



**BICESTER GATEWAY, PHASE 1B,
INNOVATION COMMUNITY**

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

ON BEHALF OF:

BLOOMBRIDGE LLP

PREPARED BY:

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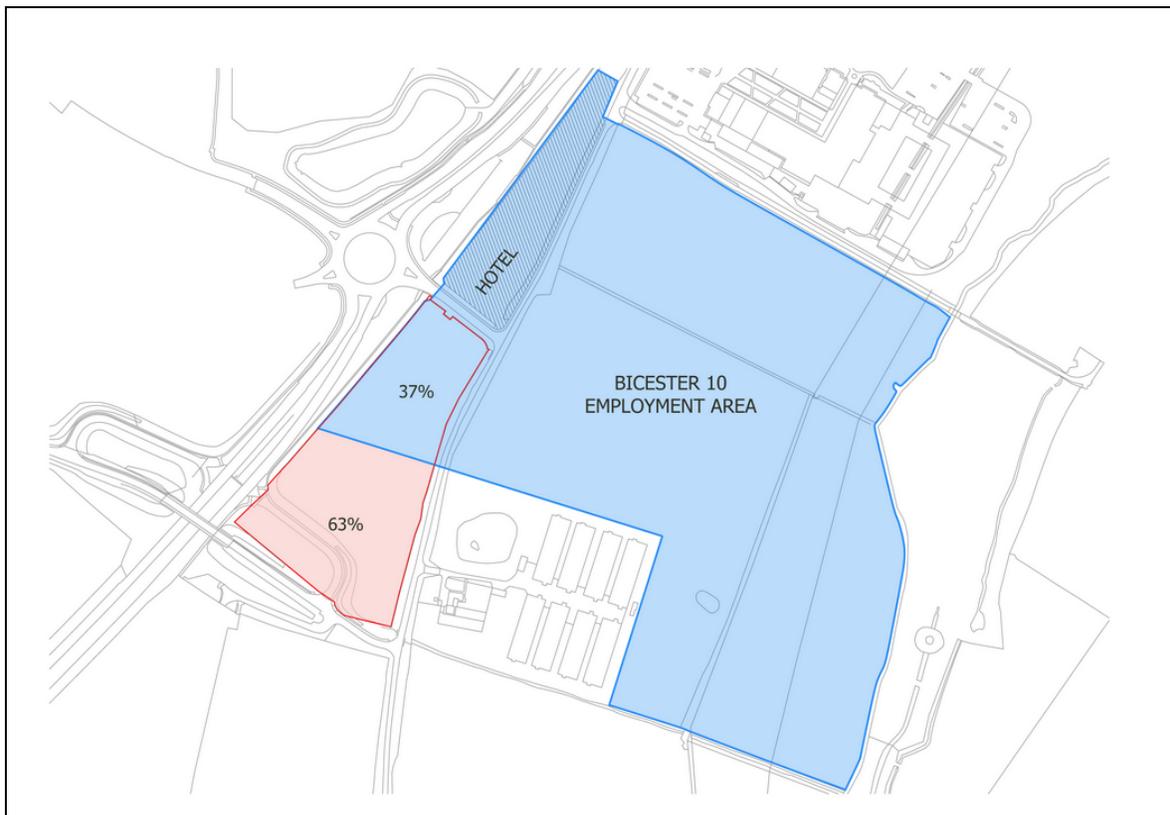
16 January 2020

Final Version

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The proposed development comprises an 'innovation community' on Phase 1B of Bicester Gateway, being frontage land facing on to the A41, opposite the 580 space Park & Ride, south of the new Holiday Inn Express (Phase 1A). This is proposed as part of the knowledge economy infrastructure for Bicester and, therefore, part of the strategy to help the town attract high value add employment, linking to the larger business park proposals at Bicester Gateway (Phase 2, Albion) and Bicester Office Park.

Bloombridge LLP first started promoting a scheme for development here in 2013, at which time the idea was to develop a large business park. This was allocated as Bicester Gateway 10 in the Cherwell Local Plan (2016), with the land to the west of the Wendlebury Road (comprising Phase 1) being consented in July 2017. Phase 2, to the east of Wendlebury Road, was subject to a 'no build' covenant in favour of the (now closed) Lakeside Chicken Farm – Bloombridge were unable to agree commercial terms for resolving this covenant so Faccenda, the owner of the chicken farm, is now promoting this land directly via their development partner, Albion. Phase 2 is subject to an extant planning application.



The blue shading in the plan above shows the area allocated for employment by Policy Bicester 10 and the redline represents the planning application area for Phase 1B, extended with this application to include the slip road and highway land owned by the applicant, Bicester Gateway Ltd.

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. Engagement started through discussions with Chesterton Parish Council and, as per the 2017 application for Phase 1, the adjoining parish of Wendlebury.

We have held (or scheduled) the following parish level briefings with Chesterton:

- 15 September 2017
- 19 February 2018
- 27 September 2018
- 24 January 2019
- 25 March 2019
- 29 August 2019
- 27 January (a pre-submission briefing)

We had an informal meeting with representatives of Wendlebury Parish Council on 25 March 2019. We have also made requests to brief Bicester Town Council and we hope to do so in the next few weeks.

The key points raised at these parish level meetings comprise:

- 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.

At the local level, we have also had contact with the Banbury Ornithological Society relating to the construction of the Holiday Inn Express on Phase 1A and the discharge of the biodiversity conditions and s106 on Phase 1B in order to deliver a net gain. We have also had contact from Bicester BUG (Bike Users Group) with a request for dialogue on how best to manage active travel.

In terms of the District Council, we held an early, informal meeting with senior officers at Cherwell in June 2019 to explain our proposed 'innovation community' concept, including by reference to a draft of the Ramidus Report. The main output from this meeting was that we should attend the Bill Grimsey Workshop on Bicester town centre on 25 June 2019, which we found both inspiring and informative. We subsequently joined the Bicester Town Centre Task Group to help take forward the outputs from the Grimsey Workshop. This structure has been invaluable in helping us meet a wide range of local stakeholders, including OYAP, Bicester Village, Bicester Motion, the Golf Club & Spa, and Coles Books.

Other key stakeholders consulted include:

1. Oxford County Council – a formal pre-app on transportation, plus two further meetings.
2. Cherwell District Council – an informal discussion on policy matters in January 2020.
3. Cherwell’s Economic Development Officer – emails, culminating in a telephone call on 12 July 2019 centred on an initial draft of the Ramidus Report.
4. 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.
5. OXLEP – meeting set for 6 February 2020.
6. A meeting with Albion Land, promoters of the adjoining Phase 2, on 5 June 2019.
7. Meetings with Bicester Village on 19 September and 14 November 2019.

The main point of discussion with these stakeholders was the economy. There was interest in, and general support for, the ‘innovation community’. Above all, there was a strong desire to attract the knowledge economy to Bicester from Oxford and elsewhere in Oxfordshire in order to create a ‘step change’ in the economic potential of the town. It was undisputed that the annual take-up of B1 space in the town is very low and that something needs to change.

CONCLUSION

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. We also feel that the parish level consultations were 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. There was also a good level of acceptance that the extant permission addressed the key technical issues, such as ecology, heritage, landscape and visual impact, floor risk and transportation.

Further Information

For further information on this Statement of Community Involvement, please contact the applicant:

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