health and fitness
 - 3 court sports hall
 - 100 - 120 station gym
 - 3 studio spaces - spin, high impact and mind & body studios
 - Children's soft play and activity space
- Spa
 - Internal spa - pool, relax, sauna and steam
 - External spa garden - pool, sauna and relax
- Leisure
 - Lounge including adult lounge/business hub
 - External lounge terrace
- Ancillary
 - Reception, changing, staff, catering kitchen/cafe bar
- External
 - Circa 250 car spaces including 10 disabled and 6 parent & child
 - 20 cycle parking spaces
 - Delivery area

2.9 The form of the building is derived from both the building's function and the spatial requirements of the internal spaces.

2.10 Many of these have precise criteria for their specifications / dimensions, both in terms of area and clear height. The spaces which have influenced the massing of the building are the sports hall, pool hall and fitness suite.

2.11 Spaces with similar requirements such as the gym and studios have been grouped together to simplify and organise the composition, ensuring (inter alia) building efficiency.

Decision-Making

2.12 Both national and local planning policies require that a sequential approach to site selection be applied to main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up to date development plan.

2.13 As set out above, and in the Planning Statement which this Report is appended to, “main town centre uses” are defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

“Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)”.

2.14 Both the Applicant and DLL Clubs do not consider that the proposed health and racquets club fulfil the definition of a main town centre use.

2.15 This is principally because their characteristics differ substantially from those of a the more “intensive” uses, especially “health and fitness centres”, by virtue of inclusion of the racquets element, which is much less intensive use and requires a significant site area.

2.16 Being a D2 Use, the Council has however insisted on the application of the sequential approach and consideration of likely impacts on Bicester Town Centre. This has been undertaken strictly without prejudice to the Applicant and operator’s views.

2.17 Whilst the sequential approach seeks to focus new main town centre uses towards town centres, it does not preclude sites coming forward elsewhere if it is demonstrated that there are no suitable or available in-centre or edge-of-centre opportunities to accommodate the development.

2.18 The Site forms part of a wider site which is allocated for employment uses (Use Class B1) by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 10. B1 uses are proposed across the remainder of the Site.

2.19 The Application is supported by **Market Evidence** which demonstrates that the health and racquets club will be complimentary to the main use of the Site and will make the proposed business park more attractive to the types of occupier which CDC hope to attract to it. The **Planning Statement** (see Section 7) explains how the health and racquets club will also catalyse development of the business park in combination with the approved hotel to the north-west.

2.20 The complementary and catalytic effects of the health and racquets club, in combination with the fact it will be fully integrated into the proposal for the wider business park, is an important material consideration in the application of the sequential test in this case.

2.21 In determining how the sequential test is applied and interpreted in practice, consideration of the following is necessary:

- Local and national planning policy and guidance
- Legally binding case law; and
- Call-in / appeal precedent.

2.22 A summary of these is set out below, followed by a bespoke sequential assessment of alternative sites in Bicester:

- (i) in and on the edge of Bicester town centre and
- (ii) within the Area of Search defined by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 5 (the latter being requested by CDC in pre-application discussions).

2.23 CDC has also asked the Applicant to consider the suitability and availability of the allocated land at:

- Bicester 4 (Bicester Business Park, which is allocated for B1a office development); and
- Bicester 8 (Former RAF Bicester, which is allocated for “*conservation-led proposals to secure a long-lasting, economically viable future for the Former RAF Bicester technical site and flying field*”).

Local and National Planning Policy and Guidance

2.24 Paragraph 86 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre, nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan.

2.25 Paragraph 87 goes on to note that, when considering out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre.

2.26 CLP 2015 Policy SLE2 adopts a sequential approach to proposals for main town centre uses, in accordance with the NPPF.

2.27 It confirms that main town centre uses will be directed towards the town centres of Banbury and Bicester and the village centre of Kidlington. It goes on to note that the council will apply the sequential test as set out in the NPPF (Paragraphs 86 and 87) as follows:

“Proposals for retail and other Main Town Centre Uses not in these town centres should be in ‘edge of centre’ locations. Only if suitable sites are not available in edge of centre locations should out of centre sites be considered.”

“When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre.”

2.28 CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 5 aims to strengthen Bicester town centre. It commits to a review of town centre boundaries through the Local Plan Part 2 (which will not be advanced until the current review of CLP 2015 to meet Oxford’s unmet housing needs is complete) and states that, in the meantime:

“...retail and other main town centre uses will only be supported within the Area of Search if they form part of new scheme which help deliver the aims for central Bicester...” [set out elsewhere in the policy].

2.29 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) advises that the sequential test should be “*proportionate and appropriate*” for the given proposal.

2.30 It also provides a checklist which sets out the factors that should be considered in determining whether a proposal complies with the sequential test, as follows:

- *“With due regard to the requirement to demonstrate flexibility, has the suitability of more central sites to accommodate the proposal been considered? Where the proposal would be located in an edge of centre or out of centre location, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Any associated reasoning should be set out clearly.”*
- *“Is there scope for flexibility in the format and/or scale of the proposal? It is not necessary to demonstrate that a potential town centre or edge of centre site can accommodate precisely the scale and form of development being proposed, but rather to consider what contribution more central sites are able to make individually to accommodate the proposal.”*
- *“If there are no suitable sequentially preferable locations, the sequential test is passed.”²*

2.31 Indeed, in applying the sequential approach, it is important to note that the NPPG acknowledges that:

“Use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations.”³

2.32 For an available, more central site to be sequentially preferable it must be “suitable”.

2.33 In assessing whether a site is suitable the decision taker and developer must consider whether there is scope for “flexibility” in terms of format and scale.

2.34 To this end, the definition of “suitability” and the extent to which “flexibility” should be demonstrated has been the subject of much legal and planning debate.

2.35 Legally binding case law and the Secretary of State (“SoS”) precedent assists in the interpretation of the above points.

Case Law and Appeal Precedents

2.36 Several recent SoS appeal decisions and court judgements have helped provide clarification regarding interpretation of the sequential test.

2.37 It is recognised that a degree of flexibility is required in relation to format and/or scale. In understanding this issue, the message established by recent Judgments and SoS decisions is consistent in that there is a requirement to consider flexibility of format and scale, but that a local planning authority must operate in the “real world”.

² NPPG Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 2b-010-20140306

³ NPPG Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 2b-011-20140306

2.38 In particular, the approach should not be applied to fundamentally compromise the development proposal.

2.39 The Dundee Supreme Court Judgment⁴ established that if a site is not suitable for the commercial requirements of the development in question, then it is not a “suitable site” for the purposes of the sequential approach; and that in terms of the size of the alternative site, provided that the applicant has demonstrated flexibility with regards to format and scale, the question is (Paragraph 29):

“...whether an alternative site is suitable for the proposed development, not whether the proposed development can be altered or reduced so that it can be made to fit an alternative site.”

2.40 The interpretation of “suitability” was clarified in the SoS decision at Rushden Lakes⁵. The Inspector identified that the Dundee Judgment to be of “seminal importance”. To this end, when commenting on suitability the Inspector (Paragraph 2.64, Inspector’s Report) noted that:

“...if a site is not suitable for the commercial requirements of the developer in question then it is not a suitable site for the purposes of the sequential approach.”

2.41 Linked to the definition of suitability, an available site need only be available for the form of development proposed, as opposed to being available to developer⁶.

2.42 In light of the above, the proper approach to the sequential test in this case is formed of the following principles:

- Whether an alternative site is suitable and available to meet the requirements that the development is intended to meet;
- Whether an alternative site provides an opportunity to accommodate the development, even in an alternative and flexible configuration;
- Whether an alternative site results in a form of development that is substantially compromised from that proposed;
- Whether an alternative site is located within a commercially viable location to serve the intended market;
- Whether an alternative site would give rise to the same complementary and catalysing effects on the delivery of knowledge-based employment opportunities in Bicester.

⁴ Supreme Court Judgement – Tesco Stores Limited v Dundee City Council (Scotland), 21 March 2012

⁵ Land Adjacent Skew Bridge Ski Slope, Northampton Road, Rushden. Appeal Ref: APP/G2815/V/12/2190175

⁶ Honiton Road and Fitzroy Road, Exeter. Appeal Ref: APP/Y1110/W/15/3005333

3 The Approach to the Sequential Test

- 3.1 It is accepted that the health and racquets club represents an out of centre development. However, the proposal is an example of such circumstances where particular market and locational requirements come into play.

Occupier Requirements

- 3.2 The intended occupier is David Lloyd Leisure.
- 3.3 The focus of DLL clubs is on tennis; however, this goes hand in hand with the provision of a full-service gym, fitness studios, swimming pool and spa, and ancillary facilities including café/restaurant, members lounge, changing facilities etc. which are provided as a minimum across all of their clubs. This is explained more fully in the submitted **Operator Statement**.
- 3.4 As a result of the large site area which is necessary to accommodate the full range of required facilities, the clubs do not lend themselves well to town centre locations. This is evidenced by the fact all existing DLL clubs are in out of centre locations.
- 3.5 As such, whilst certain elements of the proposed health and racquets club might be appropriate in a town centre location, it can be established that DLL clubs are not typical main town centre uses.

Flexibility

- 3.6 The above conclusions would apply to any family-oriented, outdoor-sport focussed, health and fitness operator (i.e. others operating at a similar scale and format) and is not solely dependent on an individual corporate personality or the intended operator.
- 3.7 The minimum site area required for the proposed development is 1.66ha, to accommodate the full health and racquets club offer.
- 3.8 As well as areas of incidental landscaping and circulation spaces, this area is formed of five key component parts:
- The main club house with indoor facilities (comprising a building footprint of approximately 0.24ha, and total floorspace of 4,107sq.m);
 - Outdoor tennis courts and courts within a permanent air dome (comprising a site area of approximately 0.3ha and having a minimum clear ceiling height of 16m in the case of the indoor courts);
 - Outdoor swimming pool and spa garden pool terrace (comprising a site area of approximately 0.13);
 - Members terrace (comprising a site area of approximately 0.07ha) and
 - External car parking (246 no. spaces, comprising a site area of approximately 0.54ha).
- 3.9 For town centre sites with good access to car parking which would be convenient and free to use for Members of the health and racquets club, the car parking component of the proposed development can be removed. As such, a suitable site size of 1.12ha (1.66ha minus 0.54ha) could be appropriate to accommodate the scheme's requirements in a town centre location.

- 3.10 As the tennis courts, full-service gym and swimming pool facilities are provided as a minimum across all health and fitness clubs of this type, this is the most flexibility that could be realistically be provided whilst remaining faithful to the business model and without significant compromise by the operators that may affect the overall viability of the health and racquets club component of the development.
- 3.11 If further flexibility were proposed, other components could be rationalised.
- 3.12 For example, whilst the club is already configured across two floors, providing a multi-level club would further reduce the footprint of the main club house. This would, however, result in a significant departure from the usual approach to the internal configuration of facilities which (as considered above). It would also be unlikely to result in a development format that would be acceptable to the local planning authority (for example, requiring a very tall building).
- 3.13 Reducing the number of outdoor tennis courts; or removing the swimming pool and spa components would, theoretically, also be possible.
- 3.14 However, as all these components are a core part of the DLL Clubs business model integral to the health and racquets club “offer”, they cannot reasonably be disaggregated without significant compromise to the operators. This would, therefore, be a highly hypothetical and unrealistic approach to the sequential test.
- 3.15 Furthermore, while business and residential uses on nearby sites fall within the catchment area, the proposed health and racquets club will have a unique, symbiotic relationship with the proposed business park.
- 3.16 The Application is supported by **Market Evidence** which demonstrates the potential benefits of the health and racquets club in complementing and catalysing the wider delivery of the business park.
- 3.17 As such, there is a site-specific requirement for the health and racquets club in this location which cannot be ignored in the application of the sequential test.

Location-Specific Benefits

- 3.18 As considered in the **Planning Statement**, the delivery of the business park is a critical component of CDC’s employment strategy for the area. The Bicester 10 allocation is one of just a few strategic employment sites, and the only allocation intended to specifically meet the needs of the knowledge industries. The proposed health and racquets club will have a catalysing effect on the wider delivery of the business park by enhancing its attractiveness to potential occupiers.

Summary of Market and Locational Requirements

- 3.19 Taking the above into account, when considering the specifics of the proposal, the following points can be noted:
- Given the minimum site area of 1.66ha required to deliver the proposed range of facilities, the health and racquets club does not lend itself well to a town centre location, thus is not a typical town centre use;
 - For town centre sites with good access to useable car parking for members, a reduced site size of 1.12ha or an existing building capable of providing circa 4,000 sq.m floorspace (being

the area required to provide the clubhouse facilities and health and fitness facilities) and 6 no. tennis courts could be considered;

- Although unrealistic and purely hypothetical, further flexibility could be introduced by reducing or removing other components of the health and leisure offer;
- The health and racquets club would increase the attractiveness of the wider business-park to knowledge-based businesses. It would complement and catalyse the delivery of the business park in combination with the approved hotel to the north-west of the Site.

3.20 These are important and fundamental factors when applying the sequential approach to ascertain whether there are sequentially preferable sites available.

Pre-Application Advice

3.21 Quod has held pre-application discussions with CDC in meetings and via email correspondence to determine the scope of the sequential test.

3.22 Officers have accepted that the approach to the sequential test should be proportionate and that it should only consider alternative sites in Bicester which are capable of accommodating the full health and racquets club offer that is proposed via the Application.

3.23 Notwithstanding this advice, and the established case law and precedents set out above, the approach adopted by the Applicant has been to consider all potentially available sites capable of delivering a more flexible and disaggregated version of the health and racquets club.

3.24 Although unrealistic and entirely hypothetical approach, a minimum site size of 0.54ha or an existing building capable of conversion with a floorspace of at least 7,000 sq.m⁷ for town centre and edge of centre sites has been considered.

3.25 Consequently, the Applicant has adopted a highly robust, albeit commercially hypothetical approach, to the sequential test in this case.

⁷ The minimum area which is required to enable provision of the main clubhouse, indoor health and fitness facilities and tennis facilities (which are required in order to differentiate the health and racquets club from other gym operators).

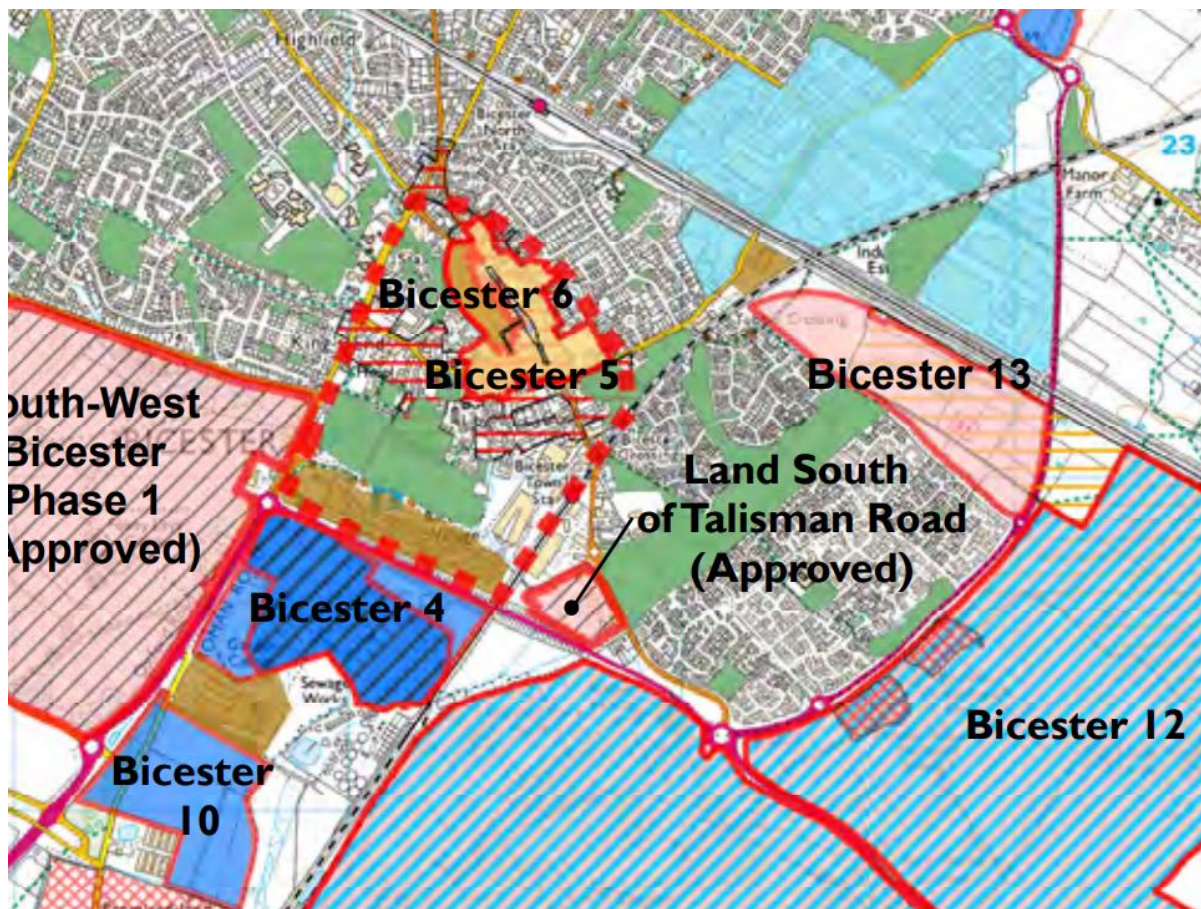
4 Sites Assessed

4.1 An area of search was established in pre-application consultation with CDC.

4.2 The following area of search has been determined in order of sequential preference:

- (i) Sites within Bicester Town Centre (see **Figure 4.1**);
- (ii) Town Centre Extension Area of Search (defined by Policy Bicester 5, also indicated at **Figure 4.1**);
- (iii) Allocated Sites Bicester 8 and Bicester 4.

Figure 4.1 – Proposals Map Extract



Key:

- Existing Town Centre
- Town Centre Extension (Area of Search)

- 4.3 Based on this area of search and the search criteria defined at **Section 3**, the following sites have been identified⁸ for consideration as part of the sequential assessment:

Site Address	Sequential Location	Site Area
Bicester Sports Association Land	Out-of-Centre	4.5 ha
Bicester Business Park	Out-of-Centre	29.5 ha
Former RAF Bicester	Out-of-Centre	160 ha

- 4.4 There are no alternative sites within Bicester Town Centre, and all the alternative sites which have been identified are in out of centre locations (i.e. they are not sequentially preferable in policy terms).

Bicester Sports Association Land

- 4.5 The site (**Figure 4.2**) is out of centre but is within the Town Centre Area of Search defined by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 5. It is large enough to accommodate the health and racquets club proposal.

Figure 4.2 – Bicester Sports Association Land



- 4.6 Whilst last used as a sports ground, Bicester Sports Association intends to relocate all its facilities to Chesterton Sports Ground, creating a “sporting hub” which would be circa 6 times the size of the existing ground.

⁸ Unallocated sites within Town Centre and Town Centre Area of Search identified by commercial agents VSL and Partners and via online property searches.

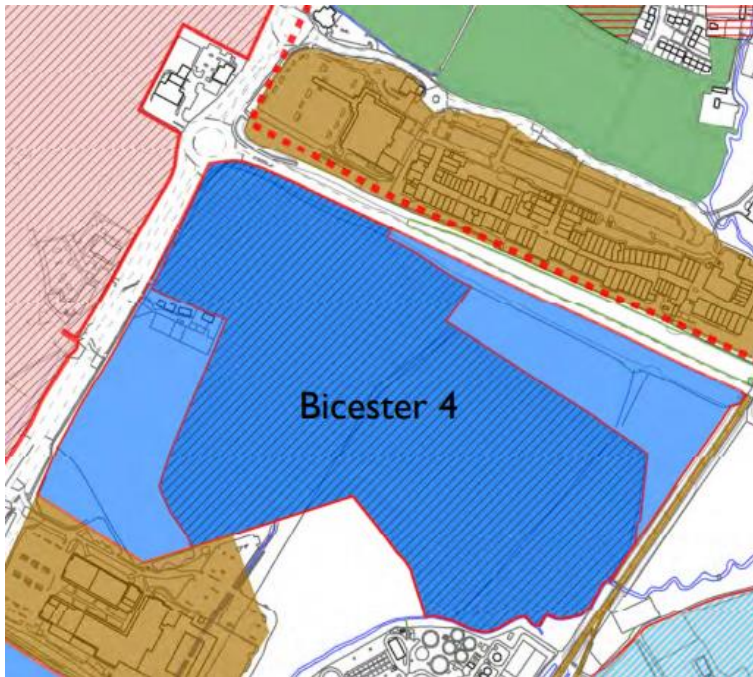
- 4.7 To fund the move, Bicester Sports Association sold the site to developer U + I in 2015, who proposed to demolish the existing buildings and bring forward a retail and food (A1) and beverage (A3, A4 and A5 uses) scheme in its place.
- 4.8 The site was later acquired by the owners of Bicester Village, Value Retail, in October 2018. In a statement confirming the acquisition⁹, Value Retail indicated that it planned to develop the site itself and would bring forward proposals in consultation with local stakeholders in due course. The DLL Clubs is deliverable now and waiting for a masterplan to be developed by Value Retail would delay its delivery.
- 4.9 Being earmarked for extension of the Town Centre has driven up the values of the site, which DLL Clubs would be unable to achieve by virtue of their business model requiring significant site area and therefore incompatible with town centre locations.
- 4.10 Additionally, the highway network in the immediate vicinity of this site is significantly constrained by congestion and capacity. DLL Clubs have significant concerns about the effect the potential of this to frustrate member access to the health and racquets club and reduce its attractiveness to possible members.
- 4.11 The site is therefore not suitable or available for the proposed health and racquets club.

Bicester Business Park

- 4.12 The site known as Bicester Business Park (**Figure 4.3**) is allocated within CLP 2015 for office (B1a) uses (Bicester Policy 4). The allocation extends to 29.5ha and is located to the north of the Garden and Home Centre immediately to the north of the Site. In sequential terms, this site is also out-of-centre, albeit it is closer to Bicester Town Centre and thus could be considered more accessible.
- 4.13 A Tesco Superstore has been constructed on the northern most part of the site. The remainder of the site is under the ownership of Scenic Land Developments Ltd who are currently promoting a major office-led business park in accordance with the site's allocation. There is also an extant planning permission for 60,000 sq.m of offices and hotel use at the site.
- 4.14 More recently, a further outline planning application (ref: 17/02534/OUT) for office-led development which incorporated additional commercial floorspace received a resolution to grant planning consent from CDC's Planning Committee in August 2018. It is understood that planning permission is anticipated to be granted imminently.
- 4.15 Whilst there would be enough land at Bicester Business Park to accommodate the health and racquets club, DLL Clubs has been unable to agree commercial terms with the landowners. The site is therefore not currently available.
- 4.16 Given its importance as a prime office location, delivery of which is central to the overall economic strategy for Bicester (as illustrated by CLP 2015 Policy Bicester 4 and its supporting text), and its strategic location to the south of the town centre and on the A41, the site is also unsuitable.

⁹ <https://www.bicesteradvertiser.net/news/16991133.bicester-village-buys-oxford-road-sports-ground-in-bicester/>

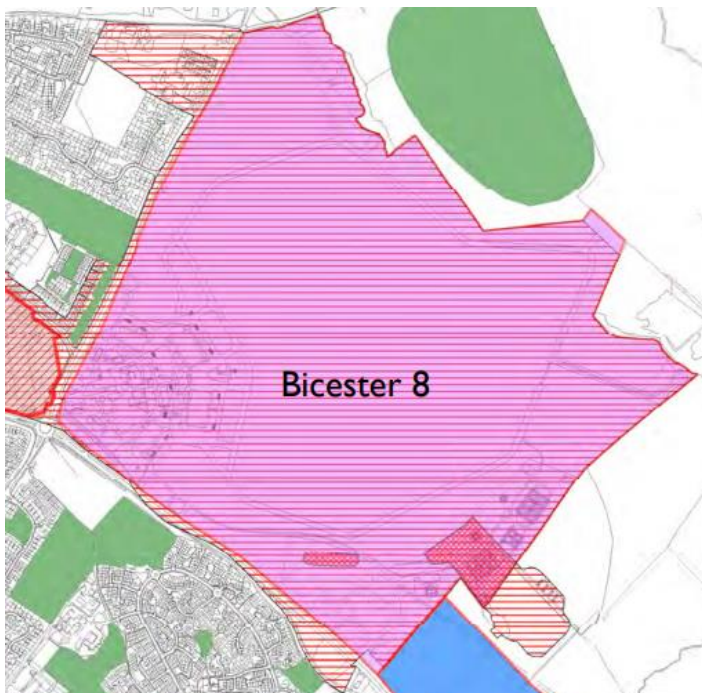
Figure 4.3 – Bicester 4



Former RAF Bicester

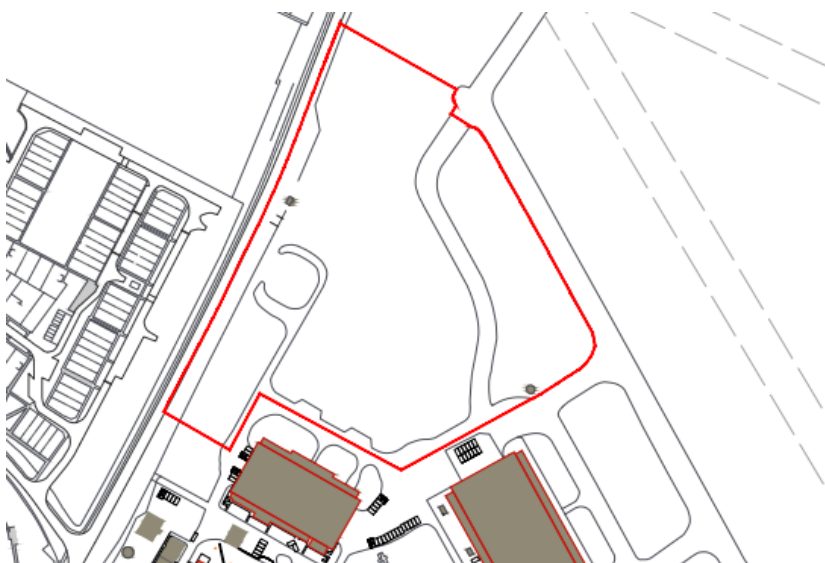
- 4.17 The Former RAF Bicester site (**Figure 4.4**) is allocated within CLP 2015 for a range of uses including heritage tourism, leisure, recreation, employment and community uses (Policy Bicester 8).
- 4.18 The site lies circa 1.8km from the northern-most tip of the town centre and would not be sequentially preferable to the Application Site on the basis of its accessibility. The Council has asked the Applicant to consider it on the basis that, by virtue of its flexible allocation, it could have the potential to accommodate a leisure use.

Figure 4.4 – RAF Bicester



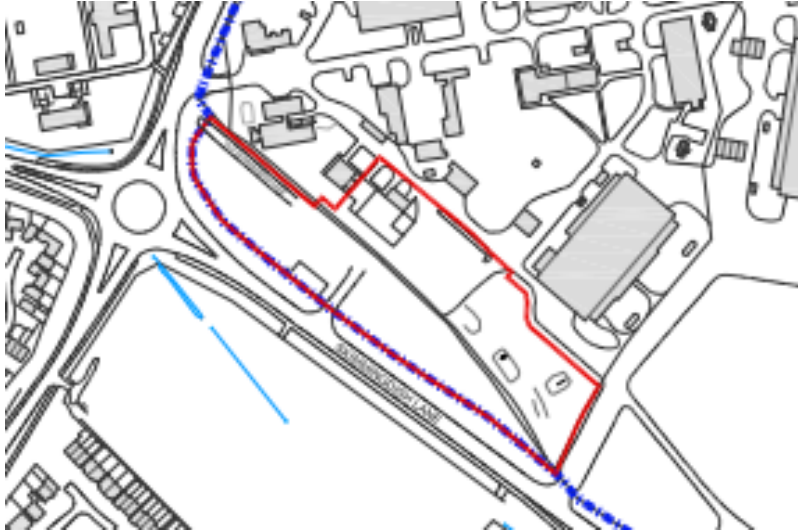
- 4.19 A Planning Brief for the site, which is also designated as a Conservation Area in its entirety, was adopted in 2009. Although the Brief pre-dates the Local Plan and NPPF, it provides some useful information about the site.
- 4.20 The site (which extends to circa 160ha in total) is split into three component parts, comprising the flying field, the technical site and the domestic site. The Brief proposes a “conservation-led” approach to the site, recognising that finding a use which can best preserve its sensitive historic fabric may require a degree of flexibility.
- 4.21 Planning permission has been granted for residential development on the domestic site and this is part implemented. With regards to the flying field component, the Brief states:
- “any loss to the extent of the flying field, or incursion into it by built development, would be wholly unacceptable and detrimental to its importance”.*
- 4.22 As such, it can be concluded the domestic site is neither available nor suitable for the proposed development, and the flying field is unsuitable for the health and racquets club.
- 4.23 This only leaves the technical site as a possible location for the health and racquets club.
- 4.24 Considering the technical site, the Brief concludes that the historical significance of the existing buildings (the majority of which are either listed or locally listed) and its layout, there is very limited scope for redevelopment and infilling.
- 4.25 Notwithstanding this, an outline planning application (18/01253/F) was submitted in July 2018 for land to the north of the existing buildings on the technical site (**Figure 4.5**). The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a hotel and conference facility. It benefits from a resolution to grant planning permission (CDC Planning Committee, October 2018).

Figure 4.5 – 18/01253/F Application Boundary



4.26 A further planning application is also pending for an extension to the south of technical site for new B1c, B2 and B8 employment units (ref: 18/01333/F, **Figure 4.3**). This similarly benefits from a resolution to grant planning permission (CDC Planning Committee, December 2018).

Figure 4.3 – 18/01333/F Application Boundary



4.27 In considering the aspects of the site which require preservation as part of any redevelopment proposal (Section 10.3), the Brief lists the following components (inter alia):

- The trident layout of roads;
- “Key views” from within the technical site and across the flying field;
- The open nature of the flying field, free of structures.

4.28 It can therefore be concluded that the land suitable for development within the technical site is unavailable as it is being promoted for alternative development. A health and racquets club does not form part of these proposals, and nor would there be scope to introduce a health and racquets club within them without significant detrimental impact on the historic significance of the site.

4.29 In any event, DLL Clubs have been unable to agree commercial terms with the landowners and location of the health and racquets club at RAF Bicester would not have the same complementary and catalysing effect on the proposed knowledge-economy development at the Site.

Findings of the Sequential Test

4.30 In conclusion, none of the sites considered are available and/or suitable to accommodate the proposed development, either as proposed or in its most flexible (and commercially unrealistic) form.

4.31 Consequentially, there is no sequentially preferable site that is available, suitable or viable that could accommodate the proposals or a realistic flexible interpretation of it.

4.32 The proposed development therefore satisfies the sequential approach as set out in both national and local planning policy and the sequential test is passed.

5 Impact Assessment

Context

5.1 Paragraph 89 of the NPPF requires an impact assessment for leisure development outside town centres and over a floorspace threshold of 2,500sq.m of gross floorspace. CLP 2015 Policy SLE 2 requires an impact assessment, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, where the proposal is over 1,500sqm (gross) in Bicester.

5.2 The NPPF (Paragraph 89) requires impact assessments to consider:

“a) the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and

b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).”

5.3 The NPPG provides further guidance on the application of the impact assessment. It notes that the purpose of the test is to ensure the impact over time (up to 5 years, or 10 for major schemes) of certain out of centre and edge of centre proposals on existing town centres is not significantly adverse.

5.4 It goes on to note that impact should be assessed in relation to all town centres that may be affected¹⁰ and advises that the impact test should be undertaken in a proportionate and locally appropriate way¹¹.

5.5 It has been demonstrated in the previous sections of this Report that the most appropriate location for the health and racquets club is at Bicester Gateway, given there are no sequentially preferable in or edge of centre sites, nor within other sequentially preferable site allocations.

5.6 Consequently, given that the Application satisfied the sequential test, unless it is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the two points above, then the proposal is acceptable in principle.

Approach to Impact Assessment

5.7 The Application proposes a health and racquets club across a 1.66ha site. There would be over 4,000 sq.m of D2 (health and fitness) floorspace as part of the development. As such, the proposals exceed both the national and local threshold, and this Section sets out the assessment of the impacts and trading effects for allowing the provision of the health and racquets club.

5.8 It is however important to note that the proposed health and racquets club will have a symbiotic relationship with the business park of which it will be part. Thus, there will be a considerable workforce on the wider site which the club will serve. The demand generated by the new businesses on-site will limit any impact on existing facilities elsewhere in the town. This is highly material in application of the impact assessment.

¹⁰ NPPG Paragraph 013 Reference ID: 2b-013-20140306

¹¹ NPPG Paragraph 015 Reference ID: 2b-015-20140306

- 5.9 The proposed health and racquets club will provide a range of health and fitness facilities, comprising:
- Full-service gym and fitness studio;
 - Outdoor swimming pool and spa area;
 - Indoor and outdoor tennis courts and further courts within a permanent air dome (8 no. in total);
 - Ancillary and associated facilities including café, clubhouse with bar/restaurant, creche, changing facilities, business lounge;
 - External car parking.
- 5.10 In pre-application discussions with CDC officers, it was confirmed that the only relevant town centre to assess was Bicester Town Centre.
- 5.11 Therefore, to assess the impact on existing, proposed and planned leisure facilities the nature and location of existing health and fitness facilities within and close to Bicester Town Centre have been established (**Figure 5.1**). This included swimming pools, racquets courts (indoor and outdoor), gyms and health and fitness facilities.

Figure 5.1 – Existing Health and Fitness Facilities



5.12 These comprise:

1. Anytime Fitness: facilities include gym and gym classes;
2. Bicester Leisure Centre: facilities include gym, swimming pool, 4-court sports hall, squash courts, activity hall, all weather pitch and café;
3. Bicester Lawn Tennis Club: facilities include three outdoor tennis courts.

5.13 From this, any likely effects to these facilities from the provision of the health and racquets club can be established, and whether those effects are likely to be significant in terms of impacts on the vitality and viability of Bicester Town Centre can be considered.

5.14 In the first instance, however, it should be noted that both the Bicester Leisure Centre and the Bicester Lawn Tennis Club are out of centre, and therefore any impact upon them would be unlikely to directly affect the operation of the Town Centre.

5.15 Additionally, as discussed in the **Planning Statement**, this offer is very limited compared to other towns of a similar size to Bicester. At present, there is therefore very little choice available to residents.

Impact on Existing, Committed and Planned Investment

Existing Facilities

5.16 There is only one health and fitness facility within the town centre boundary (Anytime Fitness) and one edge of centre leisure facility (Bicester Lawn Tennis Club).

Anytime Fitness

5.17 Anytime Fitness falls within Bicester Town Centre. It provides a gym with exercise studio only, and none of the other facilities proposed as part of the health and racquets club.

5.18 Anytime Fitness seeks to provide convenient and affordable gym facilities, opening 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The minimum member age is 18 and it does not, therefore, offer any type of family membership.

5.19 It therefore caters for a very different market to the health and racquets club and is not comparable to the proposed development. As such, the impact on this existing facility will be negligible.

Bicester Lawn Tennis Club

5.20 Bicester Lawn Tennis Club is a community tennis club falling within an edge-of-centre location but within the Area of Search for possible future extension of the Town Centre.

5.21 It provides outdoor tennis courts only, and no other facilities proposed as part of the health and racquets club. It also has its own car park, accessed from London Road. As a consequence, linked trips with the Town Centre are limited.

5.22 Whilst the tennis facilities are the focus of the proposed health and racquets club, the David Lloyd business model is based on these forming part of a full service, comprehensive health and wellness

offer. Members typically join the club in order to gain access to its full range of facilities, i.e. not solely for the tennis facilities.

- 5.23 The proposed health and racquets club is therefore not a fully comparable offer to Bicester Lawn Tennis Club and is unlikely to directly compete with it.
- 5.24 Added to this, whilst membership is required in order to use the facilities at Bicester Lawn Tennis Club, membership starts at just £10 a year and the maximum cost is £99 a year for adults. Bicester Lawn Tennis Club therefore targets a different market to David Lloyd, at a much lower price range.
- 5.25 Therefore, even if the David Lloyd proposal were to result in some limited impact or trade diversion, such impact would be unlikely to significantly affect membership levels, and any impact on the Town Centre would be negligible.
- 5.26 Indeed, the introduction of the tennis facilities at David Lloyd will provide improved choice, to benefit of local residents.

Bicester Leisure Centre

- 5.27 Although outside of the existing town centre boundary, and the town centre extension (Area of Search) boundary, Bicester Leisure Centre provides several facilities proposed as part of the health and racquets club. These include a gym, a 25m swimming pool, creche, and sauna/steam/spa facilities.
- 5.28 It also provides squash courts, 3G football pitches, a four-court sports hall and a 6-lane ten pin bowling alley, making it a leisure destination in its own right in combination with its location outside the main Town Centre.
- 5.29 For robustness, however, it has been included within the impact assessment.
- 5.30 To use certain facilities at Bicester Leisure Centre, for example the gym, membership is required. Most other facilities can be accessed by members of the public, without the need for a membership.
- 5.31 This is contrast to the proposed health and racquets club, where access to all facilities is intended to be restricted and available for Members only. In any event, membership of Bicester Leisure Centre is targeted at a mid-range price point which is not directly comparable with David Lloyd. On this basis, no significant impact on the trading of Bicester Leisure Centre is anticipated.

Committed and Planned Investment

- 5.32 There are no known further committed or planned health and fitness facilities within Bicester Town Centre or the Area of Search.

Conclusion – Impact on Existing, Committed and Planned Investment

- 5.33 In light of the above, it is concluded that any impact on existing, committed or planned leisure facilities within Bicester Town Centre will be negligible at worst.

Impact on Town Centre Vitality and Viability

- 5.34 Bicester Town Centre is the only designated centre within the catchment area of health and racquets club. It is located approximately 1.4km to the north of the boundary of the Site.

- 5.35 The primary retail frontage extends along Sheep Street, with the rest of the centre comprising a number of pedestrian shopping arcades. Given the broad range of retail and services floorspace available within it, it can be assumed that the vitality and viability of the Town Centre is not underpinned by the provision of leisure facilities comparable to the proposed health and racquets club.
- 5.36 It has also been confirmed above that those existing facilities within and close to the Town Centre would not be significantly impacted by the proposed development.
- 5.37 As such, the delivery of the health and racquets club at the Site would not impact on Bicester Town Centre's vitality and viability.

Summary

- 5.38 Having regard to paragraph 89 of the NPPF, it is concluded that the health and racquets club would not have a significant adverse impact (the policy test) on existing, committed and planned investment in a centre, or on town centre vitality or viability.
- 5.39 The proposal therefore accords with the NPPF and CLP 2015 Policies SLE2 and Bicester 5.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 A health and racquets club is proposed as part of a proposed business park development, which is aimed at meeting known market demand for knowledge-based industries. The health and racquets club is intended to be complimentary to, and catalyse development of, the wider business park proposal and will not be delivered in isolation from it.
- 6.2 The inherent characteristics of the health and racquet club is not an intensive sport and recreation use. It would require a minimum site size of 1.66ha and would therefore be generally inappropriate to a town centre location.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding this, Cherwell District Council has requested that the health and racquet component of the development is assessed against the sequential and impact tests set out in national and local planning policy. This Report has therefore been submitted without prejudice to the intended operator's view that this is unnecessary.
- 6.4 For the purposes of the sequential test, although unrealistic and purely hypothetical the Applicant has sought to demonstrate flexibility in both scale and format.
- 6.5 Even in doing so none of the alternative sites identified and assessed are available and/or suitable to accommodate the proposed development, either as proposed or in its most flexible (and commercially unrealistic) form.
- 6.6 Consequentially, there is no sequentially preferable site that is available, suitable or viable that could accommodate the proposals or any realistic flexible interpretation of it. The proposed development therefore satisfies the sequential approach as set out in both national and local planning policy and the sequential test is passed.
- 6.7 Having regard to paragraph 89 of the NPPF, it is also concluded that the health and racquet club would not have a significant adverse impact (the policy test) on existing, committed and planned investment in a centre, or on town centre vitality or viability.
- 6.8 The proposal therefore fully accords with the NPPF and CLP 2015 Policies SLE2 and Bicester 5.

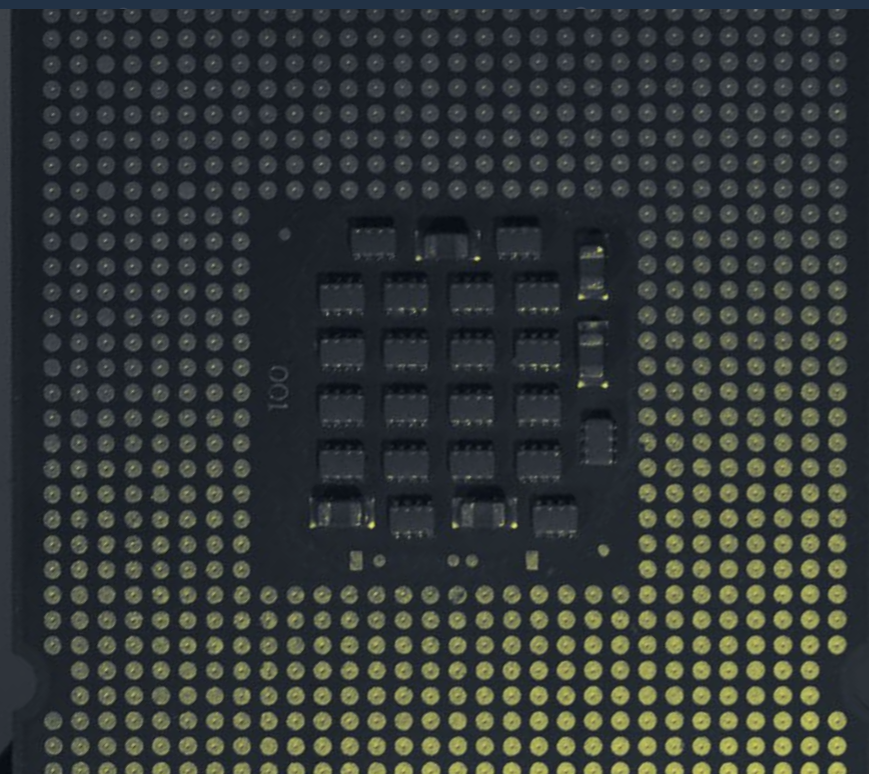


APPENDIX 4

VISION DOCUMENT

STAY
SAFE

BICESTER



Causing a positive change

Welcome to our vision for Catalyst Bicester, a sustainable business community designed to attract technology industries, advanced manufacturing and high-performance engineering companies to Bicester while benefiting the residents and the future economy.

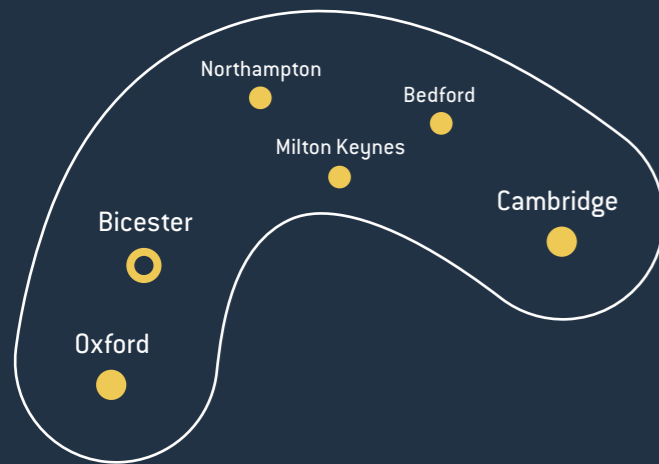
Catalyst Bicester will be more than just a technology park; by unlocking the area to the town's south, it will provide an impressive gateway for residents and visitors, complete with a health and fitness centre, soft landscaping to include a natural wetland area, alongside the new hotel, all connecting people to their homes and shops.

Find out more about our vision for local residents, businesses and economy and why Catalyst Bicester will have a positive effect on the town and area.

In the Arc

Bicester is a significant destination in The Oxford-Cambridge Arc for two reasons: its central location within the corridor is why businesses are looking to expand or locate to this vibrant town; and Bicester's impressive growth plans: 10,000 new homes within 12 years, the population increasing by 2031 from 32,000 to 50,000+, alongside the existing walking, cycle, bus, road, rail and air networks and future planned infrastructure.

Catalyst Bicester will provide a desirable environment and well-designed buildings so existing and new companies can thrive.



“The Arc already contains globally renowned universities, at the heart of a business, science and technology ecosystem that makes it one of the most exciting economic growth opportunities in the world. Realising this potential can mean more jobs, of a higher quality, for existing communities and future residents, and can encourage international investment and exports for the benefit of local businesses and the national economy.”

Ministry of Housing, Local Communities and Local Government

World-renowned

Oxfordshire is home to many industries. From the thriving automotive and life sciences' sectors, to transformative technologies such as digital health, space-led data applications, connected and autonomous vehicles, quantum computing, and also the spin-outs from the globally-renowned University of Oxford and its world-class research programmes. All these can be found across the county in its science and business parks.

Here companies are part of business communities where they can co-locate, collaborate and innovate, providing jobs and economic growth, ensuring that Oxfordshire continues to forge ahead on the global stage.

Strong foundations

Bicester is integral to this story as a fast-growing, sustainable location due to its housing, excellent transport links and infrastructure, vibrant and diverse economy, leisure, and shopping, both in the town and at the universally recognised Bicester Village.

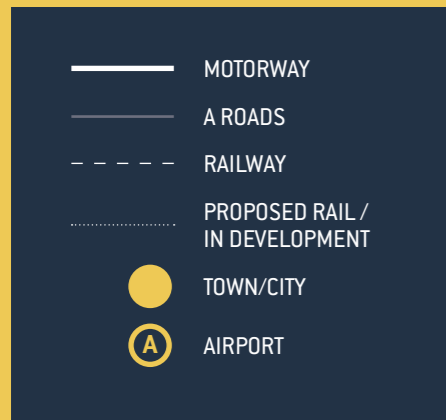
Catalyst Bicester will provide the workspace and environment to attract businesses from near and far.



Local jobs, globally connected

To support Cherwell District Council's clear ambitions for Bicester and the District, Catalyst Bicester will provide knowledge-based employment space for people in a sustainable and vibrant location.

Catalyst Bicester will be supporting the need to reduce the number of residents travelling outside the district for work while being entirely accessible to visitors.





Joined up

With Bicester already interconnected within the high technology cluster, linking businesses with suppliers, associates and relevant institutions, Catalyst Bicester will enable increased productivity for its occupiers with companies competing nationally and globally.

Flexi choice

Future occupiers will be able to choose from a combination of high specification flexible workspace. Buildings will be designed to reflect the occupiers' innovation and high value products.

Office, laboratory, R&D, high tech and manufacturing space will meet the needs of a range of occupiers, creating a mixed business community.

From young businesses through to large and more established companies, Catalyst Bicester will enable such organisations to evolve and grow.



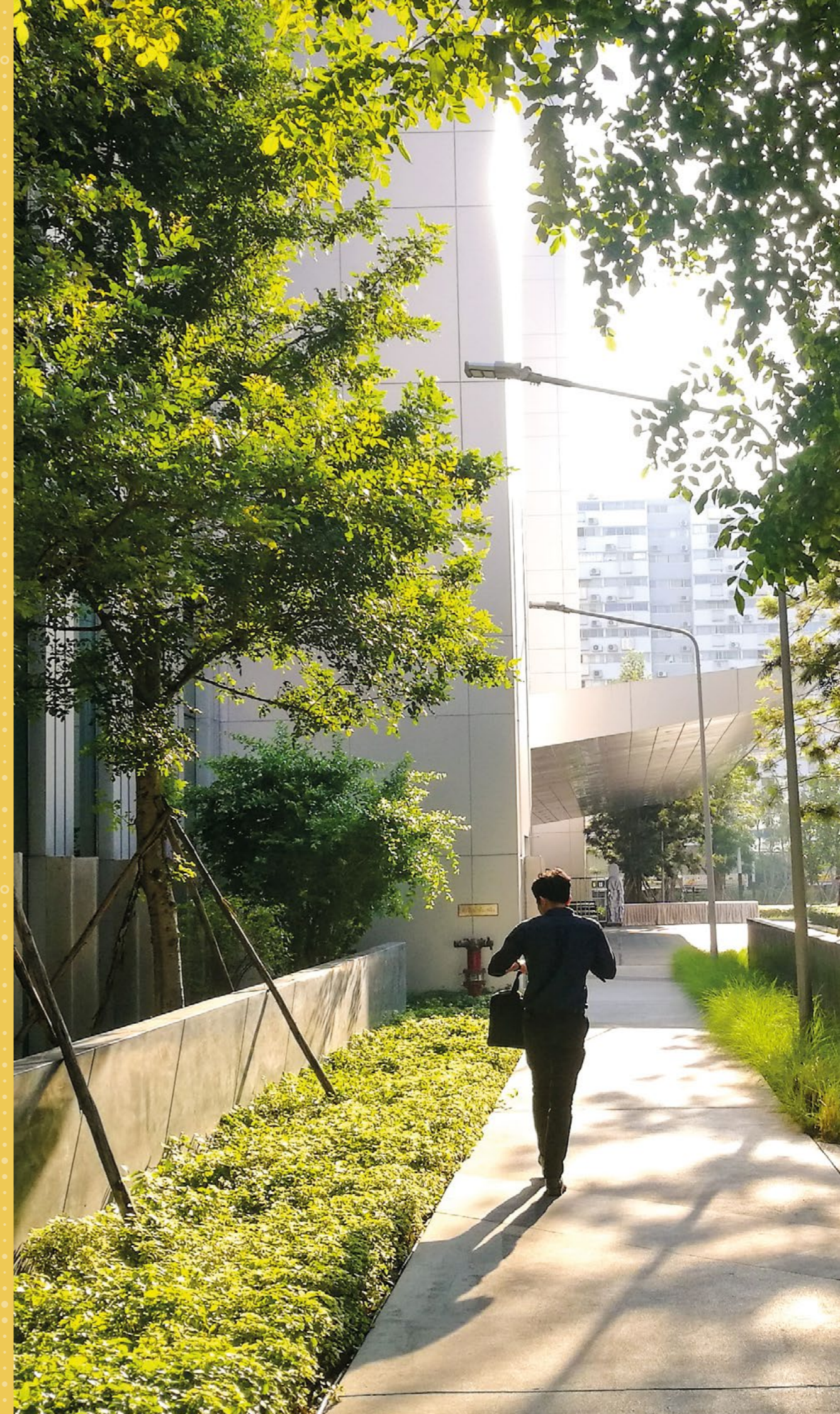
A green environment

With the environment at the forefront of everyone's minds, Catalyst Bicester will include sensitive tree planting, soft landscaping and the addition of a wetland area, complete with seating areas, for occupiers to take time out for quiet reflection, outdoor meetings, walking or running.

Once complete, the ecological wetland area will be transferred to and managed by Banbury Ornithological Society which has been part of the planning process.

New pedestrian and cycle links will connect Catalyst Bicester to the upgraded wider routes.

The new buildings will incorporate sustainable construction techniques and be rated by the globally recognised sustainability assessment method, to be BREEAM "Very Good".



Well-being included

These days, when it comes to retaining and attracting the very best people, businesses have staff well-being at the top of their lists.

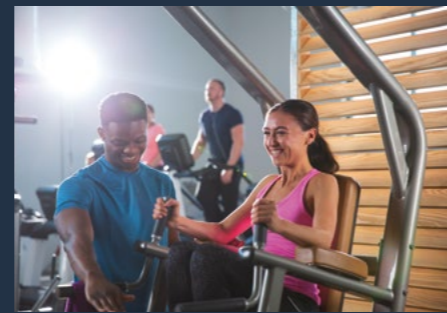
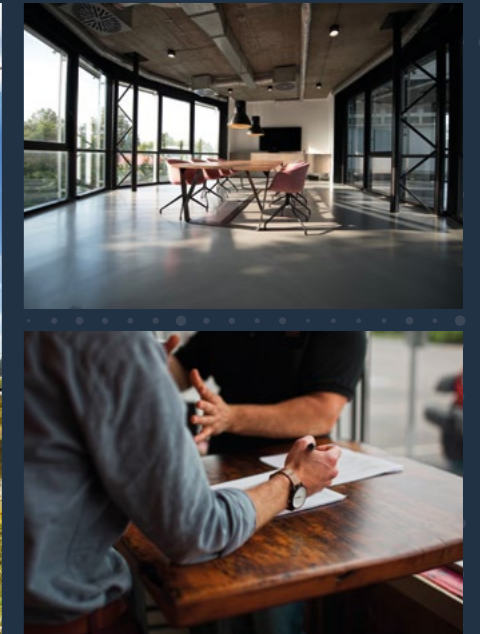
At Catalyst Bicester, health and fitness will be on the doorstep. Operated by Europe's premier racquets and fitness provider, David Lloyd Clubs, there will be a gym, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, all alongside their renowned tennis courts.



Meet, eat and sleep

Occupiers of Catalyst Bicester will be able to use the new Holiday Inn Express, not only for its overnight accommodation, but also its meeting room, conference facilities, and dining.

For a quick bite to eat, Catalyst Bicester will have easy walking and cycling connectivity to the nearby retail parks and town centre.



Workplace to suit

Business demand for Catalyst Bicester is most likely to be for buildings in the range of 10,000 sq ft to 30,000 sq ft (929 sq m to 2,787 sq m).

Larger requirements for circa 100,000 sq ft (9,290 sq m) can be accommodated.

The total developed area will be circa 25 acres with approximately 290,000 sq ft (27,000 sq m) GIA total business space and the David Lloyd Club located on approximately four acres.

Parking spaces will be in the order of 1:375 sq ft (1:35 sq m).



Masterplanning

Catalyst Bicester has been designed to be a game-changing technology park giving existing Bicester occupiers a place to grow and attracting new knowledge-based companies to the area. It will create high-quality employment, and reduce out-commuting.

In summary

- New knowledge-based employment for Bicester as a key location in The Oxford-Cambridge Arc providing up to 1,750 new jobs
- Encouraging growth in the technology cluster and links with University of Oxford
- 290,000 sq ft (27,000 sq m) of workspace in a range of stand-alone buildings within 25 acres of landscaped grounds
- £70 million investment in Bicester
- Health & fitness centre for the whole town
- Providing an impressive gateway to Bicester for residents and visitors, with connections to homes, transport, retail and leisure

“We are committed to continuing our investment in Bicester, in what will be our fourth major project in the town, through responsible and sustainable development. We are supporting Cherwell District Council’s vision for this land by providing exceptional employment space for the knowledge economy set in a high-quality business community.”

Simon Parsons, Albion Land

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