

Planning Application Comments

Planning Application Number: 20/00293/OUT

Drawing Number(s): CGI Figure 21 within Design & Access Statement

Site Name: Bicester Gateway (Phase 1B)

Planning Officer: Caroline Ford

Date of Comments: 10.3.20

Comments by: Natalie Harvey

The proposal for this 3.15ha site is for a hybrid scheme of commercial and residential land uses, envisioned as a co-working/co-living community. Plans include a mix of B1 open market office space, amenity and ancillary space, residential units and car parking.

In accordance with Policy BSC 3 in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031, all proposed developments in Bicester that include 11 or more dwellings will be expected to provide at least 30% of new housing as affordable homes.

This Planning Application proposes 273 units; the total number of affordable units, calculated at 30% is therefore 82. Qualifying developments are expected to provide 70% of the affordable housing as affordable/social rented dwellings and 30% as shared ownership.

It is expected that the affordable housing element will address identified housing needs and reflect a proportion of property types and sizes. However, this scheme is for a fully flatted development and therefore does not offer a mix of housing that we normally require. For instance, on sites of 50 or more units, we normally expect 10% of the affordable rented units to be bungalows, built to the wheelchair user housing standard Approved Document Part M4 (3)(2)(b) which is not possible on this development.

Most households on our housing register with a 2-bed need are families with children and a lack of private outdoor space for children generally makes flats inappropriate. On this site, albeit there is some outdoor space, there is neither a LEAP or LAP, which makes this development even more unsuitable for younger children.

In order to be able to support this development we need additional information/assurance as set out in the comments below and reserve the right to make further comments when this information is received.

1. Significant numbers of one type of dwelling on a single scheme are very unusual in Cherwell and generally not attractive for Registered Providers (RP's); it therefore may be problematic finding a willing partner to take these on. The Registered Provider needs to be agreed with the Council

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and we would need to ascertain the level of interest from our partners very early on to be reassured that an RP was prepared to accept these units.

2. Affordable units would normally be distributed evenly across a site, with clusters of no more than 15 dwellings, of which no more than 10 of the dwellings are rented. This would not be possible with this scheme. Blocks are also likely to be mixed, with market sale and affordable housing combined. An RP would find it challenging to manage their units in this type of situation and we need information regarding the proposed occupancy arrangements before committing further.
3. The development is aimed at younger entrepreneurs and knowledge-economy workers yet qualifying affordable housing tenants are unlikely to fit this profile. As the perimeter of the site is bounded by roads on all sides, we would need to have reassurance that facilities such as schools and shops were easily accessible for residents, and that parking space numbers are adequate.
4. To accept flats on a scheme with so much ancillary space, lifts etc. we also need to have a sound idea of the predicted level of service charges, as this could significantly impact affordability, especially for social rent tenants.

For information, in terms of space, affordable dwellings must comply with the DCLG Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard. We expect at least 50% of affordable/social rented dwellings to meet Approved Document Part M4(2)(2).