

2 Site and Setting

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This chapter provides a description of the Site and the surrounding areas, including key features, designations and key sensitive receptor locations that may be affected by the Development. A full description of the baseline conditions relevant to the technical assessments are provided in each technical chapter (i.e. Chapters 7 to 9).

2.2 Site Context

Location and Extent

- 2.2.1 The Site is located approximately 1.65km south of Bicester Town Centre in Oxfordshire with Oxford approximately 16km to the south west. Aylesbury is located approximately 25km to the south east. The Site is centred on NGR SP 57529 21010. An indicative Site location plan is shown in Figure 1.1 and the application site boundaries for Application 1 and Application 2 are attached within Appendix 1.1.
- 2.2.2 The Application 1 site comprises an area of approximately 15.76ha and the Application 2 site comprises an area of approximately 4.58ha.

Site Description

Application 1

- 2.2.3 The Application 1 site comprises three agricultural fields separated by low, maintained hedgerows interspersed with occasional mature trees. There are several mature hedgerows present that form the field boundaries, as well as, a mature treeline that runs along the western boundary, along Wendlebury Road, and the eastern boundary. The site is relatively level and open.
- 2.2.4 Langford Brook runs the length of the eastern boundary of the Application 1 site. A seasonal drain which runs along the length of the southern boundary adjoins Langford Brook at the south eastern corner of the Application 1 site. A small pond is located in the south of the Application 1 site. Beyond Langford Brook, which forms the eastern boundary of the Application 1 site is an area of seasonal wetlands which forms part of the Bicester Wetland Reserve.
- 2.2.5 There are existing overhead power lines which run the length of the Application 1 site from north to south along the eastern boundary, and which traverse the north western corner of the Application 1 site and continue along the western boundary with Wendlebury Road to connect to the poultry farm on the Application 2 site.
- 2.2.6 The Application 1 site is accessible by agricultural vehicles from Wendlebury Road only via a gated access point in the north west corner of the site. There are no public rights of way across the Application 1 site. Figure 2.1 provides an aerial image of the Site.

Application 2

- 2.2.7 The Application 2 site comprises an operational poultry farm. Poultry sheds occupy the eastern portion of the Application 2 site, farm buildings occupy the south west extent of the site and a pond lined with trees is located in the north west of the site.
- 2.2.8 The northern and eastern boundaries of the Application 2 site abut the boundary of the Application 1 site. A mature treeline runs along the southern boundary and western boundary, along Wendlebury Road.

- 2.2.9 A shallow seasonal drain runs from the west corner, along the length of the southern boundary, and adjoins a drain at the south west corner of the Application 1 site which joins Langford Brook.
- 2.2.10 A licenced abstraction borehole is located on Application 2 site which is used by the poultry farm. See Chapter 8: Water Resources and Flood Risk for further information on the borehole.
- 2.2.11 The Site is accessible by vehicles from Wendlebury Road. Figure 2.2 provides an aerial image of the Site.
- 2.2.12 As outlined within Chapter 1: Introduction, the Application 2 development will not come forward unless the Application 1 development is delivered.

Figure 2.1: Aerial image of the Application 1 site



Figure 2.2: Aerial image of the Application 2 site



Site Access

- 2.2.13 Vehicular access to the Site is provided off Wendlebury Road into the existing poultry farm in the south west corner for the Application 2 site and a gated entrance in the north west corner for the Application 1 site.

Site History

- 2.2.14 A review of historic maps shows that the Site has predominantly been in agricultural use. The 1898 Oxfordshire XXIII.SW Map shows the Site as unoccupied agricultural land. Available historical maps show no change in the use of the Application 1 site as arable land to the present day. The Application

2 site remained as agricultural fields up until the 1970's where, between 1970 and 1988, the existing poultry farm was developed.

- 2.2.15 The surrounding area has remained predominantly in agricultural use from 1898 onwards, with the railway to the east of the Site and nearby populated areas of Chesterton and Bicester present throughout. The sewage farm to the north east of the Site was constructed in 1967 and development to the north of the Site, which is now the Bicester Avenue Retail Park, was established by 1993.

2.3 Surrounding Context

Land Uses

- 2.3.1 The Site is bound to the north by an unnamed road which provides access from Wendlebury Road to the Sewage Treatment Plant located to the north east of the Site. Beyond this unnamed road is the Bicester Avenue Retail Park, home to a number of outlets including the Bicester Avenue Garden Centre, Cotswold Outdoor and Lakeland.
- 2.3.2 To the east of the Site is the Bicester Wetland Reserve beyond which lies the London Marylebone to Bicester Village railway line. Adjacent to the railway is the former Graven Hill Depot which was a Ministry of Defence (MoD) storage and distribution centre dating back to the Second World War. This depot consisted of a complex of sites clustered around two hills - Graven Hill and Arcott Hill - to the south east of Bicester. In 2014, a mixed-use development ('Graven Hill') was approved for redevelopment of the site for 1,900 residential dwellings whilst retaining the St. David's Barracks. Access to Graven Hill is gained off the A41 further east from the Site at the A41 / A4421 / London Road roundabout.
- 2.3.3 The Site is bound to the south by agricultural land. This agricultural land contains associated farm buildings, located approximately 200m south, along Wendlebury Road and an Scheduled Monument (the Alchester Roman site which covers an area of approximately 45 hectares).
- 2.3.4 The Site is bound by Wendlebury Road to the west. Beyond Wendlebury Road are two parcels of open land which in turn are adjacent to the A41. These parcels of land are subject to a planning permission (Ref. No. 16/02586/OUT) ('Bicester Gateway') (see Chapter 3: EIA Methodology, Figure 3.1 and Appendix 3.3). Beyond the A41 is Bicester Park and Ride which is serviced by the S5 Oxford – Bicester route. Beyond Wendlebury Road, to the south of the Bicester Gateway, is the Bicester Park Home Estate a gated residential development.

Settlements

- 2.3.5 The wider surrounding area of the Site is characterised by residential areas around the outskirts of Bicester to the north, agricultural fields to the south and west and the M40 to the south of the Site. The villages of Wendlebury and Chesterton are located within 2km of the Site (Wendlebury 1.7km south west and Chesterton 1.4km west of the Site).

Transport and Access

- 2.3.6 Wendlebury Road provides access to the A41 via the A41 / B4030 Vendee Drive roundabout, 100m west of the Site boundary. The A41 leads to Bicester in the north and Junction 9 of the M40 to the south.
- 2.3.7 The closest bus stops, Chesterton Turn North and Chesterton Turn South, are located approximately 320m north west and 480m south west of the Site, respectively, via the A41 and A41 / B4030 Vendee Drive roundabout. In addition, bus stops are provided at the Bicester Park & Ride 200m west of the

Site, off the A41 / B4030 Vendee Drive roundabout. These stops provide services between Bicester Town Centre, St. Georges Barracks, Launton, Langford Village, Glory Farm and Oxford City Centre.

- 2.3.8 Bicester Village train station is located approximately 1.2km north east of the Site boundary and provides frequent rail services to Oxford and London Marylebone.
- 2.3.9 There are no footpaths that run through the Site, however footpath 161/8/20 leads up to the south western boundary of the Site, adjacent to the existing poultry farm.

2.4 Site and Surrounding Sensitivities

Biodiversity

- 2.4.1 There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites or National Nature Reserves (NNR) on-site or within 10km of the Site. Similarly, there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on or within 2km of the Site – the nearest is Wendlebury Meads and Mansmoor Closes SSSI, situated approximately 3.2km to the south of the Site (Figure 2.3).
- 2.4.2 There is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Bure Park LNR, located approximately 2.3km north of the Site in Bicester.
- 2.4.3 Two Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are located within 2km of the Site; Bicester Wetland Reserve LWS is located directly adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Site (designated for its wetland habitats and wintering bird assemblage) and Graven Hill LWS located approximately 850m to the south east of the Site (designated for the presence of ancient semi-natural woodland).
- 2.4.4 Part of the Site itself is a proposed District Wildlife Site ('DWS') referred to as 'Promised Land Farm', although this has not been formally designated and as such, it does not formally require consideration under local planning policy. The reason for this designation was due to previous survey information indicating that the Site may contain remnant lowland meadow habitat which is a Habitat of Principal Importance .
- 2.4.5 Botanical surveys completed in late May 2019 to inform ES Chapter 7: Biodiversity confirmed that this area comprises semi-improved grassland. Reference to the Sites designation is included within assessment within ES Chapter 7: Biodiversity.

Water Resources

- 2.4.6 Based on Environment Agency flood maps, much of the Site is shown to lie within Flood Zone 3, with a small proportion in Flood Zone 2 and the remainder in Flood Zone 1 (Figure 2.4). Flood Zone 3 comprises land assessed as having a 'high' classification (greater than 1 in 100 annual probability), Flood Zone 2 comprises 'medium' classification (between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability) and Flood Zone 1 comprises land assessed as having a 'low' classification (lower than 1 in 1,000 annual probability).
- 2.4.7 Waterbodies on site comprise the Langford Brook and accompanying drain that runs along the eastern and southern boundary of the Site, a pond in the south west which serves the poultry farm and a dried pond in the south of the Site.

Figure 2.3: Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)¹ map of statutory, national or international designations.

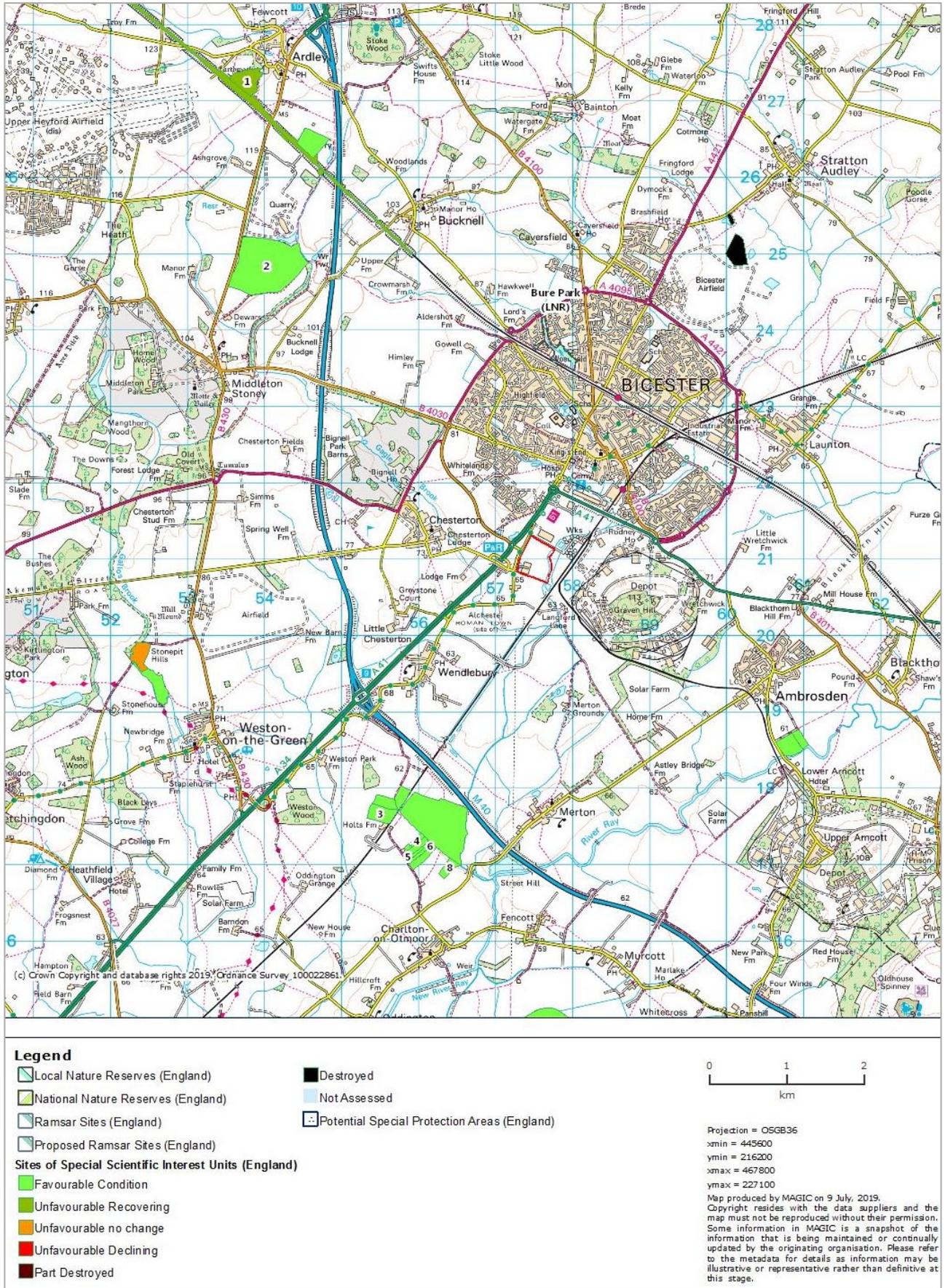
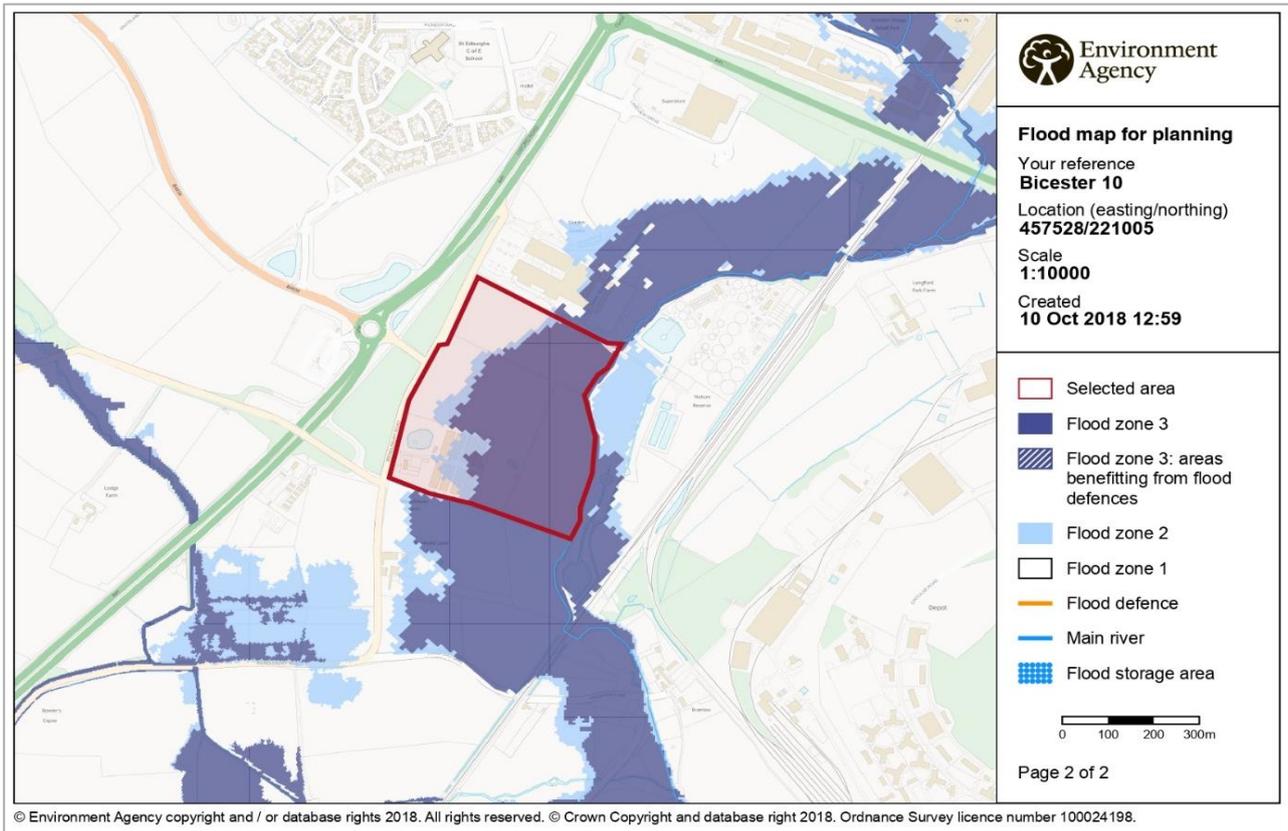


Figure 2.4: Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)²

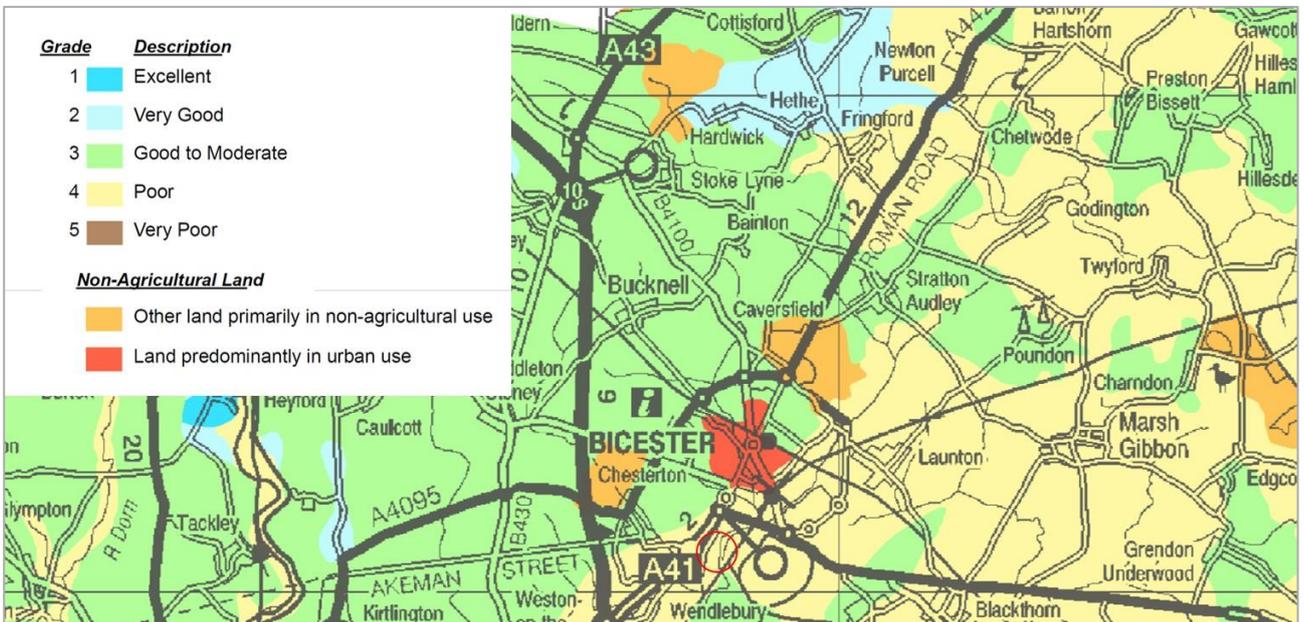


Agricultural Land

2.4.8 Agricultural land in England and Wales is graded between 1 and 5, depending on the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. Grade 1 land is ‘excellent quality’ agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use, and Grade 5 is ‘very poor quality’ agricultural land, with severe limitations due to adverse soil, relief and/or climate.

2.4.9 Natural England mapping³ (Figure 2.5) indicates that the Site contains Grade 4 agricultural land (poor quality).

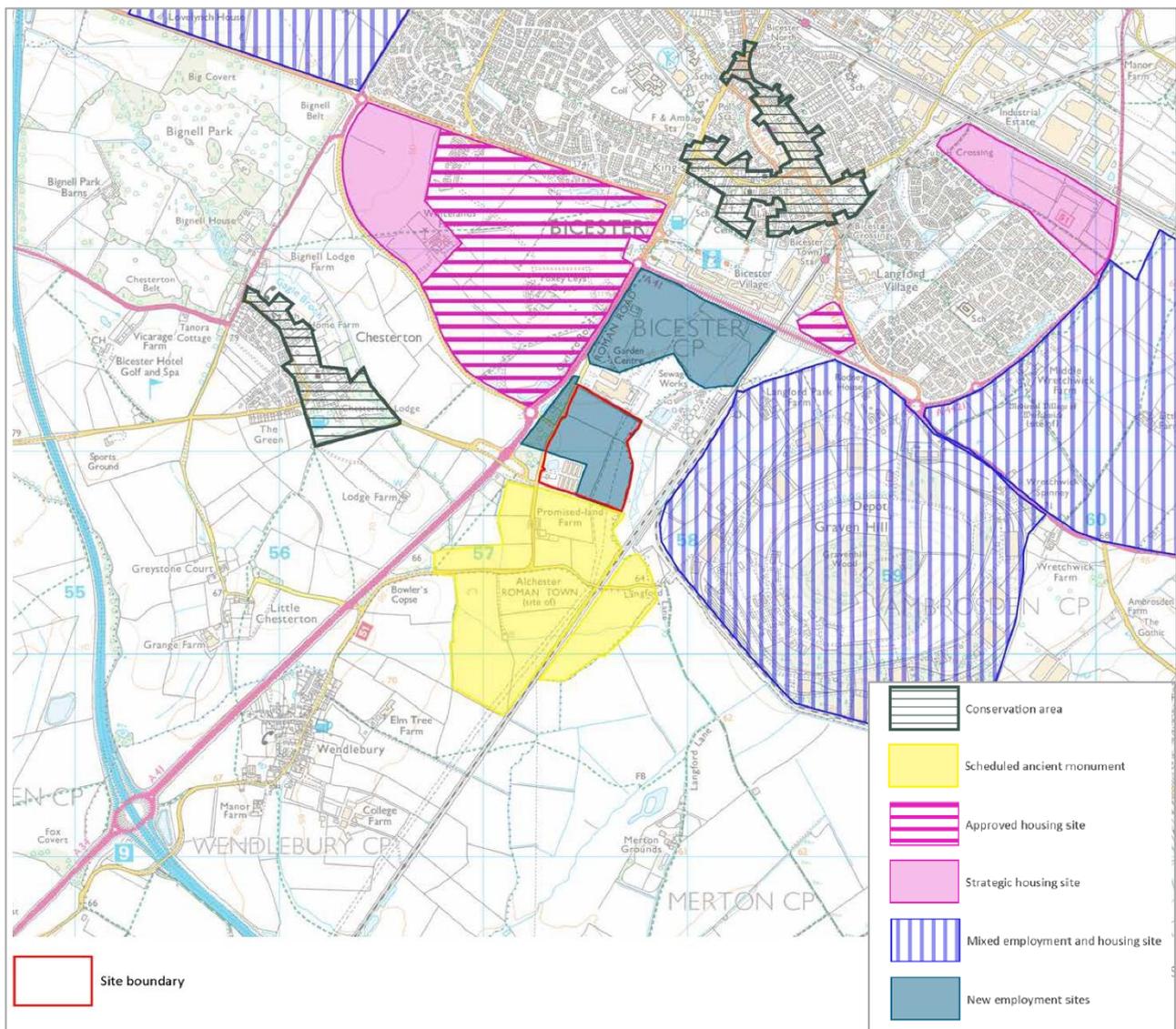
Figure 2.5: Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007) with Site location circled in Red.



Built Heritage and Archaeology

- 2.4.10 The Site does not contain any built heritage assets designated as being of national importance, such as Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, listed buildings or Registered Parks and Gardens.
- 2.4.11 The Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Monument is located immediately to the south of the Site (Figure 2.6). The significance of the Scheduled Monument principally derives from those important evidential and historical illustrative values associated with its buried archaeological remains and surviving earthworks rather than its setting.
- 2.4.12 Chesterton Conservation Area, which includes one Grade II* and four Grade II listed buildings, is located approximately 590m to the west of the Site. Within the wider setting of the Site, the Bicester Conservation Area is located approximately 1.2km to the north east and the historic core of Wendlebury Village which, although not designated as a Conservation Area, is associated with a significant number of listed buildings and is located approximately 2km to the south west.
- 2.4.13 The closest listed building is a Grade II listed bridge approximately 200m north east of Lodge Farmhouse, approximately 460m south west of the Site. A further two Grade II listed buildings are located within the vicinity of the Site; the Langford Park Farmhouse 600m north east and Oxford Lodge 630m south west of the Site.

Figure 2.6: Policy Designation Map



Air Quality

- 2.4.14 The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area ('AQMA'). The closest AQMA is 'Area Quality Management Area 4' declared by Cherwell DC. The AQMA is located approximately 1km north from the Site and incorporates sections of Kings End, Queens Avenue, Field Street, St. Johns Street and Bicester. The AQMA is designated for exceedances of nitrogen dioxide.

2.5 Future Development

- 2.5.1 Large areas of land to the north, west, east and north east of the Site are subject to planning permissions or planning applications for residential-led mixed-use development, as well as employment floorspace development. Together these developments provide proposals for circa 5,500 new residential units, 135,000sqm of employment/commercial/retail floorspace, hotel accommodation, sports and education facilities, new public amenities, community facilities and associated infrastructure. The area is currently undergoing significant change and these developments have the potential to give rise to significant cumulative effects in combination with the Development. (See Chapter 3: EIA Methodology and Appendix 3.3 for further details on cumulative schemes considered within the ES for cumulative effects).

REFERENCES

¹ Magic.defra.gov.uk. (2019). Magic. [online] Available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/> [Accessed July 2019].

² Flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk. (2019). Gov.uk. [Online] Available at: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed July 2019].

³ Natural England, (2010). Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007). <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/141047?category=5954148537204736>