

Planning statement

Bicester Gateway, Bicester, OX25 2PA

Bicester Gateway Ltd

January 2020

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Executive summary

1. Employment practices are changing. The traditional institutional office is evolving into an offer that is more suited to the challenges of a modern lifestyle, emphasising flexible working, the role of technology, and health and well-being issues. This is especially true in relation to the needs and demands of the knowledge economy.
2. Five years on from the acquisition and promotion of the Bicester Gateway site, this context has led Bicester Gateway Ltd to innovate in order to promote high value employment growth in Bicester; which, in turn, is likely to aid the potential success of the B1 traditional office market (represented largely by the 500,000 sq ft available at Bicester Officer Park) and the emerging technology park being promoted by Albion (Bicester Gateway, Phase 2). Market evidence prepared by VSL supporting the application shows historic take-up of office space in and around Bicester has been low. Other towns in the Oxfordshire remain the destination for the majority of employers.
3. The current proposal, therefore, seeks to deliver a high-quality knowledge economy “Innovation Community” using strong placemaking approaches to land use. These include employment, commercial and residential development uses on a site that straddles the boundary of an employment allocation in the Local Plan.
4. The proposal seeks to create a co-working/co-living environment that supports modern lifestyles and has the ability to attract and retain people looking to work in the knowledge economy (‘inward innovators’). The description of development is:

Outline application (Phase 1B) including access (all other matters reserved) for approximately 4,413 sqm B1 office space (47,502 sqft) GIA, approximately 273 residential units (Use Class C3) including ancillary gym, approximately 177 sqm GIA of café space (Use Class A3), with an ancillary, mixed use co-working hub (794 sqm/ 8,550 sqft GIA), multi-storey car park, multi-use games area (MUGA), amenity space, associated infrastructure, parking and marketing boards.

5. A growing wealth of evidence supports a picture that working practices are changing and institutional take-up of office floorspace by large investors may no longer be a pattern that authorities should plan for exclusively. Instead, planning should include an approach to embed flexibility for small and medium employers (“SMEs”) and employees to attract a skilled flexible workforce that offers the opportunity for people to live close to where they work. This type of flexible planning aligns with evolving work patterns that blur the boundaries between home life and work life. Evidence shows that people spend more time working remotely and from home and knowledge economy working practices are increasingly not confined to an office. Instead, the modern office is a place to socialise, share ideas, engage with similar businesses and share knowledge and experience (a view first proposed by Charles Handy in *Understanding Organisations*, 1976, and now becoming a reality).
6. Research by Ramidus Consulting (commissioned specifically for this planning application) charts a ‘war for talent’ among employers and the shifting balance of power between ‘inward investors’ (employers) and ‘inward innovators’ (employees). The Ramidus report finds (pages 13 and 14) that:

For Bicester Gateway, the fundamental point is that workplace provision today must be far more innovative than it has been in the past. It will not be sufficient simply to produce a 'better' building, or a more modern version of an old format (such as a typical B1 business park unit). The requirements of employers and employees have changed radically...

Moreover, from a land use planning perspective, the emerging onus may be better placed on attracting 'inward innovators' (people) rather than 'inward investors' (corporates/employers).

7. The proposed 'Innovation Community' at Bicester Gateway (Phase 1B) responds to these emerging trends with a development proposal that seeks to catalyse knowledge economy employment in South Bicester at Bicester Gateway. Without this sort of initiative, Bicester will continue to suffer from low levels of B1(a) take-up and rents that are too low to make this sort of development viable at a meaningful scale, as evidenced in the VSL report.

8. The Ramidus report finds that:

At the moment however, the market for B1 business space in Bicester is very slow and lacks a raison d'être. New supply is severely constrained by viability issues, which reinforces the town's market position as an 'industrial' location. There is a need for innovation in development to begin to reverse current trends.

9. The application site benefits from an extant outline scheme for new B1 employment accommodation (ref:16/02586/OU). However, a persistent weak office market at Bicester means the scheme is emerging as unviable and presents a risk that land allocated for employment in the recently adopted Cherwell Local Plan, including Bicester Office Park (500,000 sq ft), will remain undelivered. In order to reverse the low, flat trajectory, the current proposal seeks to acknowledge the change in working practices and deliver development that will attract skilled and valuable employees.
10. The planning case is robust, being based on land part allocated as 'Bicester Policy 10: Bicester Gateway' plus adjoining land to the south that benefits from the extant outline consent for employment space. The current proposals include employment floorspace being delivered on the part of the site that is within the employment allocation and for residential use to be brought forward outside the employment allocation (on consented 'white land' in the Policies Map). The amenities 'hub' is designed to link these two elements. The vision is to create a legible mixed-use working environment that will be occupied by a dynamic community in a high-quality space based on a comprehensive masterplan approach that includes generous and attractive amenity areas to help foster a strong sense of community.
11. The proposed scheme presents a layout and massing that is based on the approved outline scheme (ref: 16/02586/OUT). In this way, the current proposals seek to preserve the visual impact on the surrounding landscape and ensure that biodiversity, heritage and other key matters (that have already been assessed) remain acceptable, as per the extant outline consent. The likely impacts have been assessed and are demonstrated in this planning statement, supporting documents and drawings as no worse than those approved.

12. The use class of the employment space is B1. The use class of the residential space is C3
13. Affordable housing is proposed in accordance with policy at 30%, to be provided at a discount market rent.
14. The development site benefits from excellent accessibility by non-car modes of transport. It has excellent pedestrian and cycle links to a wide range of facilities able to accommodate most residents, employees and visitors' day-to-day needs, including retail, leisure, education and work opportunities, all within acceptable walking and/or cycling distances. It also has good public transport connections to Bicester Town Centre and to Oxford via the S5/NS5 Park and Ride bus services and local service 26, and good rail connectivity to a range of local and national destinations (including the knowledge economy 'spine' and the major economic area of the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford arc) via stations easily accessible by public transport and cycling.
15. The proposed scheme offers an exciting opportunity to catalyse knowledge economy employment at Bicester Gateway and help to realise the policy intention of Bicester Policy 10. The proposals are extremely well supported by existing and emerging infrastructure, including Park and Ride, national rail services from Oxford, Oxfordshire and London, the universities and hospitals in Oxford, and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. It will provide an affordable housing solution for young people that find themselves priced out of Oxford and Bicester housing markets. The proposals will contribute to a critical mass that has the potential to revamp the 'brand' of Bicester from a once tired former industrial/military market town to what is becoming a vibrant, forward looking and innovative location in which to live, work and socialise.
16. The proposed scheme is demonstrated within this submission to meet planning policy and material considerations in accordance with 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The proposal is for innovative, sustainable development to meet the needs of the knowledge economy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this statement is to support an outline planning application (all matters reserved except access) for mixed-use development at Bicester Gateway, Bicester OX25 2PA. The applicant is Bicester Gateway Ltd (an SPV set up by Bloombridge LLP) and the local planning authority is Cherwell District Council.

The proposal

- 1.2 This application is for:

Outline application (Phase 1B) including access (all other matters reserved) for approximately 4,413 sqm B1 office space (47,502 sqft) GIA, approximately 273 residential units (Use Class C3) including ancillary gym, approximately 177 sqm GIA of café space (Use Class A3), with an ancillary, mixed use co-working hub (794 sqm/ 8,550 sqft GIA), multi-storey car park, multi-use games area (MUGA), amenity space, associated infrastructure, parking and marketing boards.

Site background

- 1.3 The application site ('the site') comprises land that is bounded by the A41 to the west, Vendee Drive to the north, Wendlebury Road to the east and an unnamed road to the south. The northern section of the site is an employment allocation "Bicester Policy 10: Bicester Gateway" in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1. The allocation is for knowledge economy employment with high quality amenity and landscaping. The south part of the site comprises land which is unallocated. An extant outline application on a site known as "Phase 1B" (ref. 16/02586/OUT), forms an area that follows the boundary of most of the current application site, where the current site includes an additional small parcel of land at the southwest bounded by an abandoned slip way to the A41.
- 1.4 The consented scheme on Phase 1B is unviable (having been marketed since 2014) in a persistently weak office market in the Bicester area. At this location the B1 office market currently serves only the local business community with limited potential to attract investors that are otherwise attracted to Oxford and other centres in the sub-region. The focus of the current application is to deliver a scheme to build the 'knowledge economy' potential of Bicester by seeking to accommodate entrepreneurs and young professionals, including those who want good accessibility to central Oxford but who cannot afford accommodation in the city. Key to the success of the proposed knowledge hub is the availability of high-quality co-living residential accommodation to support this function. Therefore, some residential use is proposed together with employment development, based on the concept of an 'Innovation Community' combining the principles of 'co-living' with 'co-working'.

Key benefits

- 1.5 The application proposes employment floorspace in accordance with the employment allocation that forms part of the site. The proposal will provide new housing, contributing towards housing targets in the District and will directly support the proposed knowledge hub. The proposed knowledge hub will tap into and catalyse the wider knowledge economy. The proposed development comprises a sustainable mixed-use proposal for an accessible,

well-located site. It will make efficient use of land. The overall impacts, including traffic, are within the parameters set by the extant outline planning permission.

The application

1.6 This application is supported by the following drawings and documents:

- This planning statement;
- Planning application forms, certificates and notices;
- Completed CIL questions;
- Design & Access Statement, prepared by SpaceStrategy;
- The following drawings:
 - Site Location Plan (1:1250) ref: OUT _ PL 01, prepared by SpaceStrategy;
 - Constraints Plan (1:500) ref: OUT _ PL 02, prepared by SpaceStrategy;
 - Regulating Plan (1:500) ref: OUT _ PL 03, prepared by SpaceStrategy;
 - Indicative Masterplan (illustrative; 1:500) OUT _ PL 04, prepared by SpaceStrategy;
 - Access Plan (1:500) ref: 46463/5501/001, prepared by PBA Stantec;
 - Landscape Strategy (illustrative; 1:250) ref: MCA2005 01 [E], prepared by MCA;
 - Landscape Strategy Plan (illustrative; 1:1250) ref: MCA2005 02 [A], prepared by MCA;
- Illustrative CGI images (No. 3);
- Transport Assessment, prepared by PBA Stantec;
- Framework Travel Plan, prepared by PBA Stantec;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Arboricultural Statement Addendum, prepared by Cordle Design;
- Arboricultural statement and tree constraints plan for Phase 1A and 1B, prepared by The Complete Arboricultural Consultancy;
- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment (FRDA), prepared by Alan Wood & Partners;
- Ecology Briefing Note, prepared by Ecology Solutions Ltd;
- Archaeological Summary Note, prepared by Cotswold Archaeology;
- Energy Statement, prepared by Kyoob;
- Market evidence “Bicester Gateway, Oxfordshire”, prepared by VSL & Partners (June 2019);
- Economic research “Bicester Gateway - Knowledge Economy Catalyst”, prepared by Ramidus Consulting Ltd (December 2019);
- Footpath statement, prepared by Bloombridge LLP (December 2016);
- Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Bloombridge LLP.

2.0 Site and area description

- 2.1 The site address is, Bicester Gateway, Bicester OX25 2PA. The site is located within Cherwell District Council, approximately 1.5 km south-west of Bicester town centre. The site comprises land that is bounded by the A41 to the west, Vendee Drive to the north, Wendlebury Road to the east and an unnamed road to the south. The northern section of the site is an employment allocation “Bicester Policy 10: Bicester Gateway” in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1. The allocation is for knowledge economy employment with high quality amenity and landscaping. The south part of the site comprises land which is unallocated but previously consented. An extant outline application on a site known as “Phase 1B” (ref. 16/02586/OUT), forms an area that follows the boundary of most of the current application site, where the current site includes an additional small parcel of land at the southwest bounded by an abandoned slip way to the A41. The site measures approximately 3.15 hectares.
- 2.2 The wider “Bicester Policy 10: Bicester Gateway” allocation is an 18 hectare site on the eastern side of the A41. The proposal site includes a section in the south-west of this allocation, and land to the south-west. The site condition comprises managed land associated with the extant outline application with some hedgerows and trees around parts of the perimeter.
- 2.3 To the north-east of the site is the Bicester Avenue garden/shopping centre. Further north-east is the allocation “Bicester 4: Bicester Business Park”. To the north (on the other side of the A41) is the housing allocation “Bicester 3: South West Bicester” (Kingsmere) which has outline planning permission for around 2,300 houses, with over 1,000 constructed to date. . Opposite the site on the western side of the A41 is the 580-space Bicester-Oxford Park & Ride (with free car parking for 24 hours). There is some residential accommodation directly to the south. To the east is predominantly open land comprising the Bicester 10 allocation, including the former Lakeside Farm (closed at the end of 2018). The Oxford-Milton Keynes railway line is to the east of the site. Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Monument covers a significant area of land immediately to the south.
- 2.4 Albion land submitted, in August 2019, two planning applications related to the development of Bicester 10 land to the east of Wendlebury Road, and including the Lakeside Chicken Farm to the south of the Bicester 10 site. The two applications are:
 - Ref: 19/01746/OUT - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved excluding access) for up to 10,200sqm of B1 development (B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c); access and associated landscaping and infrastructure works – This relates to the Chicken Farm.
 - Ref: 19/01740/HYBRID - ‘Hybrid’ planning application comprising: - Outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for access) for up to 23,400sq.m of B1 development (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c); highway works (including provision of a new roundabout at the junction between Vendee Drive and Wendlebury Road); creation of a wetland and landscaped areas and associated infrastructure works. - Full planning permission for a health and racquets club, associated access and car parking, outdoor tennis courts,

air dome, outdoor swimming pool, spa garden and terrace, and associated landscaping – This relates mainly to the Bicester 10 Phase 2 land.

- 2.5 These applications are as yet undetermined. They are supported by Bicester Gateway Ltd save for an unresolved objection on transportation matters. The detail is set out in two Technical Notes prepared for Bicester Gateway Ltd by Stantec.
- 2.6 Oxford is located approximately 16 km south of the site.
- 2.7 The M40 junction 9 is located south approximately 2.5 km. There are numerous bus stops within a 400-metre radius of the site, which include Chesterton Turn North, Bicester Park & Ride (Stop A), Bicester Park & Ride (Stop B) and Bicester Avenue. Improvements are planned as part of the Holiday Inn Express development on Phase 1A. The bus routes provide services to Oxford (25 minutes via the S5), Bicester Town Centre, Launton, Langford Village and St Georges Barracks. There is a national cycle route that runs alongside the application site, which is also set to be improved.
- 2.8 The site lies within Environment Agency Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding) and there are no controlled parking zones or other parking restrictions.

3.0 Relevant planning decisions and pre-application consultation

3.1 The key applications relating to Bicester Gateway are detailed in the table below.

Table 1: On-site planning applications

Reference	Description	Decision	Date
17/02557/REM	Reserved matters to 16/02586/OUT - Erection of hotel and associated works	Granted	28 Mar 2018
16/02586/OUT	Phase 1 of the proposed new business park ("Bicester Gateway") comprising up to 14,972 sq m (Gross External Area) of B1 employment-based buildings, plus a hotel (up to 149 bedrooms), with associated infrastructure, car parking and marketing boards.	Granted	26 Jul 2017
16/00071/SO	Phase 1A of the Bicester Gateway development for the erection of 150 bed hotel. Phase 1B of the Bicester Gateway development for up to 180,000 sq ft of B1 employment development.	EIA screening opinion - negative	1 Sep 2016

3.2 A number of approval of condition applications relating to 16/02586/OUT have also recently been granted, as well as approval of conditions, and amendments to 17/02257/REM.

3.3 Relevant decisions elsewhere in the District are detailed in the table below.

Table 2: Off-site applications

Reference	Description	Decision	Date
19/01746/OUT (Bicester 10) Land to the East of Wendlebury Road	Outline planning application (with all matters reserved excluding access) for up to 10,200sqm of B1 development (B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c); access and associated landscaping and infrastructure works – This relates to the Chicken Farm.	Pending	
19/01740/HYBRID (Bicester 10) Land to the East of Wendlebury Road	'Hybrid' planning application comprising: - Outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for access) for up to 23,400sq.m of B1 development (Use Classes B1a and/or B1b and/or B1c); highway works (including provision of a new	Pending	

	roundabout at the junction between Vendee Drive and Wendlebury Road); creation of a wetland and landscaped areas and associated infrastructure works. - Full planning permission for a health and racquets club, associated access and car parking, outdoor tennis courts, air dome, outdoor swimming pool, spa garden and terrace, and associated landscaping – This relates mainly to the Bicester 10 Phase 2 land.		
18/00091/F (Bicester 12) Symmetry Park, Aylesbury Road A41 Ambrosden	14,200 sq m of logistics floor space, within class B8, including ancillary class B1 (a) offices (929 sq m), erection of security gatehouse, security fence, sprinkler tank and pump house, with an access road and associated site infrastructure including external service yard, lorry parking, landscaping, amenity open space including 10m green corridor with 3m foot path and cycle link to wider Bicester 12 and storm water drainage infrastructure and private sewage treatment plant.	Granted	12 Jul 2018
16/02505/OUT (Kingsmere) Land South Of And Adjoining Bicester Services Oxford Road Bicester	Four Class A1 (retail) units, one Class A3 (cafe/restaurants) unit, a Class D2 (gym) unit, surface level car parking, access, servicing and associated works	Granted	12 Nov 2017
16/00861/HYBRID (Bicester 12/ Symmetry Park) OS Parcel 0070 Adj And North Of A41 London Road Bicester	Full planning permission for 18,394 SQM (198,000 SQ FT) of logistics floor space, within class B8 of the town and country planning use classes order 1987, with ancillary class B1 (A) offices, together with access from A41 Aylesbury Road, associated site infrastructure including lorry parking, landscaping, amenity open space and sustainable drainage and private sewage treatment plant. Outline planning permission for up to 44,314 SQM (477,000 SQ FT) of logistics floor space, within class B8 of the town and	Granted	8 Nov 2016

	country planning use classes order 1987, with ancillary class B1 (A) offices, together with associated site infrastructure including lorry parking, landscaping, amenity open space, sustainable drainage and private sewage treatment plant		
16/01268/OUT	Outline application with all matters reserved apart from access for residential development including up to 1,500 dwellings, up to 7ha of employment land for B1 and/ or B8 uses, a local centre with retail and community use to include A1 and/ or A2 and/ or A3 and/ or A4 and/ or A5 and/ or D1 and/ or D2 and/ or B1, up to a 3 Form Entry Primary School, drainage works including engineering operations to re-profile the land and primary access points from the A41 and A4421, pedestrian and cycle access, circulation routes, related highway works; car parking; public open space and green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems	Pending	n/a
15/01012/OUT (Bicester 11) Land North East Of Skimmingdish Lane Launton Oxfordshire	Outline - Development of up to 48,308sqm of employment floorspace (Class B1c, B2, B8 and ancillary B1a uses), the siting of buildings to the south of the site, servicing and circulation areas, vehicular and pedestrian access from Skimmingdish Lane and landscaping	Granted	6 May 2016
15/00611/F Building 92, 93 & 94, RAF Bicester, Buckingham Road, Bicester	Change of use of building 92 from MOD use (sui generis) to class B1 (office) and B8 (storage use), change of use of building 93 from MOD use to vehicle showroom (sui generis) and change of use of building 94 from MOD use to class B1 workshops and offices, class B8 storage and ancillary class A1 showroom.	Granted	15 Feb 2016

13/00847/OUT (Kingsmere Phase 2) North Of Whitelands Farm Adjoining Middleton Stoney Road Bicester Oxfordshire	Outline - Residential development within use Class C3, Extra care facility, primary school, retail, formal and informal public open space, play facilities, sports pitches, allotments and associated infrastructure including landscaping, highways, footpaths/cycleways, drainage utilities and parking related works	Granted	30 May 2017
06/00967/OUT (Kingsmere Phase 1) Land South West Of Bicester Adjoining Oxford Road And Middleton Stoney Road Bicester And 06/02225/OUT	Outline - Up to 1585 no. dwellings; health village to include health and employment uses and elderly persons nursing home; B1 and B2 employment uses; local centre comprising of shops, a pub/restaurant, children's day nursery, offices and a community centre; 2 no. primary schools and 1 no. secondary school; a hotel; a sports pavilion; formal and informal open space; a link road between A41 and Middleton Stoney Road/Howes Lane junction; associated new roads, junctions, parking, infrastructure, earthworks and new accesses to agricultural land (as amended by plans and documents received 24.10.06).	Granted	3 Jun 2008

- 3.4 Table 2 shows that several applications for employment, housing and other uses have been granted in and around Bicester in recent years.

4.0 Proposed development

- 4.1 It is helpful to provide the context of the current application where, five years on from the initial concept of B1 office space sought at the site, market evidence and local experience (including the effects of Bicester Office Park sating demand and suppressing rents) reveals the consented B1 office space is likely to struggle in realising its knowledge economy potential and fall significantly short of Local Plan aspirations.
- 4.2 The VSL market evidence submitted with this application assesses the approved large format office buildings (30,000 sq ft (c. 3,000 sqm)) as inconsistent with the latent demand for smaller unit sizes of 2,000 – 15,000 sq ft (c. 200 – 1,500 sqm) from smaller businesses. Working practices are changing, as evidenced in the supporting report by Ramidus Consulting, and smaller businesses seek flexibility and to be agile. They are less likely to take a floor in a larger office building, rather, will have a preference for a whole office that is smaller. Those few larger operators locally that may be willing to relocate to new office space at the site would expect a price gradient in step with current local prices, but below that which is necessary to make the development viable (given build costs are the same in Oxford as they are in Bicester) .
- 4.3 Therefore, the current application seeks to deliver a scheme that will build the knowledge economy employment potential of Bicester by seeking to accommodate entrepreneurs and young professionals,
- 4.4 The proposed description of development is:

Outline application (Phase 1B) including access (all other matters reserved) for approximately 4,413 sqm B1 office space (47,502 sqft) GIA, approximately 273 residential units (Use Class C3) including ancillary gym, approximately 177 sqm GIA of café space (Use Class A3), with an ancillary, mixed use co-working hub (794 sqm/ 8,550 sqft GIA), multi-storey car park, multi-use games area (MUGA), amenity space, associated infrastructure, parking and marketing boards.

- 4.5 Seven buildings are proposed. Buildings 1, 2 and 3 are proposed as four-storey buildings with set-back on the northern part of the site. Building 1 will comprise up to 1,975 sqm of office space with 14 residential units above. Building 2 will comprise up to 2,779 sqm of office space, with 19 residential units above. Building 3, a smaller block, will comprise up to 760 sqm of office space, with up to 190 sqm of café use (Use Class A3). Building 4, also on this part of the site, will be a multi-storey car park (described in the parking section below).
- 4.6 As set out in the accompanying report Bicester Gateway - Knowledge Economy Catalyst (Ramidus Consulting Ltd, June 2019) a shift in working patterns has taken place towards smaller, co-working environments. The proposals also provide for some large floor plate office space.
- 4.7 Buildings 5, 6 and 7 will be five-storey buildings with set-back, within the 14m height parameter of the extant approval on the southern part of the site. They will comprise large-scale purpose-built shared living accommodation in 240 residential units.
- 4.8 Of the housing units, an indicative mix is set out as a working example, that seeks to meet demand from “inward innovators” and from a younger generation of knowledge workers. As

such, 40 will be studio flats (15%), 138 will be 1-bedroom units (50%) and 95 will be 2-bedroom units and (35%).

- 4.9 Further parking, and a multi-use games area (MUGA) is proposed on the southern part of the site.

Scale and massing

- 4.10 The proposed buildings will be four to five storeys high and set within the previously approved built envelope and height. These details will come forward in subsequent Reserved Matters applications.

Access and parking

- 4.11 There are two accesses to the site, both onto Wendlebury Road. A pedestrian and cycle access is located on the west side of the site providing access directly to the upgraded cycle and pedestrian paths adjacent to the A41. Parking and access to and from the site will be controlled by measures set out in the draft Travel Plan.
- 4.12 Of the proposed approximately 273 residential units, a maximum of 33 will be car-free residential flats, with access to 4 car club spaces. The remaining approximate 240 residential flats will be served by a car park providing an overall allocation of 1 space per unit. The A3/Café use will be served by a 20 spaces car park for customers and an additional 2 spaces for staff. The open market office space (B1 use) will be served by approximately 147 spaces including a dedicated car park, plus 4 electric vehicle charging spaces. The Hub area will be served by 2 car parking spaces for the use of staff (i.e. management company). In addition, approximately 368 cycle parking spaces will be provided for residents – these will be provided principally within the undercroft resident car park and therefore will benefit from secured access and be sheltered. The proposals also include approximately 54 cycle parking spaces, equating to the assumption that 20% of the proposed residential unit would accommodate a visit at any one time. These visitor stands will be located at convenient locations within the development. For the office development, approximately 60 spaces will be provided for staff and 18 for visitors. For the café, 4 spaces will be provided for staff and 10 for customers. In addition, it is proposed to provide a couple of stands for the use of the staff at the site management company. Overall, visitor cycle parking provision will be spread across the development site and will therefore allow for use across land uses, with for example, the office visitor cycle provision being available at weekends for residential visitors. More detail regarding the proposed car and cycle parking is provided in the Transport Assessment.

Reserved matters

- 4.13 Appearance, landscaping, scale, and layout will be addressed at a subsequent reserved matters stage.

5.0 Development plan policy and planning guidance

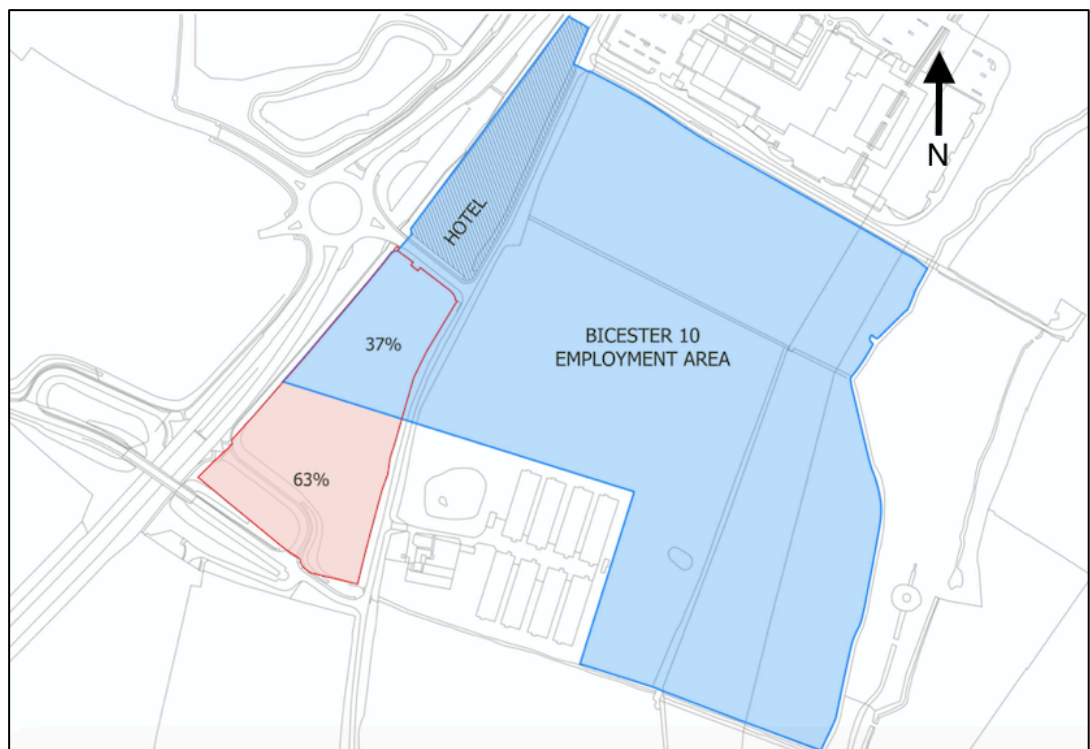
- 5.1 To the extent that development plan policies are material to an application for planning permission the decisions for applications must be taken in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Development plan

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031

- 5.2 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) was adopted in July 2015 following Examination in Public (EiP) during Autumn 2014. A further review in respect of Bicester Policy 13 meant the final version of the plan was adopted in December 2016 and included new wording in respect of Policy Bicester 13.
- 5.3 The proposal site is partly within allocation Bicester 10, as shown on the map below.

Figure 2: Application site and Bicester 10 allocation



- 5.4 Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway states the following:

“Development Area: 18 hectares Development Description: Knowledge economy employment development to the south of the existing retail area (Wyevale Garden Centre), adjacent to the A41

Employment:

- *Jobs created – approximately 3,500. Site constraints may reduce numbers slightly*
- *Use classes – B1 Business uses: high tech knowledge industries.*

Infrastructure Needs:

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

Access and Movement – M40, Phase 2 improvements to Junction 9. Contributions to improvements to the surrounding local and strategic road networks, including safeguarding land for future highway improvements to peripheral routes on this side of the town.”

[There follow a number of criteria relating to site specific design and place shaping principles not repeated here].

5.5 Other relevant policies from the plan area as follows:

- Policy PSD 1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy SLE 1: Employment development
- Policy SLE 2: Securing dynamic town centres
- Policy SLE 4: Improved transport and connections
- Policy BSC1: District-wide housing distribution
- Policy BSC 2: The effective and efficient use of land
- Policy BSC 3: Affordable housing
- Policy BSC 4: Housing mix
- Policy BSC 10: Open space, outdoor sport and recreation provision
- Policy BSC 11: Local standards of provision – outdoor recreation development
- Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Policy ESD 2: Energy hierarchy and allowable solutions
- Policy ESD 3: Sustainable construction

[Cherwell Local Plan 1996 - Saved Policies](#)

5.6 Some of the policies of the 1996 Local Plan have been ‘saved’. Relevant policies are as follows:

- Policy S26: ancillary retail units in the rural areas
- Policy S28: Local shops
- Policy C28: New development
- Policy C30: Design control
- Policy EMP4: Employment generating in the rural areas

- Policy H12: Housing in rural areas
- Policy H18: New dwellings in the countryside

Emerging development plans

[Cherwell Local Plan Part 2](#)

- 5.7 Up until recently, the Council were working on the Cherwell Local Plan Part 2. However, this work has been discontinued and instead there will be a comprehensive review of Part 1. Work on the review is at a very early stage and is not expected to progress much until January 2020 owing to the examination of the Partial Review of Part 1, Oxford's Unmet Housing Need.

[Local Plan Partial Review \(Oxford's Unmet Housing Need\)](#)

- 5.8 A Partial Review of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) is in preparation to help meet the unmet housing needs of Oxford. Cherwell District Council submitted the Local Plan Partial Review (Oxford's Unmet Housing Need) to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for formal examination on Monday 5 March 2018 and the first hearing session was held on 5th February 2019. All of Oxfordshire's councils (except possibly South Oxon) have accepted that Oxford cannot fully meet its own housing needs (approximately 28,000 homes). They collectively committed to consider the extent of Oxford's unmet need and how that need might be sustainably distributed to the neighbouring districts.
- 5.9 The Partial Review Proposed Submission Draft states at Policy PR1: Achieving Sustainable Development for Oxford's Needs that:

"Cherwell District Council will work with Oxford City Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and the developers of allocated sites to deliver: (a) 4,400 homes to help meet Oxford's unmet housing needs by 2031..."

- 5.10 The draft plan allocates eight sites to accommodate this need, in North Oxford, Begbroke, Yarnton, Water Eaton and Kidlington, linking to the A44 Corridor Strategy. With the deletion of PR10 from the draft plan (Woodstock) all of these sites are in the Green Belt, and the plan proposes that they should be removed from it.
- 5.11 Modifications were published in November 2019 and were out for consultation until 20 December 2019

[Oxfordshire Plan 2050](#)

- 5.12 As part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal agreement with the Government, the six Oxfordshire authorities have committed to producing a joint statutory spatial plan (JSSP), known as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This is at very early stages.

Housing Land Supply

- 5.13 The Council's Housing Land Supply Update July 2018 finds that Cherwell has 5.4 years of housing land supply for the period 2018-2023, with a 5% buffer applied. However, this does not accommodate the unmet housing need of neighbouring authorities, in particular, that of Oxford City.

Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014

- 5.14 The SHMA sets out a housing requirement for Cherwell of between 1,090 and 1,190 dwellings per year for the period 2011-2031. It states an estimated dwelling requirement by number of bedrooms as 28.3% 1-bedroom, 31% 2-bedroom, 36.9% 3-bedroom and 3.7% 4+ bedrooms.

Cherwell Residential Design Guide SPD 2018

- 5.15 The SPD states that it is expected that homes in a range of sizes and typologies will be accommodated within development. It states that non-residential uses can be integrated into residential areas to bring vitality.
- 5.16 The SPD states that masterplans for new housing development must be based on a connected, permeable layout of streets defining urban blocks and open spaces.
- 5.17 With regard to street design, the SPD states that it should be as easy as possible to walk and cycle, providing safe, direct and attractive routes. Cycle parking should be provided; one space per 1-bedroom unit and two spaces per 2+ bedroom unit, as well as one visitor space per 2 units.
- 5.18 The SPD requires suitable provision for the storage and collection of waste to be integrated into the street layout, building and plot design.
- 5.19 The SPD requires outdoor amenity space to be provided in the form of balconies, roof gardens or shared gardens for flats.

National planning policy framework

- 5.20 The updated National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') was published on 19 February 2019 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 5.21 Decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that means approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay (paragraph 11, the Framework).
- 5.22 The Framework states that it is the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes (paragraph 59).
- 5.23 It states that Councils should support the development of windfall sites through their decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes (paragraph 68).
- 5.24 With regard to the economy, the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant

weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity (paragraph 80).

5.25 With regard to transport, the Framework states that in assessing applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and
- c) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree (paragraph 108).

5.26 Paragraph 122 requires planning decisions to support development that makes efficient use of land.

5.27 Paragraph 127 states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

National Design Guide 2019

5.28 The National Design Guide sets out planning practice guidance for design, under the following 10 characteristics:

- context
- identity

- built form
- movement
- nature
- public spaces
- uses
- homes and buildings
- resources
- lifespan

5.29 Paragraphs 13 and 14 state that:

“In a well-designed place, an integrated design process brings the ten characteristics together in a mutually supporting way. They interact to create an overall character of place...Good design considers how a development proposal can make a contribution towards all of them.”

6.0 Key issues and considerations

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section, therefore, assesses the proposal against the development plan policies outlined above and examines relevant material considerations where appropriate. The assessment draws upon the suite of application documents listed at Section 1 of this statement. The main planning considerations are:

1. Principle of development;
2. Highways and access;
3. Heritage and archaeology;
4. Flood Risk Assessment;
5. Ecology;
6. Energy;
7. Landscape Visual Impact Assessment / Trees;
8. PROW;
9. Community engagement;
10. Planning obligations.

The proposal is an outline application including access, scale, layout, landscaping and appearance will be dealt with at reserved matters stage.

Principle of development

- 6.2 The principle of development at the site has regard to two different land designations at the site. The first is a knowledge economy employment related allocation (Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway). The second is outside that allocation (in the countryside) and which benefits from an extant outline consent for a B1 office space (ref: 16/02586/OUT). The hotel permitted as part of this consent on Phase 1A is under construction.
- 6.5 This application aims to catalyse the knowledge economy aspirations for this area with a co-working/co-living “innovation community”. This offers flexibility to new businesses on company size, but with significant wide-ranging benefits that stem from working in a co-working innovation community environment.
- 6.6 On land subject to Policy Bicester 10, the proposed uses include B1 employment, a small A3 café, a co-working HUB and residential accommodation. We consider this to be policy compliant. On land outside the allocation, the proposed uses include B1 employment and C3 residential as mixed private, private rental sector/ build to rent (PRS/ BTR) accommodation. On balance, taking in to account a range of policies, this element we also consider policy compliant.

Employment use

- 6.7 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should

be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future (para 80). Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries (para 82).

- 6.7 Policy SLE 1: Employment development states that employment development on new allocated employment sites will be as per the site policy. New employment development is required to make efficient use of previously developed land wherever possible, have good access, or be made to have good access, be accessible to public transport and other sustainable modes, meet high design standards, use sustainable construction and be of an appropriate scale.

- 6.8 The site policy relevant to the application site is Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway, which states the following:

Development Area: 18 hectares Development Description: Knowledge economy employment development to the south of the existing retail area (Wyevale Garden Centre), adjacent to the A41.

- 6.9 Policy Bicester 10 includes a list of place-making and technical planning criteria that a planning application needs to address, and the planning application will achieve this at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 6.11 The employment development proposed on the site is 'knowledge-economy' employment, in the line with the Bicester 10 site policy and market practice. The Bicester Gateway site is highly accessible. The proposed development will have high design standards, use sustainable construction and be of an appropriate scale, with high density development being appropriate to this key site. There are no ecology, heritage, landscape or transport matters that would provide a barrier to including residential use on the site (which we address below).
- 6.12 Outside the employment allocation, development proposals must meet the requirements of Local Plan policy ESD13 and Saved 1996 Local Plan Policies C7, C8, C9 and EMP4
- 6.13 Local Plan policy ESD13 seeks to protect and enhance local landscapes.
- 6.14 Saved 1996 Local Plan Policies C7, C8 and C9 seek to protect the countryside from landscape harm and from development that is incompatible with an open, rural attractive character.
- 6.15 Policy EMP4 directs that development in rural areas will normally be permitted in only three circumstances:

- A. Within an existing employment site;
- B. When converting a building, or group of buildings, without major rebuilding or extension;

- C. *Within, or adjoining settlements, for a minor extension to an existing acceptable employment site.*

Part C would apply for a minor extension to an existing acceptable employment site (i.e. that comprising the employment allocation of Policy Bicester 10).

- 6.16 Policies on landscape protection have been addressed comprehensively in the council's justification for approving ref: 16/02586/OUT. The boundary line of Bicester Policy 10, bisecting the field comprising Phase 1B, is noted as follows at para 8.6 of the officer report:

There is no delineating built or natural boundary that this line follows and it simply cuts across a field. Officers can think of no logical reason why the boundary line should have been drawn in this way.

- 6.17 Paragraph 8.8 of the officer report confirms:

Whilst the proposals would result in the loss of countryside, the remaining technically unallocated part of the application site is very contained by existing vegetation rather than appearing to form part of wider open countryside. Furthermore, its retention as isolated, vacant and unusable grassland would appear wholly incongruous adjacent to the new business development given that it so clearly and logically forms part of the same piece of land. For this reason officers have concluded that its development would not be materially harmful to the intrinsic attractiveness of the open countryside and neither would it cumulatively have any materially greater local or wider landscape impact than that caused by development of the rest of the allocated site. Consequently, whilst the proposals would result in some new built development on unallocated greenfield land, officers are satisfied that for the above reasons this would not have a materially adverse effect on the natural landscape and would help deliver further employment development on land that would, if left undeveloped, have little environmental, economic or social value.

- 6.18 We therefore find the employment proposals in accordance with policy on both the employment land allocation and in the countryside.

Residential use

- 6.19 The Framework states that it is the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes (paragraph 59). The proposal will boost the supply of homes, providing 273 new homes in an accessible location.
- 6.20 The Framework also states that Councils should support the development of windfall sites through their decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes. The proposal site is a windfall site, highly accessible and on the edge of Bicester centre. It is an ideal location for a new mixed-use development, to include housing.
- 6.21 Policy BSC1 guides district wide housing distribution for the plan period and directs residential development to Bicester, among other centres. It accommodates windfall

developments on site of less than ten homes of 104 homes. The figures represent minimum requirements and any uplift on these figures represents a planning betterment.

- 6.22 Policy BSC2 sets out how the council expects housing development to make effective and efficient use of the land.
- 6.23 Policy BSC3 identifies required affordable housing levels in the district at 30% on sites of 11 dwellings or more.
- 6.24 With regard to residential use, Policy SLE1 states that “New dwellings will not be permitted within employment sites except where this is in accordance with specific site proposals set out in this Local Plan.” The Bicester 10 site-specific proposal is for knowledge economy employment. In direct support for the knowledge economy, the small amount of residential development proposed on the allocated part of the site (33 units to be located above the office space) will be an integral part of making it work. It is therefore in line with allocation Bicester 10 and Policy SLE1. It is also in line with market practice, such as third generation business parks and business communities, all of which include residential (on mixed use, vitality and sustainability grounds).
- 6.25 The proposal directly supports emerging themes in the knowledge economy (as set out in the Economic Report prepared by Ramidus, June 2019, which accompanies the application). In particular by accommodating ‘inward innovators’ (people/ residents) at Bicester Gateway which, in turn, will act as a catalyst in attracting ‘inward investors’ (employers). We describe this as an ‘innovation community’, akin to what the University has proposed at Begbroke (and which has been supported by the Local Plan Inspector), and will directly support the function of Policy Bicester 10.
- 6.26 The supporting text to Policy SLE1 (paragraph B42) supports flexible approaches to employment development, and encourages live/work developments. The proposal, which will provide flexible space for small businesses and will provide the opportunity for people to live and work in the same location, accords with this
- 6.27 The additional housing requirement to meet unmet need in Oxford apportions 4,400 new homes to Cherwell, leading to a net figure of some 26,240 (Partial Review Proposed Submission Draft Policy PR1). The current proposal to locate much of this housing in the Green Belt at Begbrooke and Kidlington Gaps have generated significant objections locally. Delivery of sustainable homes that support the knowledge economy employment function at Bicester Policy 10 would reduce the impact of housing in other locations being considered. In this context, locating new homes close to Oxford via the Park and Ride facility means that for new occupants there is direct and sustainable access from the wider area to the proposed new innovation community.
- 6.28 The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2019 confirms at paragraph 5.44 that the Council can demonstrate a 4.4 year housing supply for the period 2020-2025 (the period will be applied in planning decisions taken from 1 April 2020). The Council considers that the extent of the five year land supply shortfall is manageable and reversible. This application will help the Council improve on its 5 year housing supply position, which currently it cannot meet.

- 6.29 The proposals accord with BSC1 and BSC 2 in delivering windfall development and making efficient use of the land. Policy BSC3 will be met where the development proposes 30% affordable housing across the site.
- 6.30 In the countryside, Saved 1996 Local Plan Policies H6 and H18 apply to new dwellings in the countryside. H6 advises that in certain circumstances adjoining settlements land may be released for low cost housing schemes provided that the development is compatible with environmental policies in the plan.
- 6.31 The extant consent ref: 16/02586/OUT is a material consideration and the current proposal is to be seen in light of the rationale for approving built form in the countryside, as set out above for the employment element, The proposals reflect the built form of the approved scheme and the rationale applied reflects that previously acceptable. Since no material differences in form are proposed, we consider the residential proposals in the countryside are also in accordance with policy and material considerations.

A3 Café use

- 6.33 A small amount of retail and café space is also proposed here to support the B1 and C3 uses; this is in accordance with Saved Policy S28 which states that small shops to serve local needs will be considered favourably.
- 6.34 In concluding the principle of development, we find the proposals in accordance with the policies in the Local Plan and supported by material considerations at the site .

Highways and access

- 6.35 A Transport Assessment, prepared by Stantec, accompanies the application. The TA states that:

“The proximity of the Bicester P&R offering direct bus access to the knowledge economy jobs in Oxford, coupled with the vast range of leisure, retail, education facilities linked by excellent cycling and walking facilities in the centre of Bicester and the nearby Kingsmere and Bicester Village developments, to which can be added two railway stations with convenient links to London in particular, mean that the proposed development aims to provide community living where car use can be limited to weekend and occasional trips as most day-to-day residents needs can be accommodated on site or close by. The proposed café and the Hub at the heart of the proposed new community are therefore essential. Although it is expected that a significant element of the café’s trade will come from the rest of the development, the Hub will provide a series of managed facilities for the exclusive use of residents and staff working at the proposed offices, and as such would be ancillary to the main residential and office uses proposed.”

- 6.36 The proposed development will be accompanied by a set of transport measures aimed at promoting sustainable travel patterns to and from the development and addressing any impacts associated with the development.
- 6.37 The sustainable transport strategy for the site includes:

- Development of a Framework Travel Plan, including measures aimed at encouraging the use of sustainable modes of travel including a parking management strategy.
 - A Walking and Cycling Strategy, including the provision of improved shared walking and cycling facilities along the A41 connecting to the extensive existing networks; the provision of an Active Travel Hub supporting a culture of walking and cycling at the development; and suitable cycle parking provision.
 - A Vehicle Parking Strategy, accommodating the anticipated car parking demand at the development, taking into account the sustainable and community ethos of the proposals, managed through a permit-based system encouraging the adoption of a car-free lifestyle.
- 6.38 The TA demonstrates that the proposed development would not have an impact on the operation of the local and strategy road networks. The proposed new development would lead to significantly reduced trip generation when compared with the consented development on site and would not necessitate any of the highway mitigation schemes and financial contributions associated with the consented scheme.
- 6.39 The report concludes that the proposed new development would have a beneficial impact on the operation of the transport networks in Bicester when compared to the consented Bicester Gateway Phase 1b development. The concept for the proposed new development and its ethos are strongly anchored in the principle of sustainability, building on excellent accessibility by non-car modes.

Heritage and archaeology

- 6.40 The site is located in an area of archaeological interest north of the scheduled Roman Town of Alchester (SM 18). An archaeological evaluation supporting the extant scheme has identified a number of Roman deposits within the site.
- 6.41 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires an applicant to describe the significance of a heritage asset and assess the potential impact arising from development on it. Where a site has potential for archaeological interest, a desk based or field based assessment must be undertaken.
- 6.42 Policy ESD 16 guides development that may affect the historic environment. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design.
- 6.43 The current scheme seeks a similar footprint to the approved outline scheme, which steers development away from the identified archaeological deposits. The proposed mitigation plan is updated, and we include the previously approved documentation, as follows in support of the application:
- An Archaeological Summary Report prepared by Cotswold Archaeology. This brings together the evidence that justifies approval on the basis of an amended mitigation plan that follows the principles in the approved scheme;
 - The initial Heritage Statement (Appendix A to the Summary Report);
 - Geophysical survey Report (Appendix B to the Summary Report);
 - The Archaeological Evaluation Report (Appendix C to the Summary Report)

- The Design Brief from Oxford Archaeology in respect of the approved scheme (Appendix D to the Summary Report);
- amended mitigation plan to address the current scheme (which we anticipate could lead to condition to approve a written scheme of investigation (WSI) based on a slightly amended version of the WSI for the extant scheme).

6.44 The proposed evidence is in accordance with policy requirements and concludes in para 3.6 of the Archaeological Summary Note that:

In accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF the programme of archaeological work carried out in 2016 provides a sufficiently detailed understanding of the heritage and archaeological resource of the site, and of its significance, to inform the planning application. In summary, there are no overriding heritage constraints which would preclude development, and limited harm that would come from the loss of archaeological remains should be assessed in the planning balance against the public benefits. Furthermore, dialogue is on-going regarding opportunities for an appropriate scheme of mitigation.

Flood Risk Assessment

- 6.45 Policy ESD 7 guides development requiring sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- 6.46 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is at negligible risk of flooding. In order to maintain the current level of flood risk to the development and the surrounding area, the Surface Water Drainage Strategy proposes mitigation measures to control the site surface water drainage.
- 6.47 The approved outline scheme was supported by a Flood Risk Assessment - the findings of this are still applicable. A geotechnical site investigation will be required ahead of detailed design to confirm the site geology and provide information necessary for the foundations and the development.
- 6.48 The proposed mitigation measures will manage the residual flood risk to an acceptable level. Swales are proposed as flood storage. Safe egress and access routes are available to and from the development and to the local and wider highway networks. Downstream flood risk will not be increased as Sustainable Design Systems (SuDS) will intercept surface water flows at source.
- 6.49 We therefore find the proposals in accordance with policy guiding flood mitigation.

Ecology

- 6.50 Policy ESD10 guides development mitigation to protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.
- 6.51 The approved outline scheme was supported by a comprehensive ecological assessment, which detailed the ecological baseline for the site alongside a suite of appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. These measures, alongside the delivery of a financial contribution towards local biodiversity initiatives (secured through local agreement) were agreed as sufficient to enable a biodiversity net gain.

- 6.52 An Ecology Briefing Note (prepared by Ecology Solutions) accompanies the application. Ecology Solutions initially undertook a suite of ecological surveys at the application site in 2016 and 2017 (attached as appendices to the Briefing Note). An updated habitat walkover of the site was undertaken by the appointed consultant in October 2019 to reassess the habitats present on site. These surveys confirmed that the habitats within the application site remain broadly comparable.
- 6.53 The Briefing Note finds that, noting the similarity of the current proposal to the previously consented scheme (insofar as there is potential for impacts on biodiversity), it is considered that the previously approved mitigation and enhancement strategy for the site will be equally suitable in respect of the revised development proposals for the site. Notwithstanding this conclusion, a suite of additional biodiversity measures are proposed to secure further enhancements for the site, with these specifically targeted to locally identified species of conservation significance (in liaison with local ecology groups).
- 6.54 We therefore find the proposals in accordance with policy guiding ecology mitigation.

Energy

- 6.55 Policies ESD1 and ESD2 guide development proposals to mitigate and adapt to climate change, accord with the energy hierarchy.
- 6.56 An Energy Statement accompanies the application. The statement summarises and highlights the potential sustainable design measures for the reduction of CO2 emissions and energy demand for the proposal. It states that a more detailed analysis should be undertaken during the detailed design stages with particular consideration relating to the technical feasibility of including and installing LZC systems.
- 6.57 We therefore find the proposals in accordance with policy guiding energy mitigation.

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment/ Trees

- 6.58 Policy ESD 10 sets out protection for the natural environment.
- 6.59 An updated LVIA/Tree report is submitted with the application. This finds that the landscape effects associated with the proposed development remain unchanged in terms of substance and amount. A small length of hedgerow will need to be removed in order to facilitate improved pedestrian and cycle network access. Three trees will also need to be felled within the same section in order to facilitate the access route. The trees are of intermediate landscape value and live under severe threat of disease. It is predicted that replacement trees in the adjacent hedgerow will have improved form and character, disease resistance and suitability over the self-set trees to be removed.
- 6.60 In terms of visual impact, the report finds that the revised proposals are very similar to the previously consented scheme in terms of visual effects exerted upon the surrounding landscape. However, the effects upon the external views adjacent to and very near the site, as well as those within the interior of the site are markedly improved.

- 6.61 The use of stainless steel climbing frames and wires will soften the external faces of the buildings and increase the appearance of green space and naturalness. The green walls will provide a natural backdrop to the tree avenues, and together the avenue and green wall features create an internal landscape that is dominated by natural elements rather than being limited by the rigid spaces between sheer building faces.
- 6.62 The outside spaces around the buildings are much more useable and inviting than around the building exteriors of the previous scheme. The revised scheme continues to provide for an impressive entrance avenue of trees on either side of Vendee Drive.
- 6.63 We therefore find the proposals in accordance with policy guiding landscape impact mitigation and trees.

PROW

- 6.64 A public right of way exists across the site. The principle of relocating at the site has been accepted under the extant scheme. The application is supported by a PROW statement.
- 6.65 Since the application will address layout at Reserved Matters stages, the principle of the relocation of a PROW has been accepted and detail will be open for the council to determine at a future date.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 6.66 Bloombridge LLP first started promoting a scheme for development here in 2013, at which time the idea was to develop a large business park. The pre-master plan and pre-application community engagement exercise for the proposed development on the Phase 1B site was undertaken directly by Richard Cutler, a Chartered Surveyor and Chartered Town Planner, one of two Founding Partners of Bloombridge LLP and a shareholder in Bicester Gateway Ltd.
- 6.67 During the course of the period, extensive consultation has been undertaken and includes engaging with the following stakeholders:
- Oxford County Council – a formal pre-app on transportation, plus two further meetings;
 - Cherwell District Council – informal meetings and discussions on the proposed ‘innovation community’ concept and on policy matters in January 2020;
 - Attendance at the Bill Grimsey Workshop on Bicester town centre on 25 June 2019;
 - Cherwell’s Economic Development Officer – emails, culminating in a telephone call on 12 July 2019 centred on an initial draft of the Ramidus Report;
 - Oxfordshire Growth Board – informal briefing on the potential of ‘innovation communities’, including a review of the analysis in the Ramidus Report, May and December 2019;
 - OXLEP – meeting set for 6 February 2020;
 - A meeting with Albion Land, promoters of the adjoining Phase 2, on 5 June 2019;
 - Meetings with Bicester Village on 19 September and 14 November 2019.

6.68 Chesterton Parish Council has been a key stakeholder and seven separate meetings have been held with them (as reported in the SCI). Meetings have also been held with neighbouring Wendlebury Parish Council. The key points raised by these parish level meetings include:

- The principle of development being established by the extant planning permission;
- Acceptance that the extant permission addresses the main technical constraints, but a desire for traffic impact not to be increased;
- Support for public transport, cycleway and footpath improvements;
- Concern about ‘rat running’ through Wendlebury village;
- Concern about the recent accident at the A41 roundabout;
- Interest in new housing, especially addressing young person, small scale and affordable needs. Better at Bicester Gateway than impacting directly on the villages;
- A preference for a master plan that emphasizes landscaping and green public realm rather than car parking areas for commercial uses.

6.69 Additional Bicester stakeholders contacted and channels utilised include:

- Membership of the Bicester Town Centre Task Group;
- Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership (OYAP);
- Bicester Motion, motor sports resort;
- Bicester Golf Club & Spa;
- Coles Books Oxfordshire;
- Banbury Ornithological Society,
- And others.

6.70 The community involvement efforts since 2013 have proved an invaluable contribution to the design-evolution exercise. Very careful attention has been paid to the comments received. The myriad consultations have proved helpful in demystifying the development proposals, providing reassurance on design quality and mix, and in helping the scheme to evolve to something that feels grounded in what local people want and need. The SCI reports a good level of acceptance that the extant permission addressed the key technical issues, such as ecology, heritage, landscape and visual impact, flood risk and transportation, providing encouragement for the current application.

Planning obligations

6.71 The outline application scheme proposes to meet the requirements for planning obligations where it will replicate those relevant from the extant scheme, and in accordance with the NPPG. Those items relevant from the extant consent ref: 16/02586/OUT are:

- A strategic transport contribution;
- A travel plan contribution;
- Ecological contribution.

- 6.72 Affordable housing will be provided in accordance with the approach set out in para 6.29 above.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The development proposed at Bicester Gateway is an 'Innovation Community' which seeks to catalyse knowledge economy employment in South Bicester. The proposal seeks to create a co-working/co-living hub that supports modern lifestyles and has the ability to attract people ('inward innovators') to the area.

- 7.2 The application site benefits from an extant outline scheme for new B1 employment development (ref: 16/02586/OUT). However, a persistent weak office market in Bicester means that the scheme is emerging as unviable. Market evidence prepared by VSL supporting the application shows historic take-up of office space in and around Bicester has been low. Other towns in the Oxfordshire remain the destination for the majority of employers. The current proposal seeks to acknowledge the change in working practices and deliver development that will attract skilled and valuable employees.

- 7.3 The proposed employment use is consistent with the policy allocation for the site (Policy Bicester 10) and the limited other uses of residential and café (Class A3) support the employment function. The proposed employment development outside the allocation accords with the previously approved built form which was found to be compliant with policy and material considerations (ref: 16/02586/OUT). The proposed housing development on the part of the site which is outside of the allocation accords with the requirements of the Framework to boost housing supply and to look favourably on windfall housing sites. The residential use will support the employment use and an employment and amenities 'hub' will link the two. The vision is to create a legible mixed-use space that will be occupied by a dynamic community.

- 7.4 The proposed scheme offers an exciting opportunity to catalyse knowledge economy employment at Bicester Gateway and help to realise the policy intention of Bicester Policy 10. The proposals are extremely well supported by existing and emerging infrastructure, including Bicester Park and Ride 400m from the site, national rail services from Oxford and London, University of Oxford, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. It will provide an affordable housing solution for young people that find themselves priced out of Oxford and Bicester housing markets. The proposals aim to contribute to a critical mass that has the potential to revamp the 'brand' of Bicester from a modest former industrial/military market town to a vibrant, forward looking and innovative location in which to live, work and socialise.

- 7.5 The proposed scheme presents indicative layouts and massing that are based on the approved outline scheme. In this way, the current proposals seek to preserve the visual impact on the surrounding landscape and ensure that biodiversity, heritage and other key matters remain acceptable, as per the extant outline consent. The likely impacts have been assessed and are demonstrated in this planning statement, supporting documents and drawings as equivalent to those approved.

- 7.6 The proposed scheme is demonstrated within this submission to meet planning policy and material considerations in accordance with 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.