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Catalyst Bicester

Strategic Landscape Assessment

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A Introduction

Landscape assessment

re-form Landscape Architecture Ltd. has been appointed by Albion Land to carry out a Strategic Landscape Assessment of a site to the south of Bicester, Oxfordshire. The scope of the assessment was previously agreed in advance with the councils landscape officer. A Strategic Landscape Assessment rather than an LVIA has been undertaken, as it is unlikely that any effects will be greater than, cumulative or independently than those created by the adjoining consented scheme, the Gateway Phase One. The Assessment will be undertaken with consideration to the methodologies and principles set by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' Third Edition (2013).

The Strategic Landscape Assessment will help determine the sites capacity to accept development. The report considers the constraints and opportunities of the site through an analysis of the existing landscape features including vegetation, topography and built form. It assesses landscape character and the inter visibility of the site. The appraisal also looks at landscape-related planning policies and designations which may shape any future development proposals for the site. The report concludes with a strategic landscape framework that will assist the development of a site masterplan, help integrate new development into the landscape, and create a development of appropriate scale and character.

This site and its surrounding area has been allocated for extensive development, both housing and commercial growth in the adopted Local Plan. This area is partially developed already, but remains a "landscape in transition", with a greatly changing landscape character which is moving away from open countryside and towards a character more akin to the Bicester Townscape.

This assessment has been made of the site and its current context as of winter 2018/2019. Numerous proposals, some consented, others under construction within the surrounding area for both residential development and commercial use are referenced as part of the cumulative assessment, but all also contribute to the changing character of the 'landscape in transition'.



Figure 1: site location

A Introduction

Planning applications and scenarios

This document has been produced for the assessment of the site's capacity to accept development and the landscape and visual effects that are likely to arise, which is being brought forward as two separate planning applications of which there are a number of potential outcome scenarios subject to planning approvals.

Planning permission will be sought via two planning applications:

- Application 1 is submitted in hybrid form (part full and part outline). It seeks outline planning permission for employment floorspace and full planning permission for a racquets club within site A.
- Application 2 is submitted in outline and seeks permission for additional employment floorspace on site B.

There are a range of development scenarios that could arise at the site (assuming Application 1 is approved), dependant on whether the racquets club is delivered as part of the proposals and /or whether Application 2 is also approved alongside Application 1.

- Scenario 1 - Development across all of site A
- Scenario 2 - Development across site A including racquets club
- Scenario 3 - Development across all of site A, plus development across all of Site B
- Scenario 4 - Development across site A including racquets club, plus development across all of Site B

For clarity the opposite illustrations set out the different sites and potential scenarios proposed.

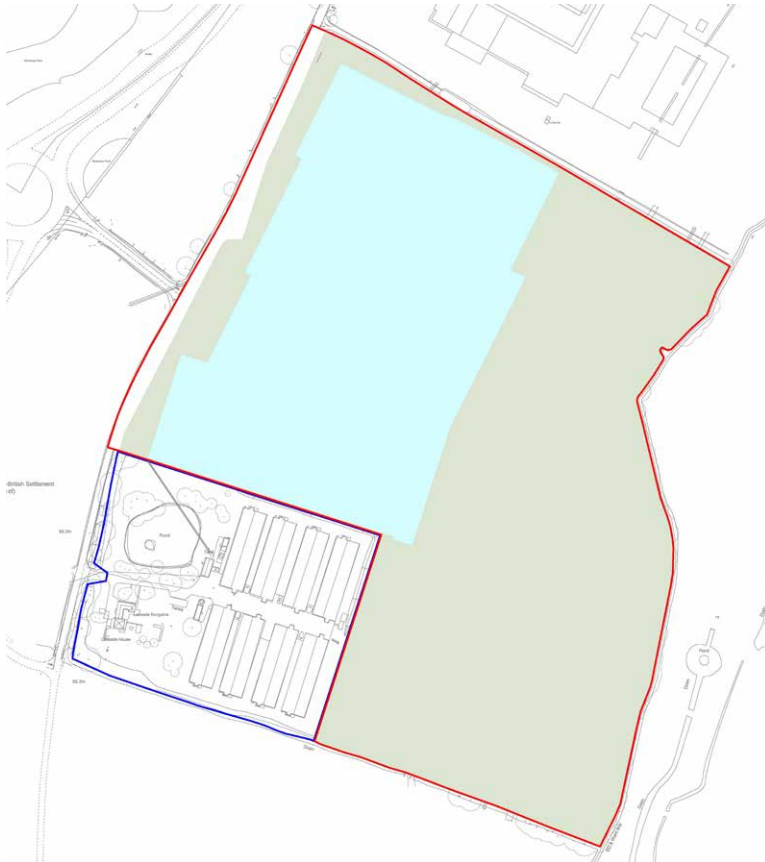
For the purposes of this document the 'development envelope' as identified in the parameter plans on the following page has been assessed for the outline planning application.



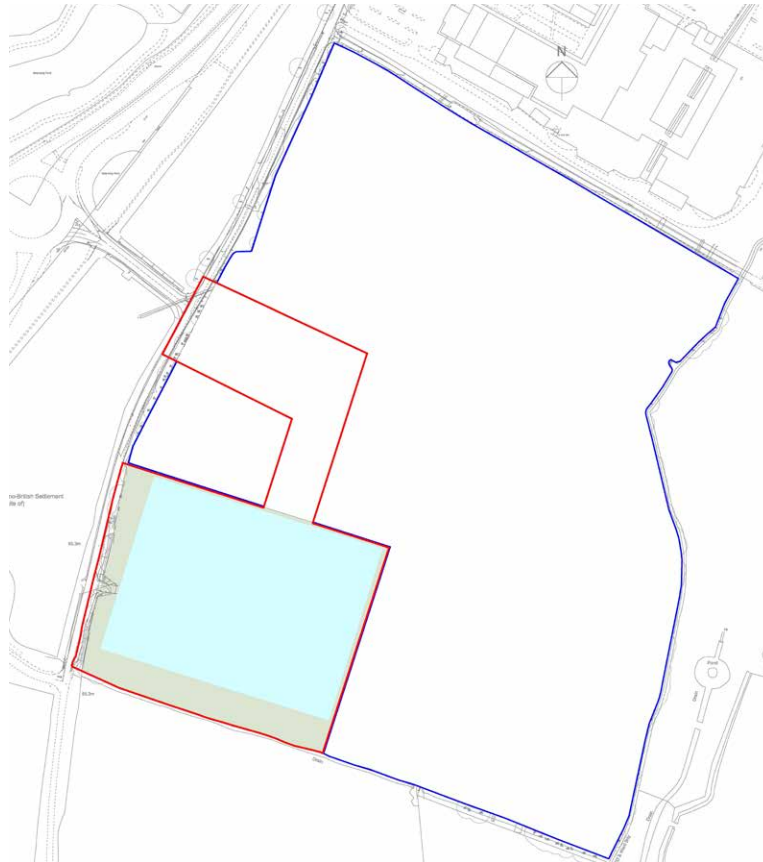
A Introduction

Assessment parameters

Application 1



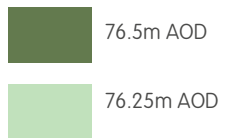
Application 2



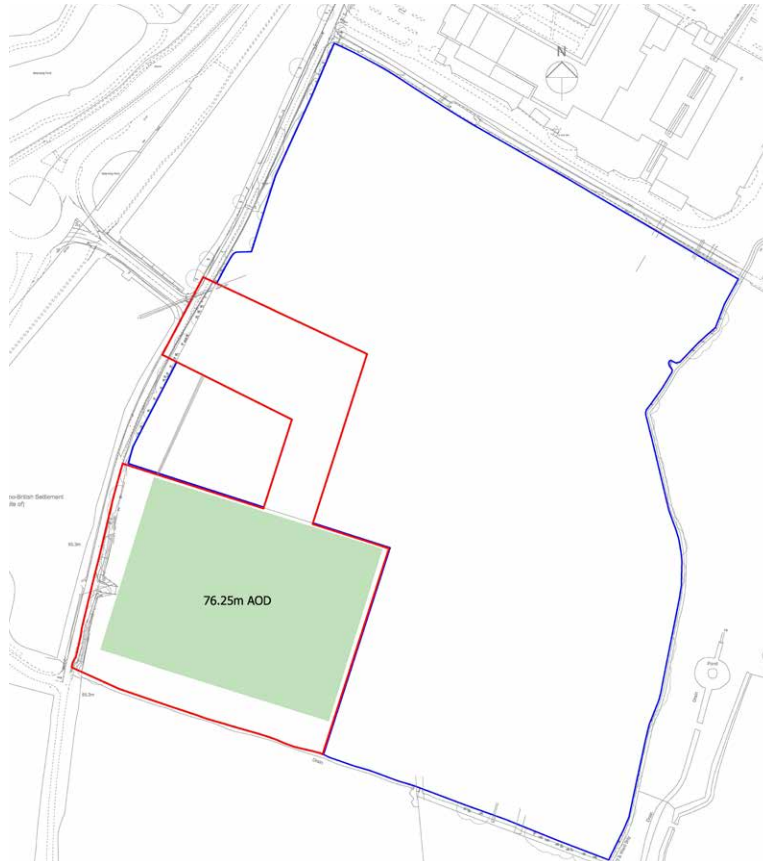
A Introduction

Assessment parameters

Application 1

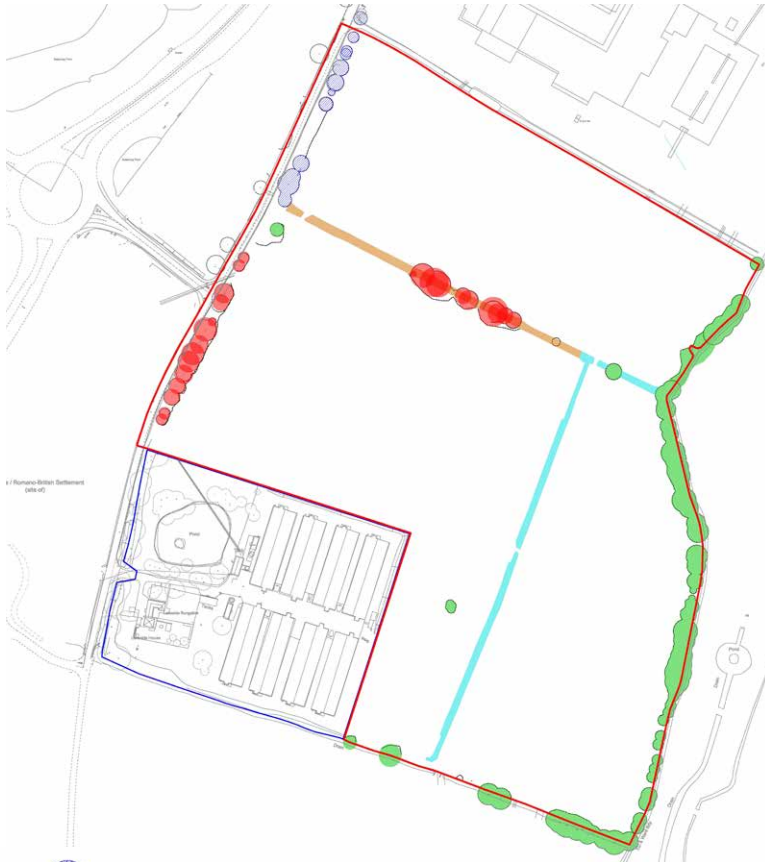







Application 2



A

Application 1



-  Existing tree to be retained where possible
-  Existing tree to be removed
-  Existing tree to be retained
-  Existing hedgerow to be removed
-  Existing hedgerow to be retained

Application 2



B Site appraisal

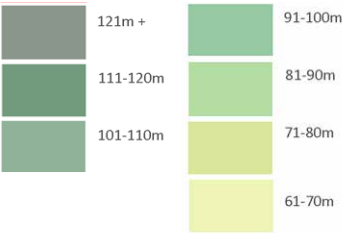
Topography

Topography is an important part of the character of the area. Visually, it is important in defining the character of views around the site, particularly because of its generally flat terrain.

The landscape of the Upper Thames Clay Vale is broad and flat with gentle undulations nowhere much in excess of 5 metres in variance. The same is true of the Alluvial Lowlands to the south, and although to the north-west, the land begins to roll in a little more pronounced fashion in the Wooded Estatelands, the effect is not local enough to provide any vantage point with a view towards the site.

The site very gently slopes down from Wendlebury road towards the eastern boundary and the adjacent wetlands from a high point of 66.00m AOD to a low point of 65.00m AOD. The surrounding landscape is similarly broadly flat with gentle undulation with the clear exception of Graven Hill that reaches a high point of 120m AOD. Graven Hill is made up of corallian limestone, and it contrasts sharply with the surrounding low lying Oxford Clay being approximately 60m higher.

Two points of minor change in local topography to accommodate highway infrastructure are notable as follows; to the north of the site where the A41 adjacent to Bicester Village rises upon a large embankment in order to cross over the railway and to the south of the site, where the A41 approaches Bicester and passes under a bridge that carries a small local road between Wendlebury & Chesterton which is approximately 10m in height.



Site boundary

Figure 5: Topography

B Site appraisal

Context

The site is located to the southern edge of Bicester, Oxfordshire. The site is bounded by Wendlebury road to the west, Bicester Avenue home and garden centre to the north, and agricultural land enclosed by hedgerows to the east and south. 1km to the north of the site is Bicester Village, a luxury shopping area that attracts visitors from far afield.

To the west of the site just over 100m away from the access roundabout runs the A41 dual carriageway, a main arterial road between Oxford and Bicester and connecting to the M40 motorway located 2km to the south west of the site. A train line runs to the east of the site connecting Bicester Village to the city of Oxford.

The surrounding landscape is predominantly low-lying agricultural land with some isolated areas of hedgerow structure and woodland, with the exception of Graven Hill. Settlements in the vicinity include the villages of Wendlebury and Chesterton.

2km to the north west of the site is Bignell Park and House a historic building in a parkland setting.

A south east perimeter road is anticipated to the south of the site.

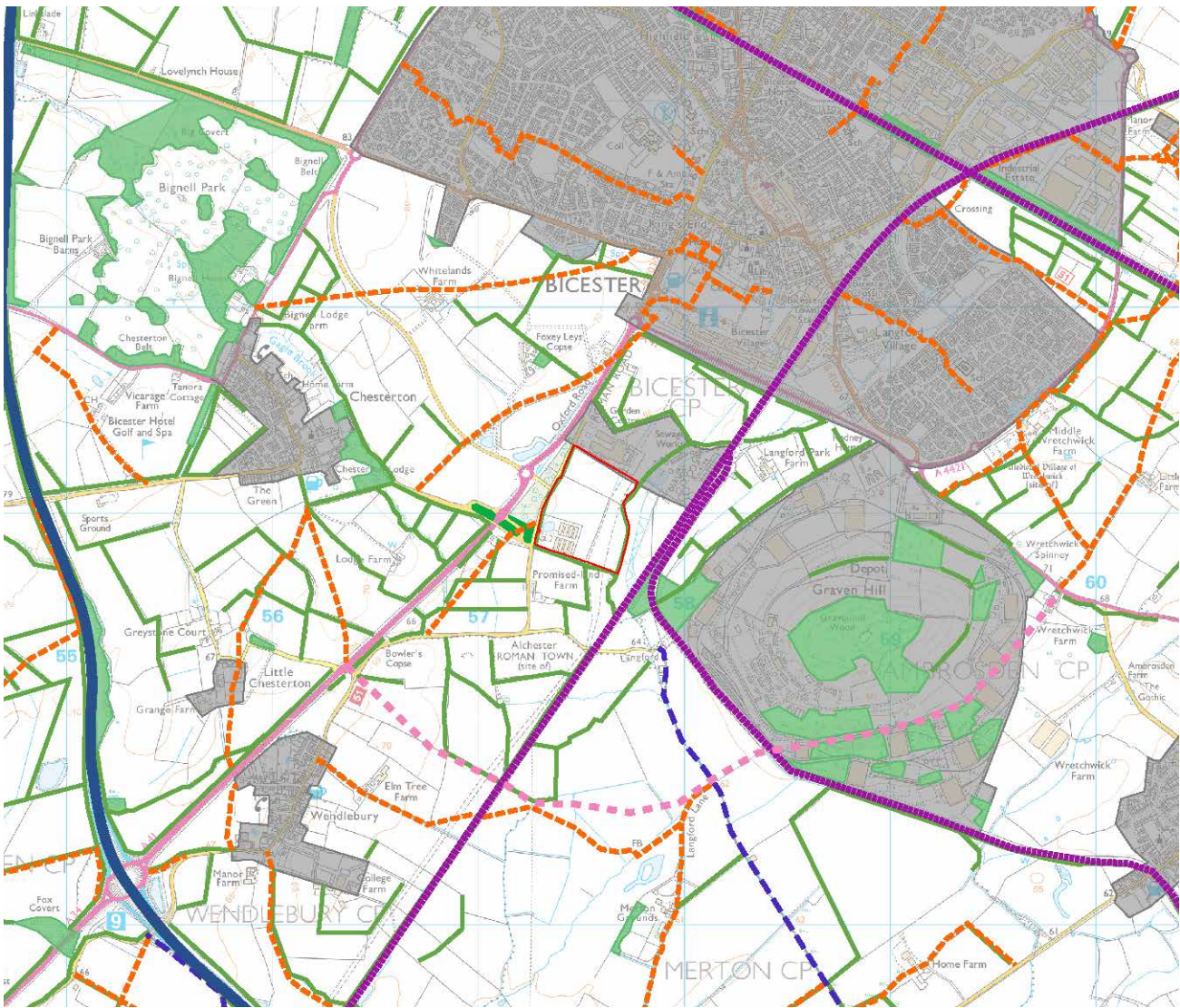


Figure 2: site context

B Site appraisal

Existing urban form, open space, significant vegetation & water

The landscape in the area is characterised by small and medium sized enclosed fields, often with a strong network of native hedgerows and mature boundary trees (frequently oaks).

To the west of the site along Wendlebury Road is a dense band of tree planting and scrub vegetation where the road from Chesterton crosses the A41. The landscape to the south extends into more open countryside with field boundaries.

The site itself is bounded by large tree planting and crossed with native hedgerows. The south western corner of the site is punctuated with trees around a small pond. An arboricultural survey of the trees on site has been carried out by Tyler Grange, drawing reference 11920/P01 with supporting information 11920_TSS01.

The site falls within Flood Zone 2+, and to the east of the site lies a wetland area that is managed as a local wildlife site. To the north east corner there is a Thames Water sewage treatment plant, with the private access road to this running along the northern boundary of the site.

Graven Hill to the east contains a large block of ancient semi-natural oak and ash woodland which dominates the hilltop.

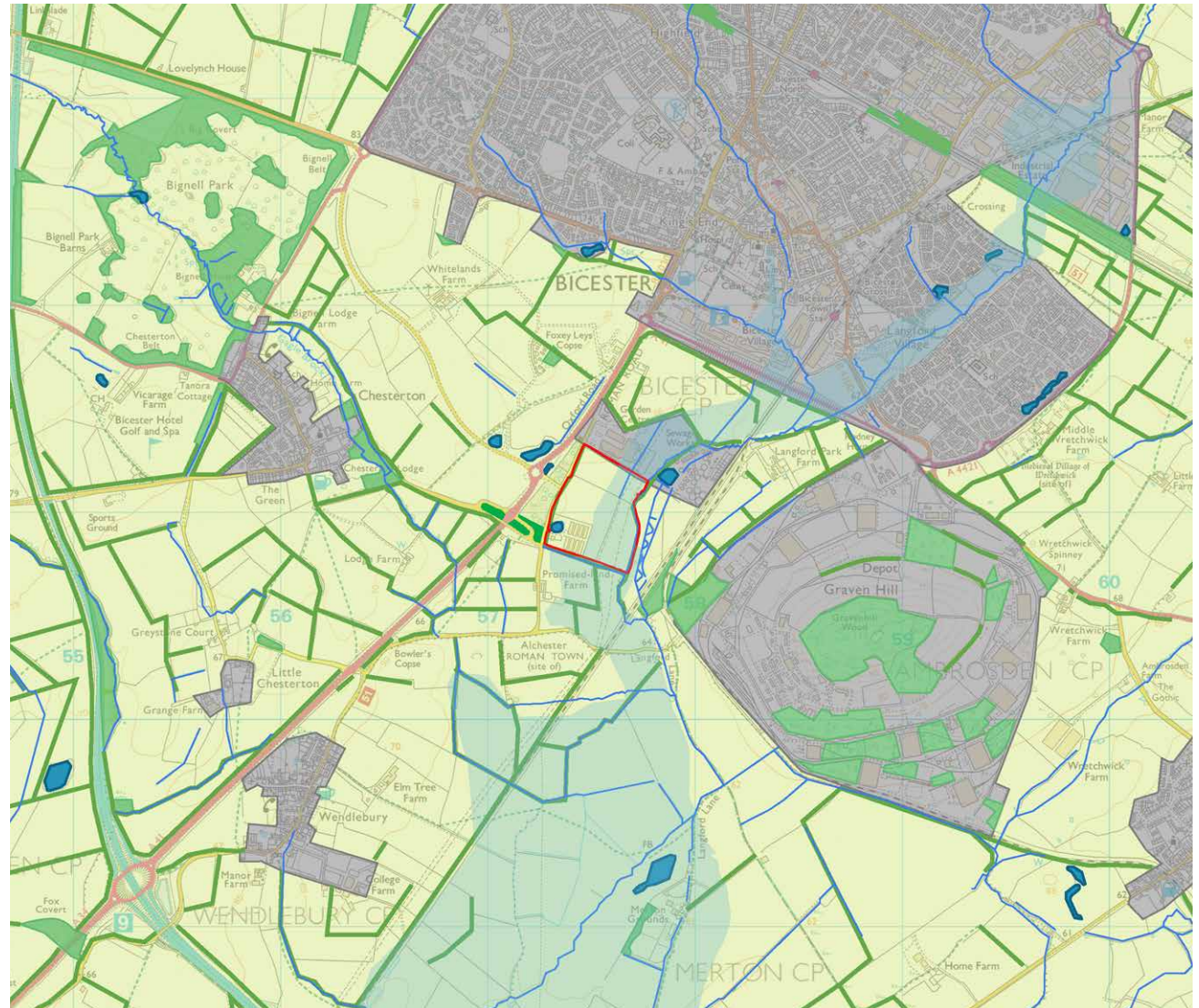
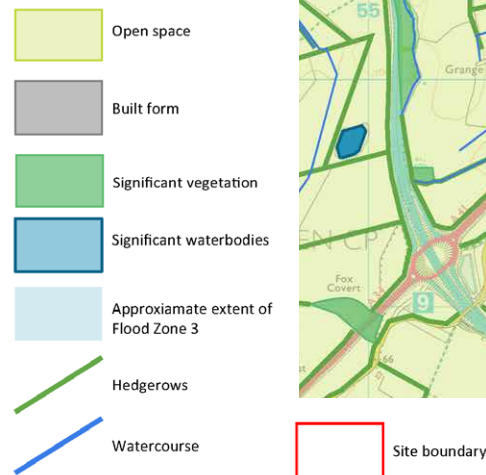


Figure 3: Existing urban form, open space, significant vegetation and water

B Site appraisal

Existing Land Use

The land around the site is predominantly agricultural, with growing residential and employment & industrial sites to the north. It is a site located on the urban/rural fringe of the Bicester townscape. Immediately to the north is an area of employment, industrial and retail use, whilst to the south is agricultural open countryside. The wider farmland to the south is interspersed with small settlements and woodland.

Graven Hill, previously an old MOD site is currently being transformed into the UKs largest self and custom build community.

The current development site known as Kingsmere is the creation of 1500 new homes which lies directly to the north west of the site.

Notable settlements within 2km of the site are the villages of Wendlebury and Chesterton.

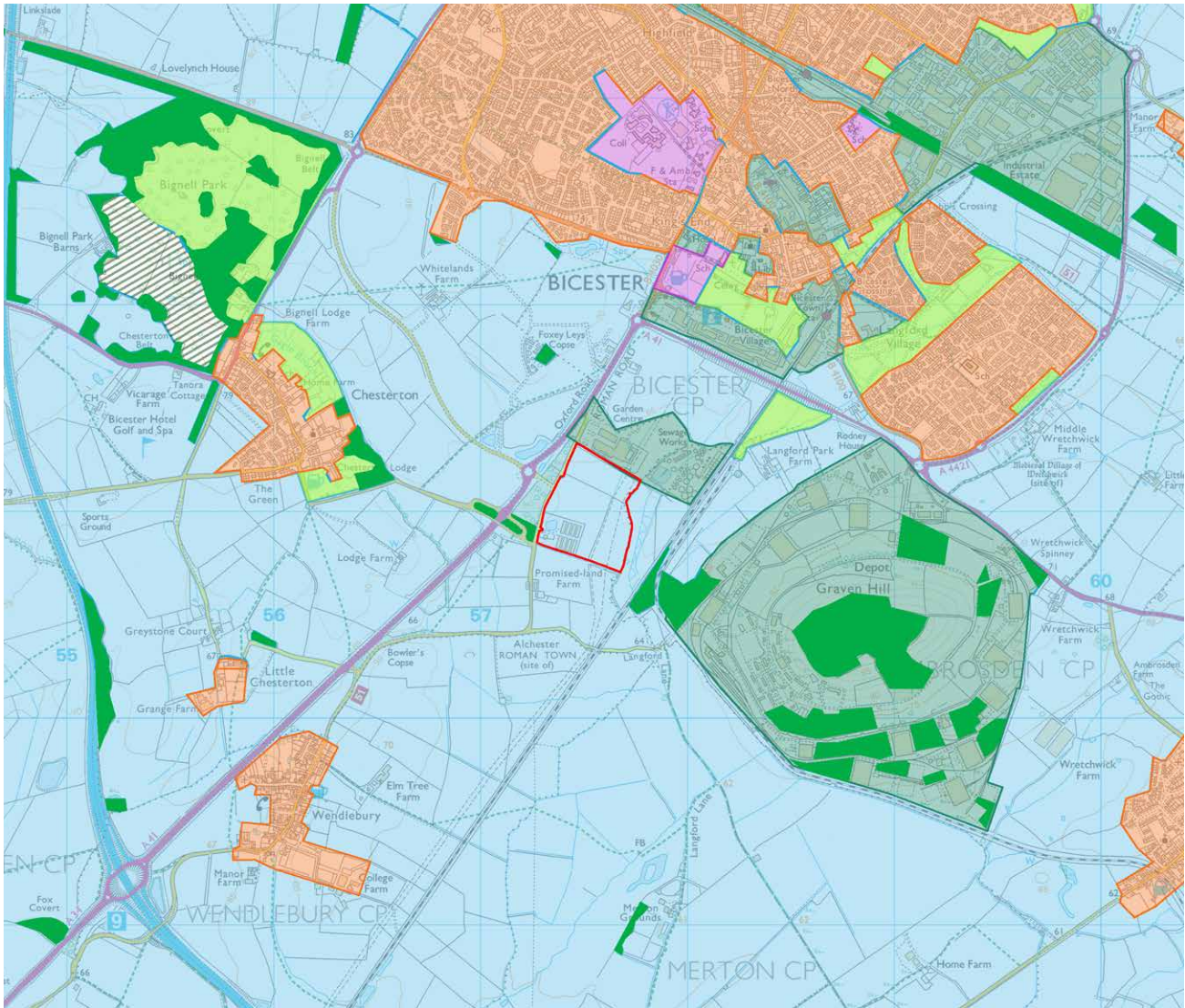
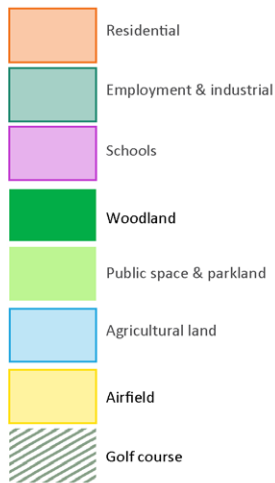


Figure 4: Existing Land Use

C Planning context

Planning policy review

National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF-2019)

Review of national and local planning policy provides the context and key issues relating to the site and the development proposals. The government's primary planning guidance is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁰¹. Sections relevant to landscape and visual issues are as follows:

- Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding & coastal change
- Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places

In respect of Chapter 12, the government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is seen as a key aspect of sustainable development, and includes creating high quality development which is attractive, has good layout and landscape design, and which promotes a sense of place that is sympathetic to the local character and setting.

These key aims in respect of good design and landscape setting are addressed throughout this document.

Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding & coastal change

At paragraph 149 the NPPF highlights the need for local plans to take account of climate change over time, integrating future resilience and spaces for physical protection measures. At paragraph 150, the NPPF states new development should be planned to integrate green infrastructure.

In respect of flooding the NPPF states (Paragraph 155) where development is necessary in areas of flood risk the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

There exists the opportunity within the development to retain and augment the main infrastructure elements - existing trees and shrubs, existing hedgerows and field boundaries - through the planting of new native trees and shrubs.

Sustainable drainage and attenuation strategies will be implemented across the site.

Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

There are no significant environmental designations on or within the vicinity of the site. However the principles set out in the NPPF for sustainable development still apply through establishment of policies which enhance and protect the natural and local environment, biodiversity and intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

New development should also look to maintain and enhance networks of habitats and green infrastructure (paragraph 171). Opportunities to improve on biodiversity in and around new development are encouraged, and should be considered as part of the proposals.

Care should be given to minimising indirect impacts upon the surrounding area, as well as consideration of enhancing biodiversity and ecology where possible within the site

Scheduled Monuments & nationally important but non-scheduled monuments (October 2013)

Under the terms of the 1979 Act the Secretary of State has a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of ancient monuments of national importance, the purpose being to help preserve them, so far as possible, in the state in which they have come down to us today.

In Annex 1: Principles of Selection for Scheduled Monuments it states; "The significance of ancient monuments derives not only from their physical presence, but also from their setting."

The proposed development is adjacent to the designated site of the Scheduled Monument of the walled town of Alchester a Roman Settlement.

The "setting" of the Walled Town is included within the irregularly shaped boundary of the Scheduled Monument which extends up to 500m around the town and includes a range of outlying buried features associated with the settlement.

The existing poultry farm and associated buildings are currently located to the south of the site closest to the Scheduled Monument. Proposed development and associated mitigation should demonstrate no visual effect greater than the existing condition for the Scheduled Monument setting.

C Planning context

Planning policy review

Local Policy

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (revised version adopted December 2016) allocates the majority of the development site (all of Site A) as a new employment site. Identified for knowledge economy employment development use under policy Bicester 10, the allocation area incorporates in addition to the site the parcel of land to the west of Wendlebury Road, currently a poultry farm and policy suggests the site contains approximately 18 hectares of development area.

Bicester Policy 10 provides a number of points relating to the preferred design outcome for the site that pertain particularly to landscape and visual considerations:

- Open Space – structured open spaces and planting that provide a strong landscape setting, support SUDs and improvements to the micro-climate
- 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.

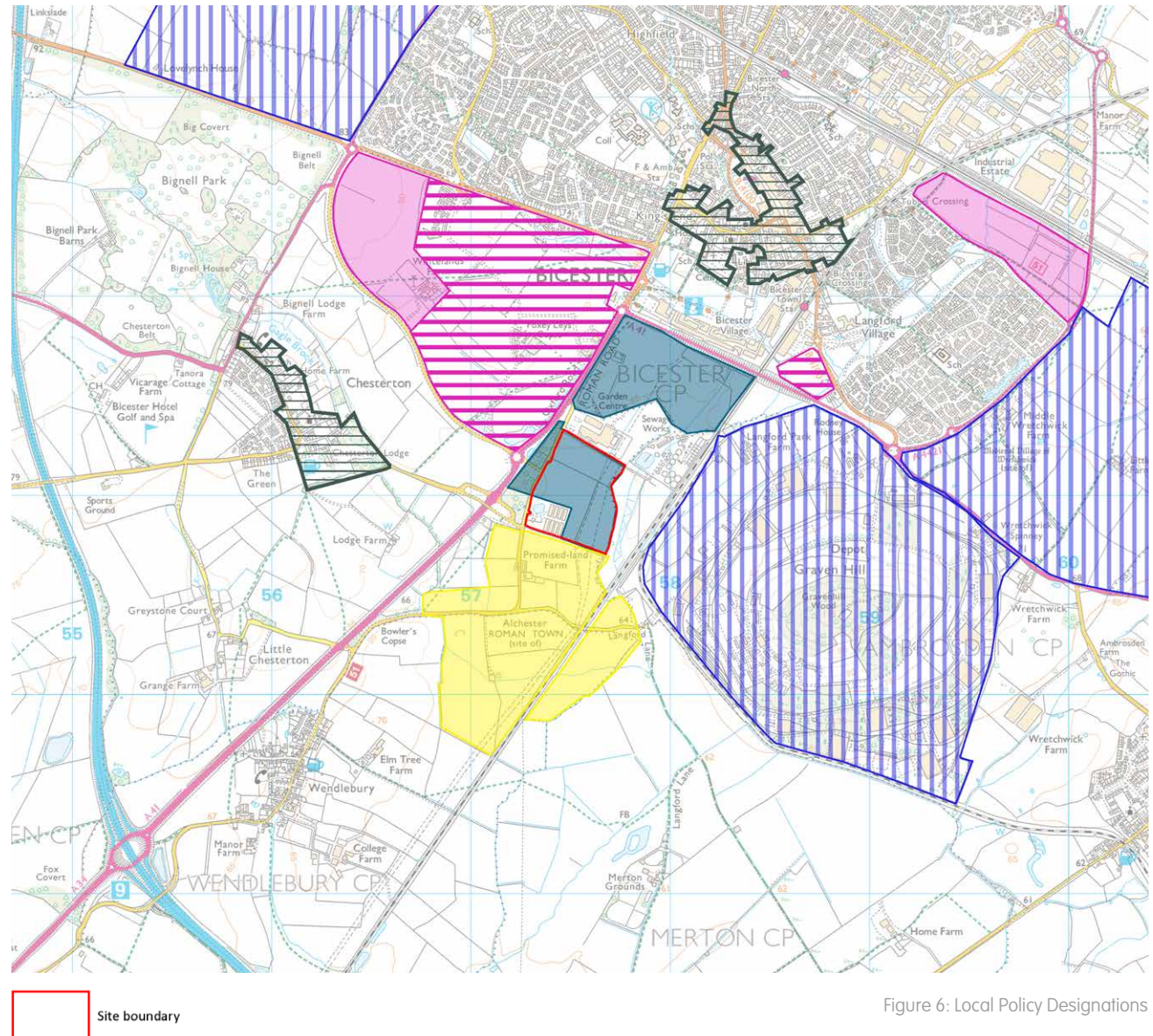


Figure 6: Local Policy Designations

C Planning context

Planning policy review

- Provision of opportunities for Green Infrastructure links beyond the development site to the wider town and countryside.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Development proposals to be accompanied and influenced by landscape/visual and heritage impact assessments.
- Planting of vegetation along strategic route ways to screen the noise.

The Cherwell Local Plan sets out the long term spatial vision for the District and contain policies to help deliver that vision. The key policies and points within the Local Plan relating to landscape issues are:

Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

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

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

Policy ESD 13 Local landscape protection & enhancement

"Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided."

Policy ESD 17 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 ESD7: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."

The proposals are part of the wider business park proposals allocated for development by Policy Bicester 10 of the Cherwell Local Plan, adopted July 2015. The practical loss of 'agriculture' is accepted as part of Policy Bicester 10.

C Planning Context

Landscape in transition

This site and its surrounding area has been allocated for extensive development of both housing and commercial growth. This area remains a “landscape in transition”, with a greatly changing landscape character which is moving away from open countryside and towards a character more akin to an urban townscape.

This strategic landscape assessment has been undertaken of the site and its current context as of winter 2018/2019. Numerous proposals, some consented, some under construction for both residential and commercial use are in close proximity to the site and consideration should be given to the changing character of the area. The key developments that in future years will impact upon the character and views of the site are as follows;

- Kingsmere - A large village style development of over 1500 new homes, a health centre, schools, sports facilities and open space provision. A largely complete and occupied development with only a few later phases remaining including a secondary school currently being constructed in the southern area of the development.
- Graven Hill - The UK's largest self and custom built community of over 1900 new homes, this is predominantly a construction site with a handful of complete residential buildings.
- Bicester Gateway Phase One - Proposed offices (B1 use) and hotel consisting of 149 rooms with associated infrastructure and car parking, currently consented at detail design level. The hotel has been consented with the hotel at 18.5m high on the northern most parcel, with four office blocks at 14m high on the southern parcel.

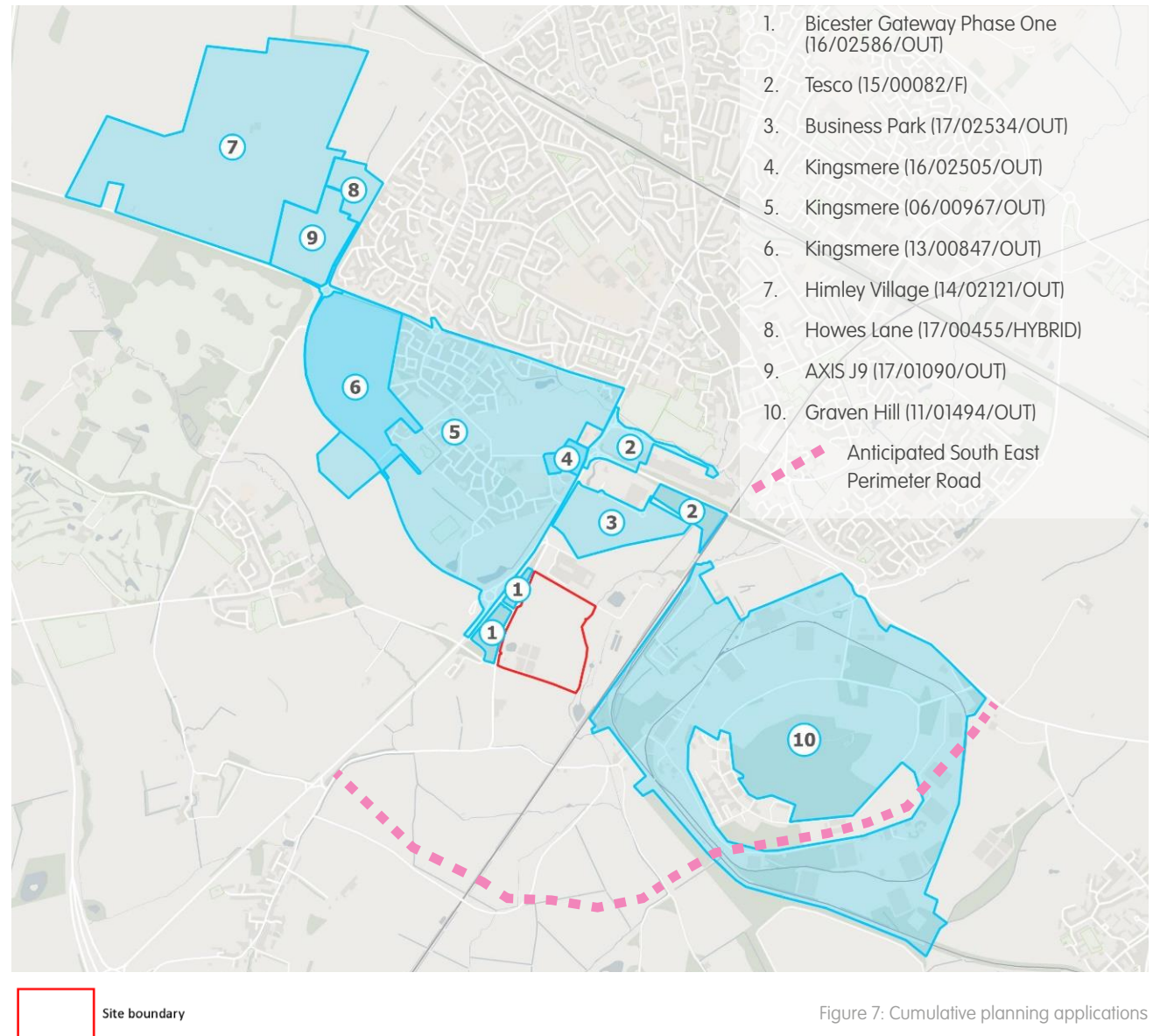


Figure 7: Cumulative planning applications

D

Landscape character

National landscape character

Natural England has produced a National Character Area (NCA) Map for England, which identifies broad areas of distinct and individual countryside character. The character map takes account of the physical landform and the effect of human activities on the natural world. The national framework of character areas identifies and describes the diversity of landscape character across England and provides a common starting point for more detailed local assessments.

The National Landscape Character Area profile for the proposed development site is the Upper Thames Clay Vale (NCA No.108), which summarises this area as follows;

“The Upper Thames Clay Vales National Character Area (NCA) is a broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland on predominantly Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site falls within the NCA, along with around 5,000 ha of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and smaller areas of the Chilterns AONB and the Cotswolds AONB.

There are contrasting landscapes, including enclosed pastures of the claylands with wet valleys, mixed farming, hedges, hedge trees and field trees and more settled, open, arable lands. Mature field oaks give a parkland feel in many places.

The area is dominated by watercourses, including the Thames and its tributaries, and there are also lakes associated with mineral extraction areas, such as the Cotswold Water Park. Watercourses and lakes provide important areas for wildlife and recreation. There is little woodland cover (around 3 percent) but hedgerows and mature field and hedgerow trees are a feature, and many watercourses are fringed with willow or poplar. ”

Key characteristics of this landscape include:

- A flat, low-lying landform
- Mixed land uses, dominated by pasture land, with small to medium-sized hedged fields.
- Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees.
- Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars.
- Small to medium-sized nucleated villages

D Landscape character

Local landscape character

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS-completed in 2004) addresses landscape character both regionally and locally.

The site is located within and close to the following key character areas, further described on the next page:

- Alluvial Lowlands
- Clay Vale
- Wooded Hills
- Wooded Estates

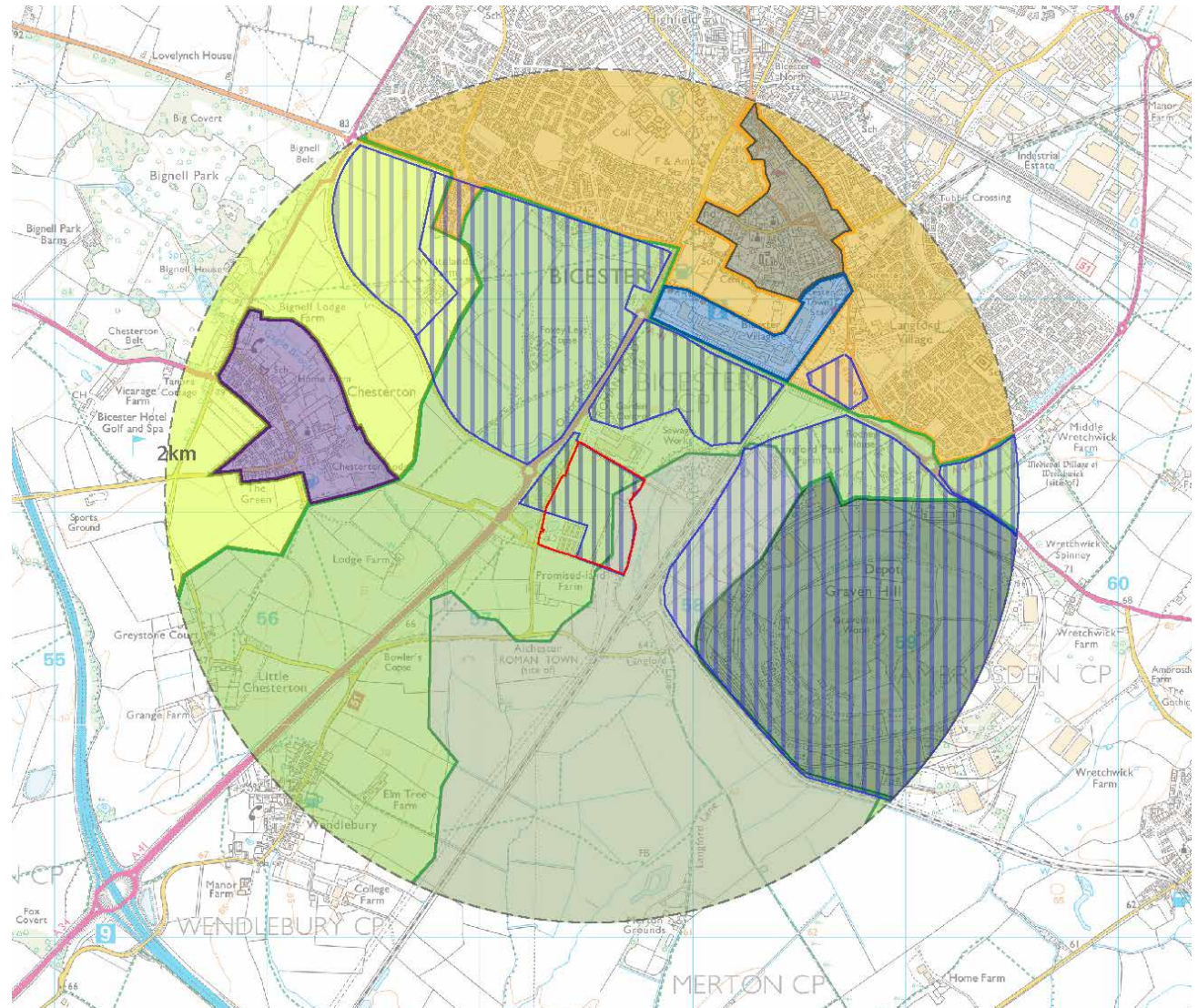
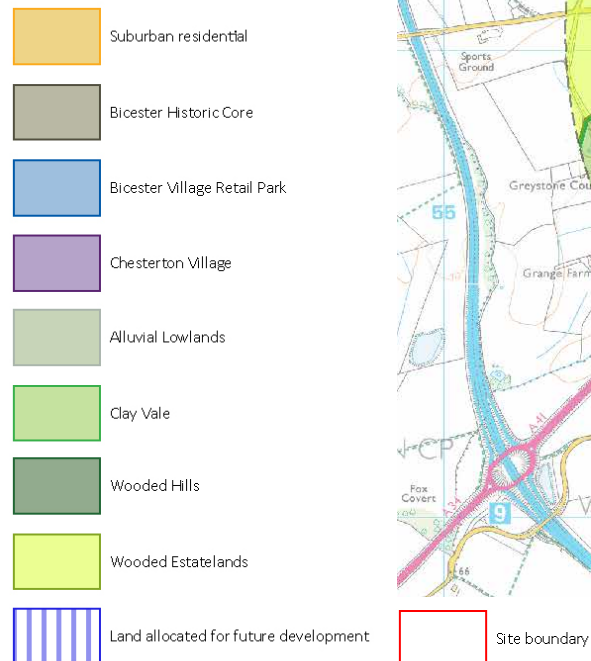


Figure 8: Local Landscape Character

D Landscape character

Local landscape character

Alluvial Lowlands

"This landscape type is restricted to lowland areas, associated with alluvium drifts, adjacent to the main river corridors of the upper and lower Thames, the lower Cherwell and the rivers Ray and Ock. This landscape type includes flat landscapes of lowland river valleys, associated with alluvial soils. It is characterised by a regular pattern of medium-sized hedged fields with permanent pasture and arable cropping. Key characteristics are as follows;

- Broad alluvial plains.
- Mixed farming pattern with regular fields with both arable cropping and pasture.
- Densely scattered hedgerow trees of ash and willow.
- Dense willow corridors bordering a large number of ditches.
- Sparsely settled"

Clay Vale

"This landscape type extends from the vale landscapes adjacent to the northern part of the River Cherwell to the Upper Thames area south of Bicester. It also occupies a large part of the Vale of White Horse to the north-east of Wantage and borders part of the River Thames and its tributaries.

This is a low-lying vale landscape associated with small pasture fields, many watercourses and hedgerow trees and well defined nucleated villages. Key characteristics are as follows:

- A flat, low-lying landform.
- Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized hedged fields.

- Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees.
- Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars.
- Small to medium-sized nucleated villages."

Wooded Hills

"This landscape type covers the wooded hills at Graven Hill. This is a landscape of prominent hills with large blocks of ancient woodland and small grass fields. Key characteristics include the following;

- Steep sided, isolated hills in an otherwise low-lying landscape.
- Large, interlocking blocks of ancient woodland.
- Mixed land uses, but dominated by pastureland."

Wooded Estatelands

"This landscape type includes parklands at the eastern end of the Cotswolds, ranging from the area around Blenheim Park, Steeple Barton, Middleton Park and as far as Shelswell Park to the north of Bicester. Further south it includes Eynsham Hall Park and Bladon Heath Wood and also covers the majority of the wooded and parkland areas in the undulating landscape of the Corallian Ridge.

A wooded estate landscape is characterised by arable farming and small villages with a strong vernacular character. Key characteristics are as follows:

- Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.
- Large parklands and mansion houses.

- A regularly shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.
- Small villages with strong vernacular character."

Summary

Within the OWLS study, the development site is situated within both the 'Clay Vale' and 'Alluvial Lowlands' Landscape Character Area of the Upper Thames Vale.

The adjacent Landscape Character Areas to the west is Wooded Hills (Graven Hill), and to the east is Wooded Estatelands, as well as the Townscape of Bicester to the north.

The most significant detracting feature from the landscape character of these areas is the dominant effects associated with the A41 road. The emerging and large scale changes associated with the future development proposals of Kingsmere, the Gateway and Graven Hill have already eroded a substantial part of the character areas nearest to the town.

These significant and recent changes to the landscape, have not yet been addressed by a revision to the Landscape Character Assessment. As such, there is currently no reference to the extensive new housing or the semi-urban business and retail development which has begun to alter the landscape character within the area. Development of the area is continuing at a rapid pace and the landscape is currently characterised by significant change, construction and the growth of housing and commercial developments.

Most of the site is allocated and the development proposals are in line with that allocation, or in relation to Site B the development proposals will replace the existing poultry buildings. Changes to landscape character are therefore consistent with the allocation.

E Visual assessment

Viewpoints and methodology

A comprehensive visual assessment has been undertaken to determine the degree of visual effect the proposed development would have upon the surrounding landscape.

ZTV (the Zone of Theoretic Visibility)

In order to establish the ZTV i.e. the area within which the development is theoretically visible, the site is assessed in relation to survey maps. This provisional assessment is then refined in the field, at which stage visual receptors are also identified.

The ZTV covers an area of up to 2km away from the site. It is restricted in the south by significant vegetation within field boundaries and the built form of the village of Chesterton to the west. The ZTV to the east of the site extends up onto Graven Hill which offers elevated views across the area. An important visual constraint upon the ZTV arises from the extensive area of new development known as Kingsmere that lies to the south-west of Bicester. The Kingsmere development limits views in towards the site from the north-west.

The ZTV is comparatively constrained, due to the flat nature of the landscape which provides few elevated vantage points and the abundance of large hedgerows and mature trees.

The landscape is in transition and the changes are occurring at a rapid pace. The ZTV is expected to reduce as more development works are completed on nearby land. Most notably, the development of the new school site is expected to obstruct views towards the development, and additionally, these new elements in the landscape will bring their own visual screening and amelioration measures.

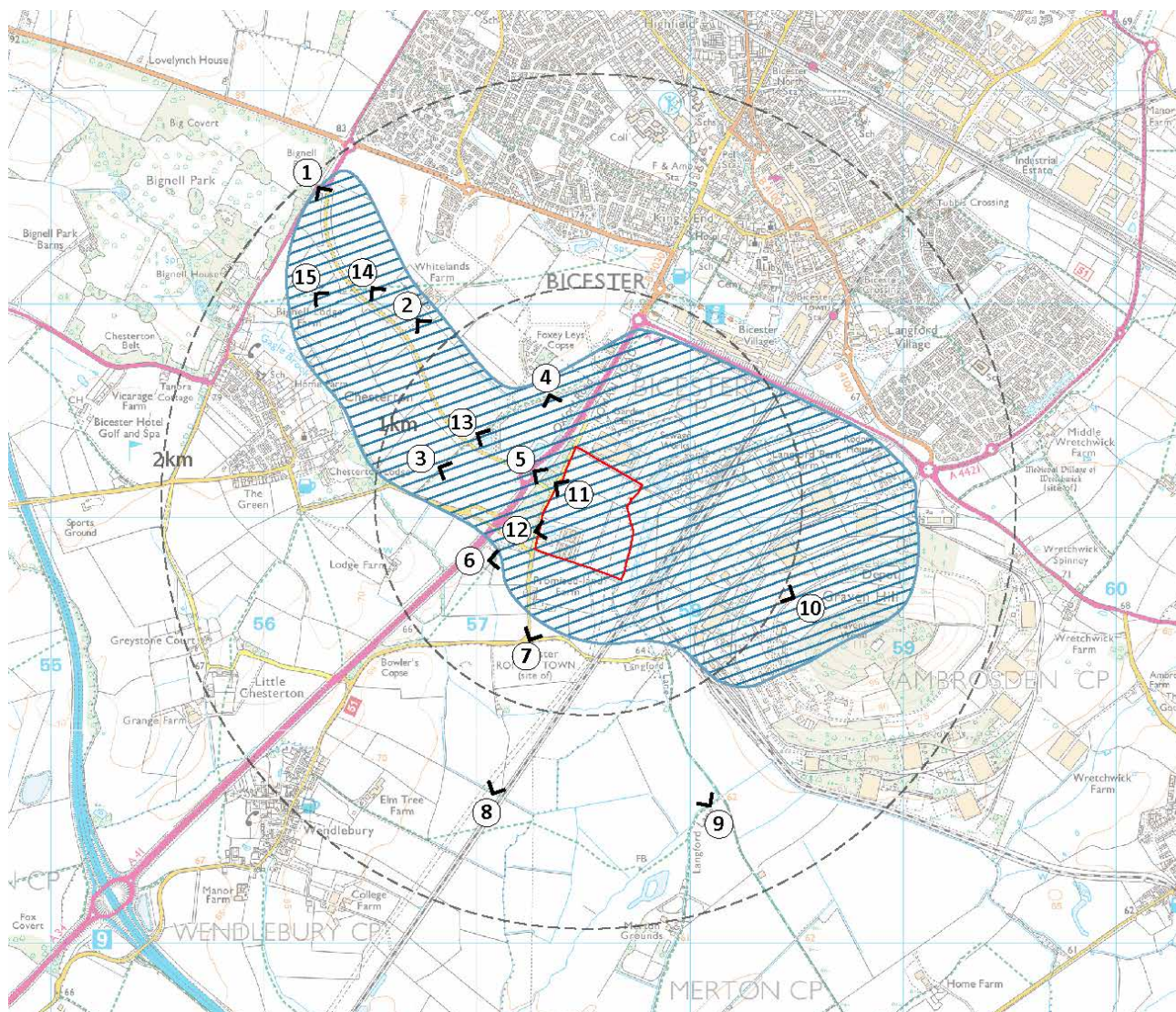
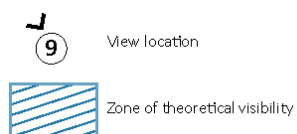


Figure 9: Viewpoint Locations

Identifying the viewpoints

The siting of viewpoints for the visual assessment balances 2 factors:

- The likely significance of effects; and
- How typical, or representative the view is

In some circumstances, a viewpoint may also be chosen due to the cumulative effects the proposals will have on the landscape.

Whilst the choice of viewpoints is very important, the visual assessment is also based on other aspects. It is important that over-emphasis on viewpoint assessment is avoided as this may create the erroneous assumption that this is the only aspect of Landscape Assessment.

It is important that viewpoints can be safely and legally accessed. Some viewpoints might be judged inappropriate for formal visualisations due to unacceptable health and safety risks, or limitations on access.

Viewpoint locations were tested within and beyond the ZTV, and a total of 15 representative viewpoints were chosen to assess either the potential visual effect or to ratify that there would be no change to the view. The viewpoints selected are considered representative of the kinds of views possible to the local area and from local receptors e.g. walkers, residents and road users. They are taken from distances ranging from adjacent to the site to just over 2km away.

The photographs were taken in winter 2018/2019. Views 1-10 were taken on a clear day, while views 11-15 were taken when there was some residual low lying fog in the long distance behind the vegetated horizon line. This has not affected the assessment of the views. On both occasions all deciduous trees were not in leaf so visibility and permeability

through existing vegetation was at its highest.

The site and the development may not be visible in all assessed view points, however the modelling exercise and photomontage overlay is undertaken to verify this and a written overview of the potential visual effects produced.

Each view is described in respect of key visible characteristics and thus the likely effects on the view due to the proposed development are provided. Finally the likely effects of potential proposed landscape mitigation is then described.

Proposed mitigation measures to assist with screening of any development proposals would be considered at a 15 year maturity.

Viewpoint photographs have been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Advice Note 01/11 Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment (2011).

Assessment and classification of likely visual effects

The level of the potential visual effects identified is determined by a consideration of the sensitivity of the visual receptors and the magnitude of change to the view. The sensitivity of a visual receptor combines judgements of their susceptibility to the type of intervention proposed and the value attached to the particular view. The magnitude of change to the view depends upon the size or scale of the intervention, the geographical extent of the area experiencing change and its duration and reversibility.

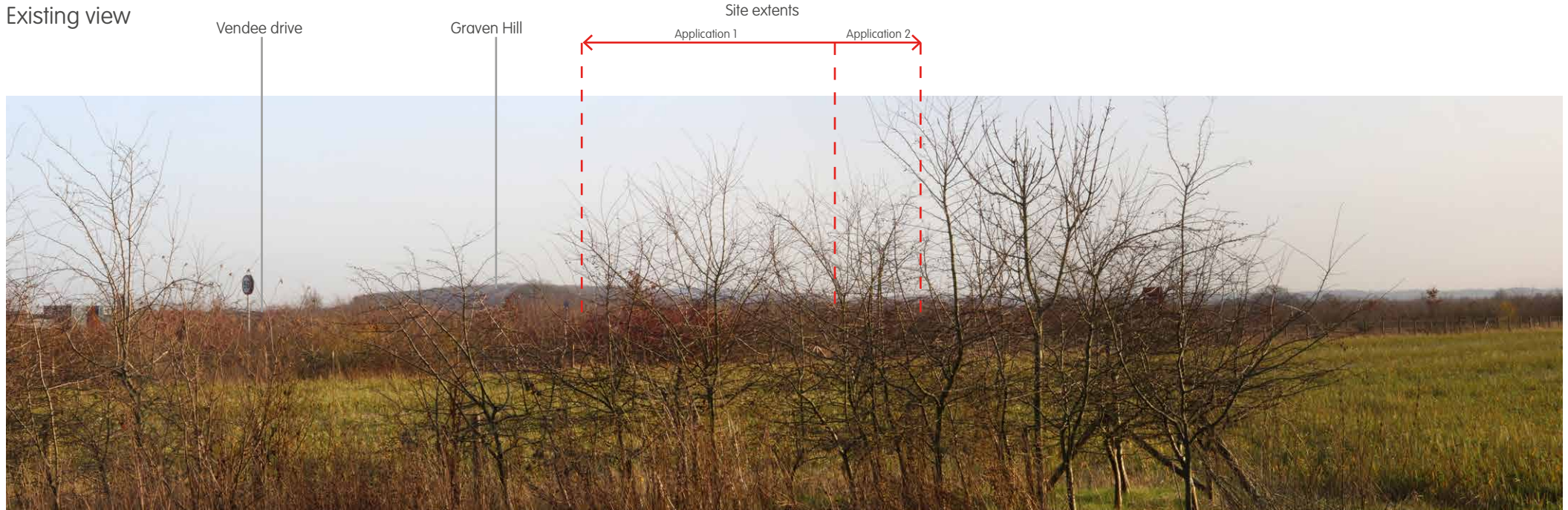
Potential visual effects can be described as follows;

- Major adverse effect- where the proposed intervention would cause a significant deterioration in the existing view.
- Moderate Adverse effect - where the proposed intervention would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view.
- Minor adverse effect - where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.
- None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.
- Minor beneficial effect - Where the proposed intervention would cause a slight improvement in the existing view.
- Moderate beneficial effect - where the proposed intervention would cause a noticeable improvement.
- Major beneficial effect - where the proposed intervention would cause a significant improvement in the existing view.

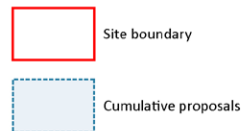
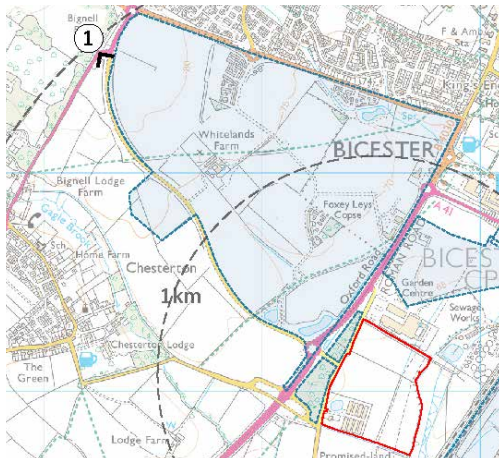
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 1

Existing view



View south east from outside Bignell Park from A4095



Existing view:

The view looks south east from the edge of Bignell Park from the side of the A4095 road towards Chesterton village. This is a long range view located 2km away from the site. The site is located in front of Graven Hill behind layers of existing and newly planted vegetation. The existing view includes no visible built form. The layered tree and shrub planting along field boundaries blocks views of the site extents.

The view is taken from a roadside where there is no footway therefore would have a low sensitivity due to the speed of travel of receptors and the nature of the view being short-lived. The value attached to the view would be moderate given the landscape character typical of the locality being generally attractive but with some detracting features.

Likely changes to the view:

It is unlikely that the proposed built form will be visible from this view. The distance from the proposed development would result in no perceptible change in the existing view and the character and quality of the view will remain unchanged.

Potential visual effects:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

Any additional tree and shrub planting will have no discernible effects on the view.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

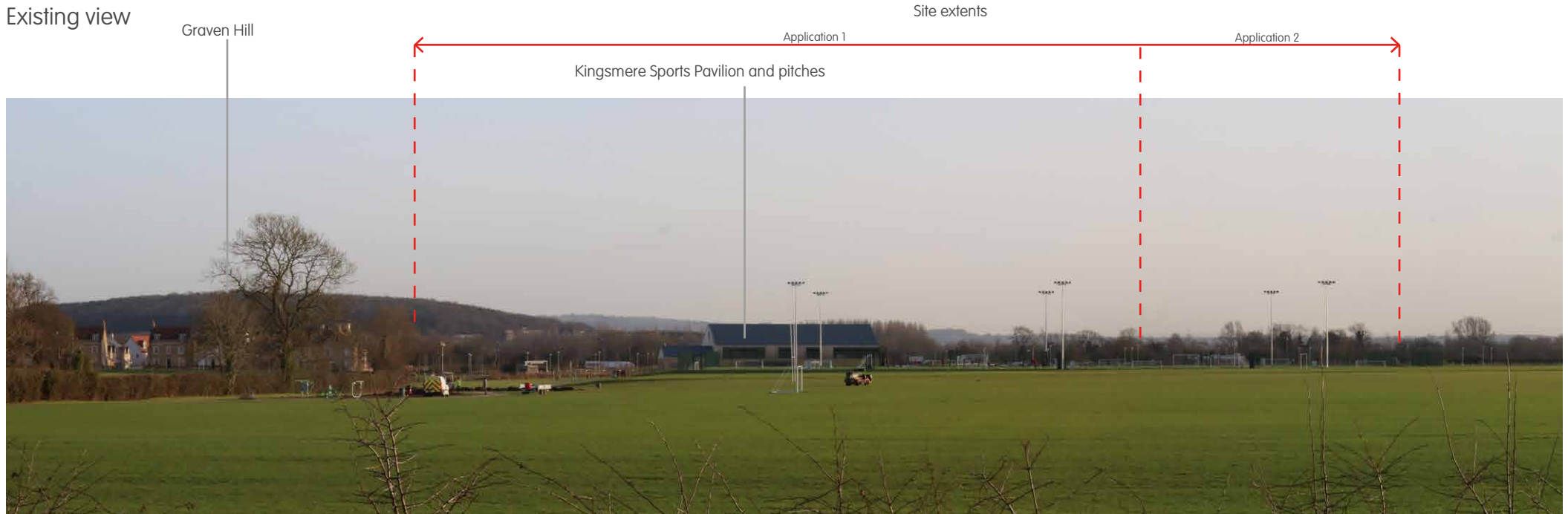
This view looks across the emerging Kingsmere development which is located in front of the site from this view. In addition the Bicester Gateway Phase One proposals are located immediately in front of the site which including buildings up-to 18m high would likely block all potential sight lines.

As part of the Kingsmere development young native vegetation has been planted along Vendee Drive and will mature and grow adding to the height and density of the layered vegetation within this view.

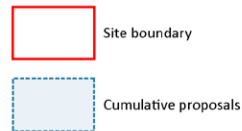
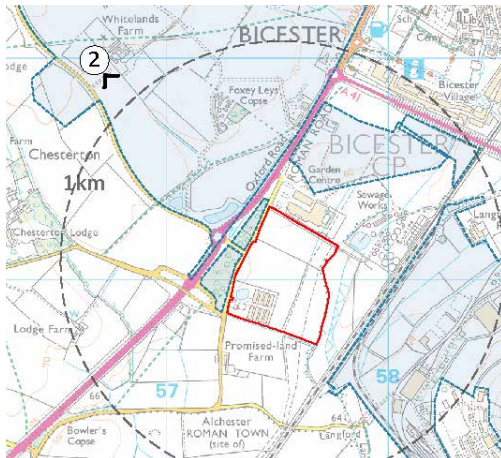
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 2

Existing view



View south east from Whitelands farm track and access road.



Existing view:

The view looks south east from the road leading to Whitelands farm and development. This is a mid range view located approximately 1km away from the site. The site extents are located to the centre of the view, at the foothill of Graven Hill. It is a wide and open view across amenity sports pitches, a new pavilion building with large lighting columns that punctuate the horizon line.

The view is taken from a roadside standing on the footway. It is not a public right of way, but does provide pedestrian access form Whitelands farm development therefore would have a medium sensitivity. The amenity sports pitches, whilst offering a green outlook are not typical of the local landscape character, and the lighting columns detract and interrupt the view therefore the value attached to the view would be low.

Likely changes to the view:

There will likely be some change to the view due to the visibility of some rooftops of the proposal through the breaks in the tree planting. The proposed buildings will not break the existing vegetated horizon line.

Potential visual effects:

The view will undergo a minor adverse effect with built form partly visible amidst the vegetation behind the sports pavilion. When deciduous trees come into leaf this change will be less adverse.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This could contain native woodland style planting and would include the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. At 15 years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

New planting will screen and soften built form, and once mature will reduce the level of visual effects to negligible resulting in no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration:

The consented B1 use and hotel proposals are located immediately in front of the site behind the sports pavilion. The proposed hotel up-to 18m high and the business park of approximately 14m high would likely block all views through to the site.

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Likely changes to the view:

There will likely be some change to the view due to the visibility of some rooftops of the proposal through the breaks in the tree planting. The proposed buildings will not break the existing vegetated horizon line or interrupt the view of the hill.

Potential visual effects:

The view will likely undergo a minor adverse effect with built form partly visible amidst the vegetation behind the Park & Ride. When deciduous trees come into leaf this change will be less adverse.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. At 15 years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

New planting will screen and soften built form, and once mature will reduce the level of visual effects to negligible resulting in no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

The Bicester Gateway Phase One proposals are located immediately in front of the site behind the Park and Ride. The proposed hotel of 18m high and the business park of approximately 14m high would likely block all potential sight lines through to the site.

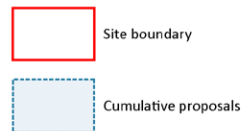
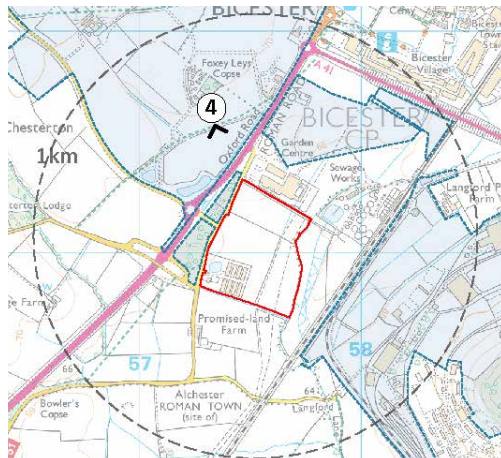
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 4

Existing view



View south from public right of way (residential development under construction)



Existing view:

The view looks south from the public footpath across the construction site of a proposed secondary school. Immediately behind the view is a newly completed phase of the residential Kingsmere development. This is a short-mid range view located 0.5km away from the site. The extent of the site is visible the full width of the view, with the A41 road in the mid ground and the existing vegetated boundary of the site in the background. A native hedge has recently been planted in the foreground of the view.

Whilst currently being located on a Public right of way, it is worth noting that the type of receptor will change over time from footpath user and resident to school user. Visual receptors will also be at first floor level from residential dwellings. In both existing and future circumstances the sensitivity is considered high. The existing value of the view is low due to visible restrictions to the extent of the view and the low quality character.

Likely changes to the view:

Given the transitional nature of this view it is predicted that the proposed built form will not be visible from this view due to consented development that is currently being constructed on site.

Potential visual effects:

Due to the significance of the cumulative considerations for this view the potential visual effects are difficult to ascertain, however it is assumed that any effects would be negligible.

Proposed mitigation:

Any additional tree and shrub planting will have no discernible effects on the view due to the significance of the cumulative proposals.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

Due to the significance of the cumulative considerations for this view the potential visual effects are difficult to ascertain, however it is assumed that any effects would be negligible.

Cumulative consideration

This view looks across the emerging Kingsmere development which is located in the foreground of the site from this view. As part of this development a native hedge has been planted in the foreground of the view which over time will mature and grow adding to the visual screening.

The Bicester Gateway Phase One proposals are located immediately in front of the site behind the Kingsmere development site and the A41. Collectively these two cumulative proposals would likely block all potential sight lines through to the site.

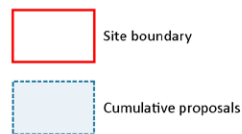
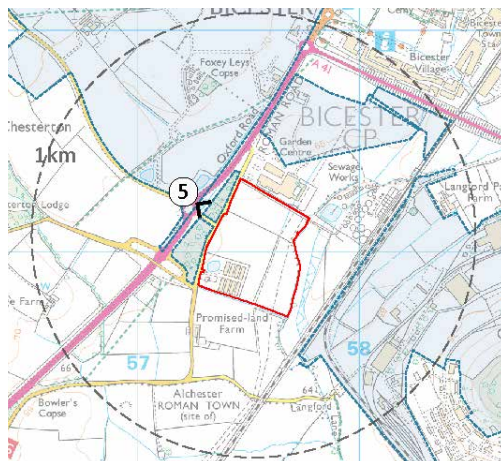
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 5

Existing view



View south east from A41 'Gateway' roundabout



Existing view:

This view looks south east from the link road between the A41 and Wendlebury road. This is a short range view with the road itself filling the foreground. Graven Hill is visible in the background, and the proposed development site fills the mid-ground. The existing boundary vegetation along Wendlebury road is screening the proposed development site.

The view is taken from a pedestrian footway that provides wider connectivity therefore this viewpoint has a moderate sensitivity. It currently does not have much footfall given the proximity to the busy A41. It is low in terms of landscape value due to the strong presence of highway infrastructure and associated signage.

Likely changes to the view:

With the removal of existing boundary trees and vegetation to provide a new access roundabout into the site there would be a partial alteration or loss to the view looking onto proposed buildings. The proposed built form will be positioned in the field and will fill the middle ground of the view. It will reduce the sense of openness of the view.

Potential visual effects:

It is predicted that the potential visual effect could be moderate adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. At 15 years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

New planting will screen and soften built form, and once mature will reduce the level of visual effects to minor adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

This view would be located within the new Gateway development, with the hotel (18m high) immediately to the left and offices (14m high) immediately to the right. Still to be retained as a link road with a pedestrian footpath the view looking onto the proposed development site will be partially screened by the Gateway buildings.

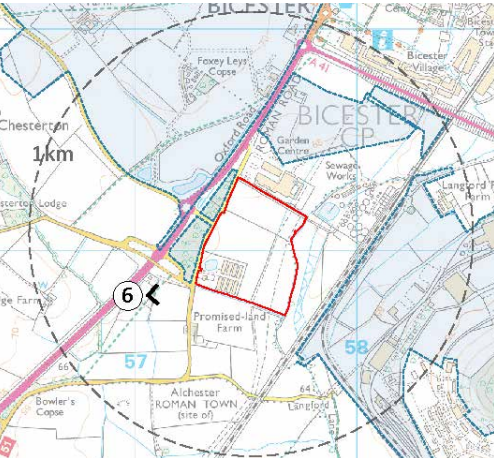
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 6

Existing view



View east from public right of way



- Site boundary
- Cumulative proposals

Existing view:

This view looks east from a public right of way located in the middle of a field. The field dominates the foreground of the view, whilst existing vegetation fills the background. It looks across to Wendlebury road and the existing vegetation that aligns both sides of the road. The corner apex of the field almost meets with the corner apex of the development site.

This view has a moderate value generally being attractive and typical of the locality. Located on a public right of way its sensitivity is medium where users are engaged in outdoor recreation but the enjoyment of the landscape is incidental rather than the main interest.

Likely changes to the view:

The existing vegetation is likely to screen the proposed development buildings with the possibility of some visibility of rooftops through the vegetation during winter months.

Potential visual effects:

The proposed development may be very slightly visible through vegetation, but is unlikely to be noticed by the observer. This constitutes as a potential minor adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western and southern boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along these more sensitive edges. At 15years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

It is predicted that the potential visual effect with mitigation would be negligible with no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

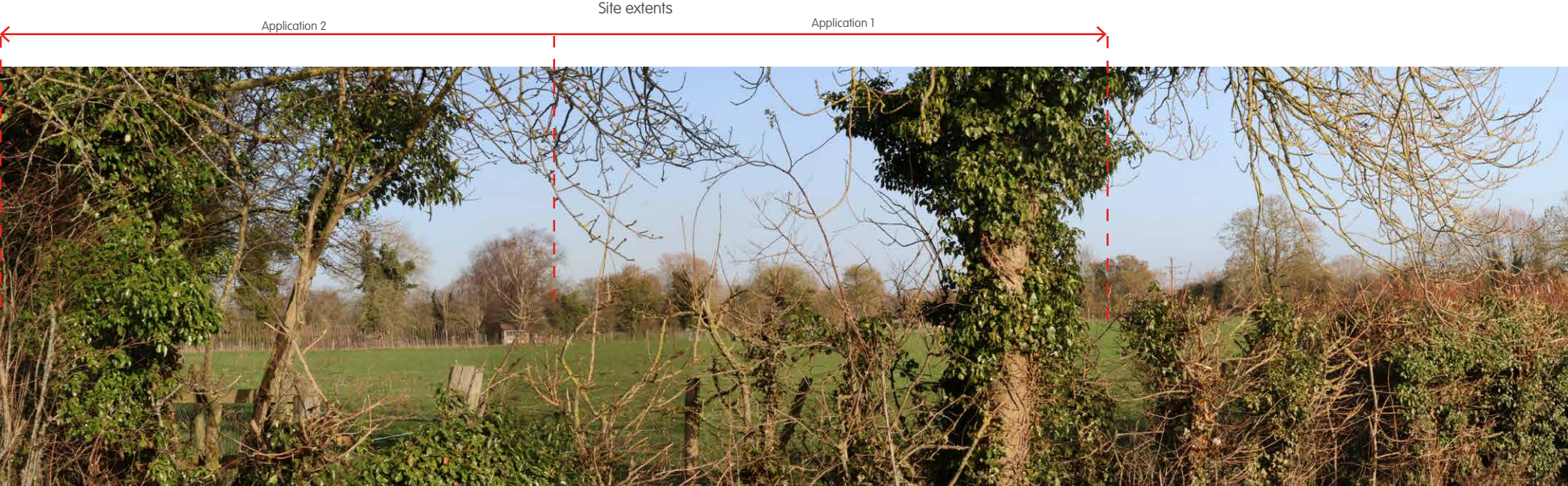
Cumulative consideration

Not applicable.

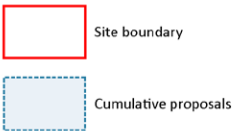
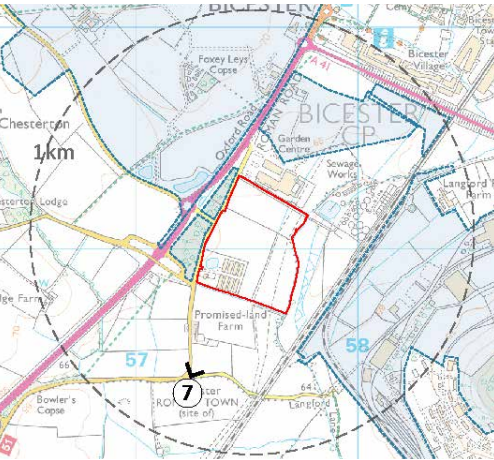
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 7

Existing view



View north from corner of Wendlebury Road



Existing view:

This view is looking north across farmland towards the site and the town of Bicester. Boundary vegetation dominates the foreground, with arable farmland in the middle ground. The vegetation in the background is a field boundary half way across to the development site.

The view is taken from a roadside where there is no footway therefore would have a low sensitivity due to the speed of travel of receptors and the nature of the view being short-lived. The landscape has a moderate value being generally attractive and typical of the locality with limited built form in view.

Likely changes to the view:

The existing vegetation is likely to screen the proposed development buildings with the possibility of some visibility of rooftops through the vegetation during winter months.

Potential visual effects:

The proposed development may be very slightly visible through vegetation, but is unlikely to be noticed by the observer. This constitutes as a potential minor adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western and southern boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along these more sensitive edges. At 15years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

It is predicted that the potential visual effect with mitigation would be negligible, with no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

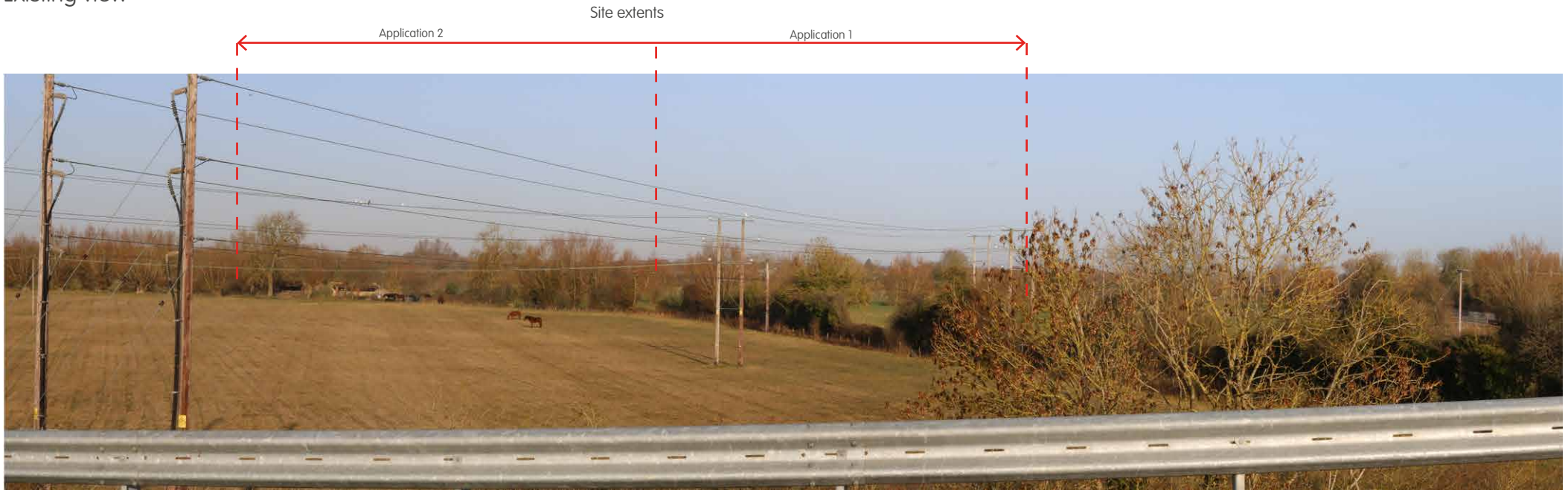
Cumulative consideration

Not applicable.

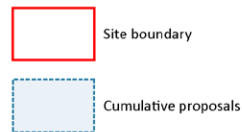
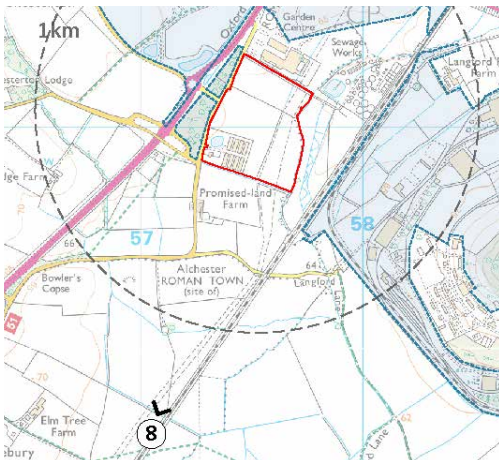
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 8

Existing view



View north from Langford Lane (bridge over railway tracks)



Existing view:

This view is taken from a new road, Langford Lane that connects a farm at the foot of Graven Hill to Wendlebury Village. This viewpoint is taken at an elevated position where the road rises up to bridge over the existing railway. Located approximately 1.5km away there are a number of field boundaries and associated vegetation in the background.

The view has a low landscape value. It is generally attractive and typical of the locality but is punctuated with electricity pylons that stand taller than the horizon line and detract from the landscape quality.

The view is taken from a roadside where there is no footway therefore would have a low sensitivity due to the speed of travel of receptors and the nature of the view being short-lived.

Likely changes to the view:

It is likely that the proposed built form will not be visible from this view. The distance from the proposed development would result in no perceptible change in the existing view and the character and quality of the view will remain unchanged.

Potential visual effects:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

Any additional tree and shrub planting will have no discernible effects on the view.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

Not applicable.

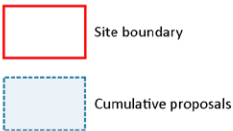
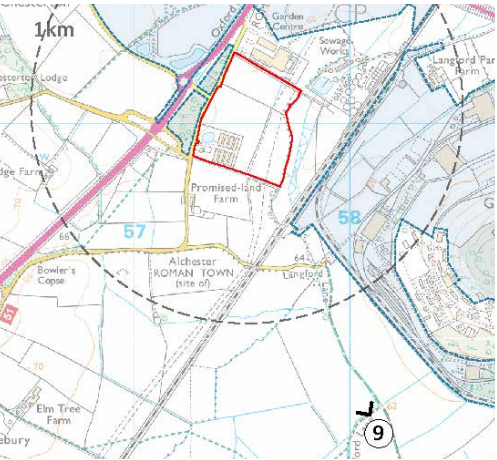
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 9

Existing view



View north west from farm track and bridleway



Existing view:

This view is looking north west from a distance of 1.5km away. The foreground is pasture farmland with boundary vegetation forming the backdrop to the field.

The view is located on a public right of way so has a high sensitivity and the landscape has a moderate value being generally attractive and typical of the locality.

Likely changes to the view:

It is likely that the proposed built form will not be visible from this view. The distance from the proposed development would result in no perceptible change in the existing view and the character and quality of the view will remain unchanged.

Potential visual effects:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

Any additional tree and shrub planting will have no discernible effects on the view.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

Not applicable.

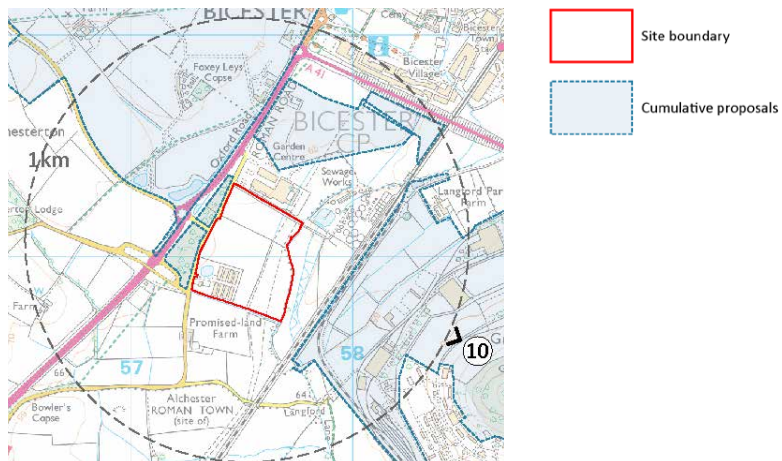
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 10

Existing view



View west from Circular Road, Graven Hill (residential development under construction)



Existing view:

This view is taken from the side of Graven Hill from a footway alongside a recently built road. It looks west across to the site with a foreground made up of soil storage, temporary cabins, water towers and dwellings under construction. The background is a long range view across to the site and beyond. The tower within the existing poultry farm on the proposed development site is visible within the tree cover.

Given the transitional nature of this view it is difficult to ascertain its real value and sensitivity, but its elevated position, albeit with obstructions, does provide a wide view over a generally attractive landscape. The current receptors are of medium sensitivity, but this will increase to high when the residents occupy the new dwellings and visitors, pedestrians and vehicle users should be considered.

Likely changes to the view:

The development proposals are unlikely to be visible within the tree cover of the background, but glimpses of rooftops may be revealed particularly when deciduous trees are not in leaf during winter months.

Potential visual effects:

The proposed development may be very slightly visible through vegetation, but is unlikely to be noticed by the observer. This constitutes as a potential minor adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include tree planting both within and along the boundaries of the development site to create layering and greening to soften any glimpses of rooftops. A wide green corridor through the site will also contribute to softening the scale of built form.

At 15 years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

It is predicted that the potential visual effect with mitigation would be negligible, with no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

Graven Hill is under significant change from a previous MOD site to the UK's largest self and custom build community of over 1900 new homes. The unique nature of it being a self-build community means that infrastructure has been laid but dwellings are slow in the construction phase. The current view is dominated by active construction, as only a handful of residential buildings have been complete out of view.

It is likely that the proposed dwellings will significantly narrow and reduce the outlook from the hill, obscuring many views across to the site for pedestrians on foot. However, it is worth noting that the type of receptor will also include future residents, and will include views from first floor windows.

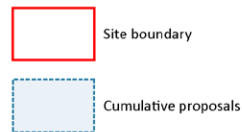
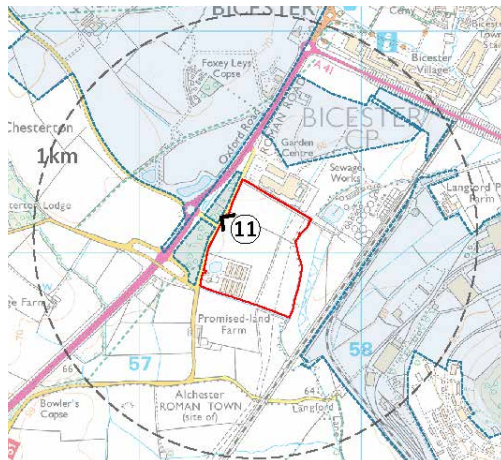
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 11

Existing view



View east from Wendlebury road towards boundary vegetation



Existing view:

This view looks south east from Wendlebury road directly in front of the site. This is a close range view with the site boundary vegetation filling the foreground. Graven Hill is visible in the background, and the proposed development site fills the mid-ground. The existing boundary vegetation along Wendlebury road is screening the proposed development site.

The view is taken from a pedestrian footway that provides wider connectivity therefore this viewpoint has a moderate sensitivity. It currently does not have much footfall given the proximity to the busy A41. It is low in terms of landscape value due to the detracting features such as the telegraph pole.

Likely changes to the view:

With the removal of existing boundary trees and vegetation to provide a new access roundabout into the site there would be a partial alteration or loss to the view looking onto proposed buildings. The proposed built form will be positioned in the field and will fill the middle ground of the view. It will reduce the sense of openness of the view.

Potential visual effects:

It is predicted that because of proximity the potential visual effect could be moderate adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. At 15 years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

New planting will screen and soften built form, and once mature will reduce the level of visual effects to minor adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.

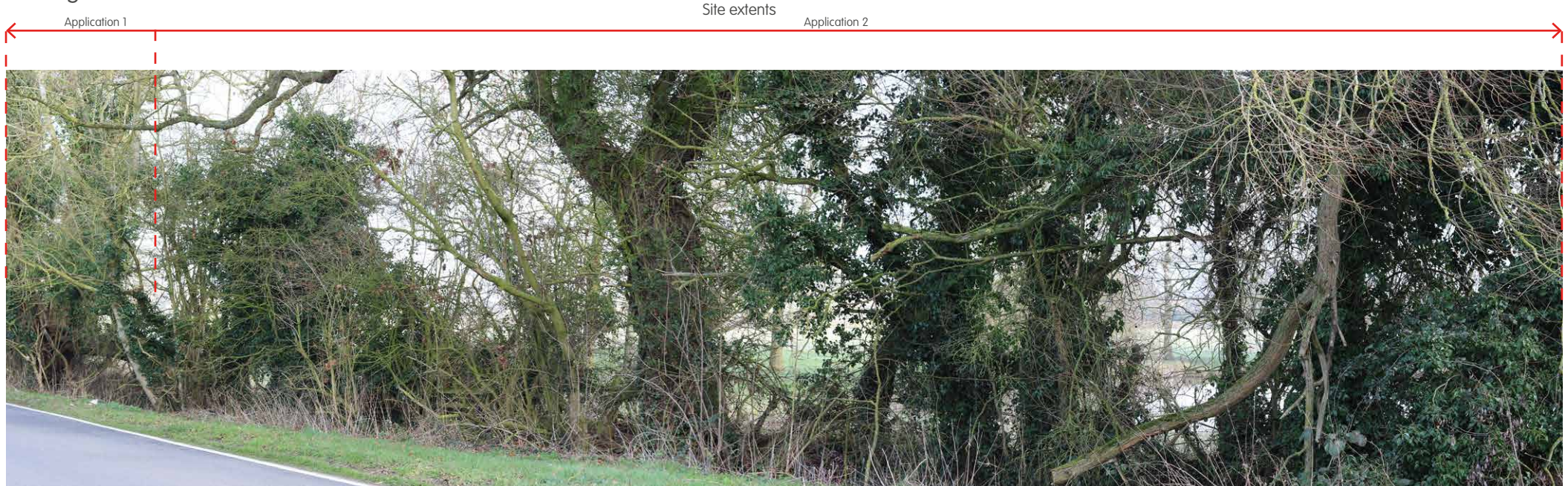
Cumulative consideration

Not applicable.

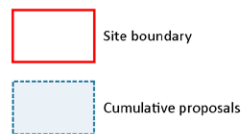
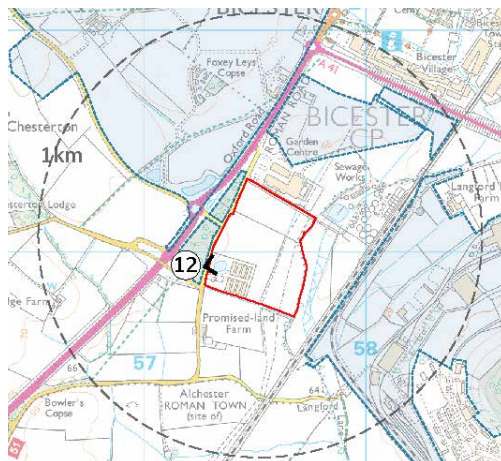
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 12

Existing view



View north east where public right of way meets Wendlebury Road



Existing view:

This view looks east from Wendlebury road directly in front of the site. This is a close range view with the site boundary vegetation almost completely filling the foreground. The existing boundary vegetation along Wendlebury road is screening the proposed development site behind.

This view has a moderate value, generally being attractive and typical of the locality. It is located on a public right of way as it meets Wendlebury road therefore its sensitivity is medium where users are engaged in outdoor recreation but the enjoyment of the landscape is incidental rather than the main interest. It has moderate value in terms of landscape character, but there are detracting features such as the lack of management of the vegetation boundary and the road.

Likely changes to the view:

The proposed built form will be positioned in the field behind this existing vegetation. Between the trees and planting glimpses of the proposed development would be visible.

Potential visual effects:

It is predicted that because of proximity the potential visual effect could be moderate adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. At 15years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

New planting will screen and soften built form, and once mature will reduce the level of visual effects to minor adverse effect, where the proposed intervention would cause a slight deterioration in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

Not applicable.

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View



Site boundary

Cumulative proposals

Existing views:

The view looks south east from the public footpath looking across the open space of the Kingsmere development to the Park and Ride. This is a mid range view located approximately 0.6km away from the site. The site extents are located to the centre of the view, to the right of Graven Hill.

It is an open view across amenity green space, the A41 and onto Graven Hill. Being located on a public right of way this view has a high sensitivity, however it has a relatively low value in terms of natural landscape character due to the recent development of the Park & Ride with both the car park and lighting columns detracting from the view.

When this view was photographed there was a light low lying fog visible over the further distance. Whilst this does provide a haziness to the trees in the background it does not affect how the development would if at all be visible through the trees.

Likely changes to the view:

There will likely be some change to the view due to the visibility of some rooftops of the proposal through the breaks in the tree planting. The proposed buildings will not break the existing vegetated horizon line or interrupt the view of the hill.

Potential visual effects:

The view will likely undergo a minor adverse effect with built form partly visible amidst the vegetation behind the Park & Ride. When deciduous trees come into leaf this change will be less adverse.

Proposed mitigation:

The proposed mitigation would include a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. At 15 years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

New planting will screen and soften built form, and once mature will reduce the level of visual effects to negligible resulting in no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

The view is taken from within a newly completed area of the Kingsmere development, and to the left of the view will be the proposed secondary school. The Bicester Gateway Phase One proposals are located immediately in front of the site behind the Park and Ride. The proposed hotel of 18m high and the business park of approximately 14m high would likely block all potential sight lines through to the site.

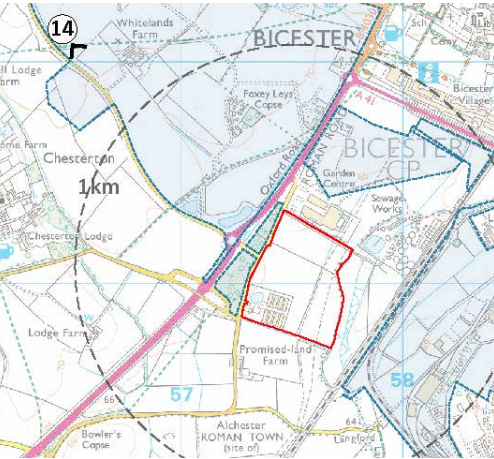
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 14

Existing view



View south east from public right of way, with young native woodland in foreground.



Existing view:

The view looks south east from the public right of way connecting through the Kingsmere development and into Bicester. This is a long range view located 1.5km away from the site. The existing view includes no visible built form. The recently planted tree and shrub planting as part of the Kingsmere development blocks all views of the development site.

Being located on a public right of way this view has a high sensitivity, however it has a low value in terms of landscape value due to the shortening of views with the recent planting.

Likely changes to the view:

The proposed built form will not be visible from this view. The distance from the proposed development and the existing buffer planting would result in no perceptible change in the existing view and the character and quality of the view will remain unchanged.

Potential visual effects:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

Any additional tree and shrub planting will have no discernible effects on the view.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

This view looks across the emerging Kingsmere development. As part of these development proposals young native vegetation has been planted along Vendee Drive and the public right of way and will mature and grow adding to the height and density of the layered vegetation within this view.

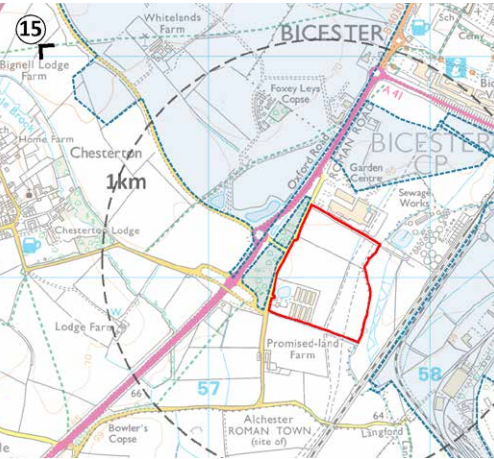
E Visual assessment

Viewpoint 15

Existing view



View south east from public right of way.



Existing view:

The view looks south east from the public right of way connecting across Vendee drive through the Kingsmere development and into Bicester. This is a long range view located approximately 1.8km away from the site. The site is located in front of Graven Hill behind layers of existing vegetation and a recent spoil mound.

The existing view includes no visible built form. The layered tree and shrub planting and spoil mound block views of the site extents. Being located on a public right of way this view has a high sensitivity, however it has a moderate value in terms of natural landscape value.

Likely changes to the view:

It is likely that the proposed built form will not be visible from this view. The distance from the proposed development would result in no perceptible change in the existing view and the character and quality of the view will remain unchanged.

Potential visual effects:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Proposed mitigation:

Any additional tree and shrub planting will have no discernible effects on the view.

Potential visual effects with mitigation:

None / Negligible - No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

Cumulative consideration

This view looks across the emerging Kingsmere development which is located in front of the site from this view. In addition the Bicester Gateway Phase One proposals are located immediately in front of the site which including buildings up-to 18m high would likely block all potential sight lines.

As part of the Kingsmere development young native vegetation has been planted along Vendee Drive and will mature and grow adding to the height and density of the layered vegetation within this view.

E Visual assessment

Summary

The visual analysis assesses the likely effects of the proposed development. Fifteen views from around the site are considered, all of which lie within 2km of the site.

The views demonstrate that the site has a high level of visual containment to its southern, eastern and northern extents, with the western boundary being more exposed. The views from Wendlebury road, public footpaths towards the west and near Vendee drive are the most visually sensitive, with the development likely to produce a partial loss or alteration to the setting and a moderate adverse level of visual effect to some of the closer range views without the use of mitigation. This is to be expected when developing previously undeveloped land, therefore the effects are not unusual or unanticipated. It is important to consider the wider context and the transitional nature of the surrounding landscape, in particular the three cumulative proposals of the Gateway phase one, Kingsmere and Graven Hill that will significantly alter the context of which the development is proposed. These will not only change many of the view locations, but will block and modify what extent of the development site will be visible.

The level of effects are entirely consistent with what would be anticipated with the form of development being brought forward under the allocation given that change is already accepted in principle.

Potential mitigation measures for the development have been described for each views where it would be beneficial. These consist of: retaining and augmenting existing field boundary vegetation, introducing landscape buffers to limit the extents of development (such as along the western boundary), and providing street tree planting within the site. The critical mitigation is the provision of a landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. The northern section of the western boundary will have a narrower planting zone more akin to a single row

of structural / avenue planting to provide a balance between pedestrian permeability and frontage for the development, and screening for longer range views. At 15years maturity it is assumed that proposed tree planting would be in excess of 12m high. These measures have the potential to reduce the level of visual effects through softening the outline of built form, filtering views to the site, and setting development back away from more visually sensitive boundaries.

In line with the agreed approach and methodology for this assessment, the effects have been described as a narrative which has enabled a broader, but more relevant approach to outlining the effects given the significant cumulative proposals in close proximity and the transient nature of this part of Bicester.

In conclusion three of the fifteen views have been assessed as having potential visual effects with mitigation of minor adverse effect, all others have been assessed as negligible. These three views are all close range, with two being at 'point blank' range. They are looking east from Wendlebury Road and the effects are as to be expected within that close proximity for a site with this allocation.

F Landscape assessment

Summary

A localised landscape analysis of the site has been undertaken to inform the strategic landscape framework. This summarises the key aspects of the site in its current condition and has been informed by its physical features, landscape character and visual issues, as well as planning policy issues affecting the landscape.

The landscape analysis of the site highlights the following key elements:

- The predominant quality of the landscape on the site is good, and is defined through managed hedgerow vegetation. The overall landscape condition adjacent to the site is good.
- The surrounding rural setting to the south is defined by medium-sized fields, with hedgerow planting and occasional copses of trees. These provide a strong layering effect of views to the site from the south.
- The A41 adjacent to Bicester Village going over the railway-line provides a significant level change and limits the long range views of the site from the north.
- The site topography is very slightly sloped, falling from circa 66m AOD in the west to circa 65m AOD in the east adjacent to the wetland area.
- The small field sizes mean that visual boundaries occur within the landscape more frequently giving an enclosed appearance to the predominantly pastoral land. Also as a result of this density of hedgerow boundaries, the landscape appears more densely wooded because of the layering effect.
- There are no landscape impacts greater than the existing poultry farm upon the setting of the Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument.



View looking south east from near Wendlebury road along the northern site boundary adjacent to the Thames Water access road.



View along Wendlebury Road and site boundary showing large scale trees and vegetation



Existing wetland area to the east of the site.



View looking north into the site from the entrance of 'Lakeside' the existing poultry farm.

F Landscape assessment Summary

The figure opposite summarises the key aspects of the site in its current condition - physical features, landscape character and visual issues as well as planning policy issues affecting the landscape.

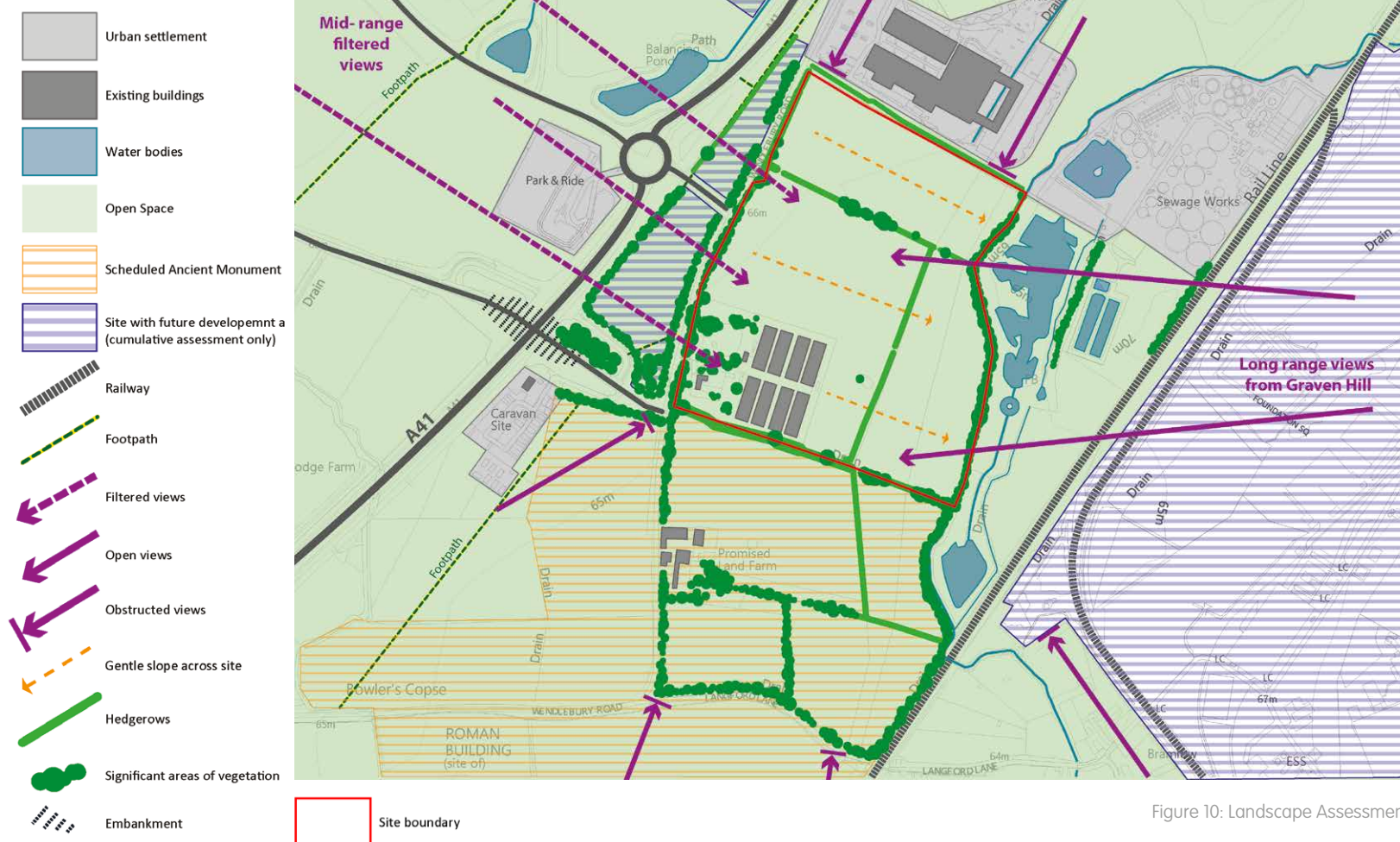


Figure 10: Landscape Assessment

G Strategic landscape framework

The strategic landscape framework sets out how the key landscape issues can be addressed through the development of the masterplan for the site.

It considers both the landscape and visual assessment and helps to identify appropriate mitigation measures to help support the sensitive placement of development within the site.

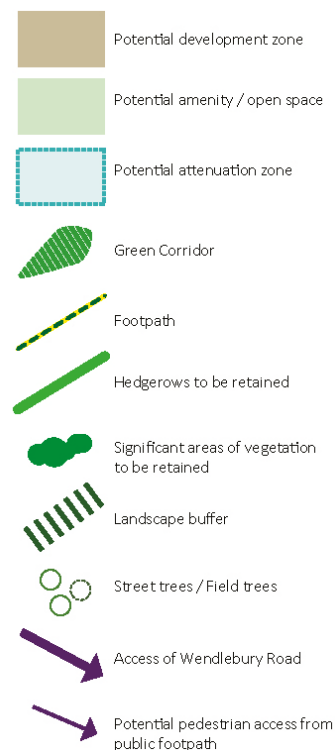


Figure 11: Landscape Assessment

G Strategic landscape framework

The key elements to the strategic landscape framework for the site are:

- 01 A landscape buffer of 8-10m to set back the development from the western and southern boundary. This would contain native woodland style planting and provide for the replacement of any tree loss with semi-mature specimens to ensure views are filtered along this more sensitive edge. The northern section of the western boundary will have a narrower planting zone more akin to a single row of structural / avenue planting to provide a balance between pedestrian permeability and frontage, and screening for longer range views.
- 02 Access off Wendlebury Road to be set back from the existing road alignment to enable a wider site opening which will provide opportunity for the development zone to be split and broken with a green corridor connecting through to the amenity space.
- 03 Maintain the strong tree and hedgerow boundary vegetation to the site to retain the character of the wider landscape setting.
- 04 The landscape character should be of a more formal character towards the north and naturalistic towards the south. This is in keeping with the urban-rural fringe location and will contribute to softening the visual effects of the development.
- 05 Within the development, the massing and layout of the built form should be broken up and softened with high-quality landscape including street trees and open spaces.
- 06 The buildings should be located towards the west away from the flood zone, with the provision of amenity landscape and potential zone for attenuation towards the east in close proximity to the wildlife site.
- 07 Pedestrian access and permeability should be provided from Wendlebury Road to increase connectivity

H Overview and summary

Baseline assessment

- The site is located to the southern edge of Bicester, Oxfordshire. The site is bounded by Wendlebury road to the west, Bicester Avenue home and garden centre to the north, and agricultural land enclosed by hedgerows to the east and south.
- The site itself is bounded by large tree planting and crossed with native hedgerows. The site is currently pastoral landscape with a poultry farm located in the southern most corner. Vegetation to the wider area consists of occasional copses of trees and a network of hedgerows which form field boundaries. Intermittent trees also form part of the hedgerow vegetation.
- The site very gently slopes down from Wendlebury road towards the eastern boundary and the adjacent wetlands from a high point of 66.00m AOD to a low point of 65.00m AOD. The surrounding landscape is similarly broadly flat with gentle undulation with the clear exception of Graven Hill that reaches a high point of 120m AOD.

Planning context

- The Cherwell Local Plan allocates the site (or part of) as a new employment site, identified for knowledge economy employment development use under policy Bicester 10.
- This area of Bicester is a “landscape in transition”, with a greatly changing landscape character moving away from open countryside and towards a character more akin to an urban townscape.
- Numerous proposals, some consented, some under construction for both residential and commercial use are in close proximity to the site. The key developments that in future years will impact upon the character and views of the site are Kingsmere, Graven Hill and the adjoining Bicester Gateway Phase One.
- The proposed development is adjacent to the designated site of the Scheduled Monument of the walled town of Alchester a Roman Settlement which forms the central feature of the Monument.

Landscape character

- The development site is situated within both the ‘Clay Vale’ and ‘Alluvial Lowlands’ Landscape Character Area of the Upper Thames Vale.
- The adjacent Landscape Character Areas to the west is Wooded Hills (Graven Hill), and to the east is Wooded Estatelands, as well as the Townscape of Bicester to the north.
- The most significant detracting feature from the landscape character of these areas is the dominant effects associated with the A41 road. The emerging and large scale changes associated with the other development proposals have already eroded a substantial part of the character areas nearest to the town.
- These significant and recent changes to the landscape, have not yet been addressed by a revision to the Landscape Character Assessment. As such, there is currently no reference to the extensive new housing or the semi-urban business and retail development which has begun to alter the landscape character within the area. Development of the area is continuing at a rapid pace and the landscape is currently characterised by significant change, construction and the growth of housing and commercial developments.
- Site A is allocated and the development proposals are in line with that allocation. Site B currently has existing poultry buildings and it is anticipated that the proposals would be of a similar scale.
- Changes to landscape character are therefore consistent with the allocation.

H Overview and summary

Visual assessment

- The fifteen views demonstrate that the site has a high level of visual containment to its southern, eastern and northern extents, with the western boundary being more exposed.
- The views from Wendlebury road, public footpaths towards the west and near Vendee drive are the most visually sensitive, with the development likely to produce a partial loss or alteration to the setting and a moderate adverse level of visual effect to some of the closer range views without the use of mitigation.
- The three cumulative proposals of the Gateway Phase One, Kingsmere and Graven Hill will significantly alter the context of which the development is proposed. These will not only change many of the view locations, but will block and modify what extent of the development site will be visible.
- The level of effects are entirely consistent with what would be anticipated with the form of development being brought forward under the allocation.
- Three of the fifteen views have been assessed as having potential visual effects with mitigation of minor adverse effect, all others have been assessed as negligible. These three views are all close range, with two being at 'point blank' range. They are looking east from Wendlebury Road and the effects are as to be expected within that close proximity for a site with this allocation.

Landscape analysis

The landscape analysis highlights the key baseline characteristics of the site:

- The predominant quality of the landscape on the site is good, and is defined through managed hedgerow vegetation. The overall landscape condition adjacent to the site is good.
- The surrounding rural setting to the south is defined by medium-sized fields, with hedgerow planting and occasional copses of trees. These provide a strong layering effect of views to the site from the south.
- The A41 adjacent to Bicester Village going over the railway line provides a significant level change and limits the long range views of the site from the north.
- The site topography is very slightly sloped, falling from circa 66m AOD in the west to circa 65m AOD in the east adjacent to the wetland area.
- The small field sizes mean that visual boundaries occur within the landscape more frequently giving an enclosed appearance to the predominantly pastoral land. Also as a result of this density of hedgerow boundaries, the landscape appears more densely wooded because of the layering effect.

I Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The site is located to the south of Bicester, with an allocation identified for knowledge economy on most of the site.

Views of the site demonstrate its relatively open character particularly from views looking eastwards towards the site. Although the site boundaries are well defined with vegetation, the proposed removal of some existing vegetation and the height of some hedgerows does not allow complete screening of the proposed built form.

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 but appropriate mitigation measures could significantly reduce these effects.

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 line with local plan policies and guidance. These will help assimilate development to the urban-rural fringe setting and address the wider context.

It is important to recognise that any development will inevitably have an effect on the landscape character, and therefore the quality of any proposals and the use of existing policy guidance is important to better integrate the development into the local landscape. The following recommendations, as outlined in the Strategic landscape framework, will help go some way to ensuring the development is an attractive and healthy place to work, has a sense of place, is better assimilated into the local context and offers ecological benefits as a result of SuDS and Green Infrastructure improvements.

Recommendations

The strategic landscape framework describes the key elements that can be provided to better improve the sites capacity to accept development in a sensitive manner and assimilate proposals to the existing landscape character and setting. The framework sets out the following recommendations:

- 01 A landscape buffer of approximately 8-10m to set back the development from the western and southern boundary.
- 02 Access off Wendlebury Road to be set back from the existing road alignment to enable a wider site opening which will provide opportunity for the development zone to be split and broken with a green corridor connecting through to the amenity space.
- 03 Maintain the strong tree and hedgerow boundary vegetation to the site to retain the character of the wider landscape setting.
- 04 The landscape character should be of a more formal character towards the north and naturalistic towards the south. This is in keeping with the urban-rural fringe location and will contribute to softening the visual effects of the development.
- 05 Within the development, the massing and layout of the built form should be broken up and softened with high-quality landscape including street trees and open spaces.
- 06 The buildings should be located towards the west away from the flood zone, with the provision of amenity landscape and potential zone for attenuation towards the east in close proximity to the wildlife site.
- 07 Pedestrian access and permeability should be provided from Wendlebury Road to increase connectivity

- 01 National Planning Policy Framework (2019) Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
- 02 Scheduled Monuments & nationally important but non-scheduled monuments (October 2013)
- 03 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (revised version adopted December 2016)
- 04 National Character Area (NCA) Map for England
- 05 The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS- completed in 2004)
- 06 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013)
- 07 Landscape Institute's Advice Note 01/11 - Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment (2011).

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