

From: Christina Cherry
Sent: 26 May 2020 11:17
To: Caroline Ford
Cc: Chris Thom Heather Seale
Subject: 20/00293/OUT – Bicester Gateway Business Park

Caroline

I refer to your re consultation dated 5 May 2020 on proposed amendments to the above application.

In particular I have considered the comments made in the Maddox Planning letter dated 30 April 2020.

By way of background, the adopted Cherwell Local Plan, which is less than five years old, identifies significant areas of both housing and employment land to meet the needs of the town up to 2031. A key objective of this spatial strategy is to achieve a greater balance between homes and jobs at Bicester to significantly reduce out commuting from the town. Moreover, one of the key economic challenges was to make Bicester more attractive to new businesses, particularly knowledge -based and high-technology companies.

It is also noted that the extant planning permissions (approved 2017) on the application site and the applications on adjoining land are primarily for B1 uses in accordance with the Local Plan strategy.

As set out in my original response to this application the proposals need to be primarily considered against the requirements of Policy SLE 1 and Policy Bicester 10 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.

Policy Bicester 10 seeks to create approximately 3,500 jobs across the whole site which is identified for B1 Business uses: high tech knowledge industries.

Policy SLE 1 states 'Employment development on new sites allocated in this Plan will be the type of employment development specified within each site Policy Other types of employment development (B Use class) will be considered in conjunction with the use(s) set out if it makes the site viable.'

The application has provided detailed information on the lack of demand for office development (B1a) but there has been no detailed information provided for other B uses, including that within B1 (the reference to DAF excepted). For example, R&D and hi-tech light industrial processes/manufacturing could fit the employment uses set out in Policy Bicester 10. Current applications for these uses in the immediate locality would seem to indicate that there is at least some market demand.

This information is required to assess whether the proposals are in accordance with the development plan.

Any residential development within the Bicester 10 allocation would be a departure from the development plan.

Paragraph B.48 of the adopted Plan states that Policy SLE 1 applies to sites which have planning permission for employment uses. The requirements of this policy are therefore applicable to that

part of the application site outside the Bicester 10 allocation which has an extant permission for employment use.

Policy SLE 1 states *that existing employment sites should be retained unless:*

- *The applicant can demonstrate that an employment use should not be retained, including showing the site has been marketed and has been vacant in the long term.*
- *The applicant can demonstrate that there are valid reasons why the use of the site for the existing or another employment use is not economically viable.*
- *The applicant can demonstrate that the proposal would not have the effect of limiting the amount of land available for employment.*

There is provision in the Plan to consider other uses on employment sites, but this is only when they have remained undeveloped in the long-term and there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for that purpose. However, as stated above the Local Plan is up to date, and the application as currently submitted lacks substantive evidence that employment uses (other than offices) would be unviable and inappropriate.

Policy SLE 1 does however, state that regard will be had to whether the applicant can demonstrate that there are other planning objectives that would outweigh the value of retaining the site in an employment use and it is noted that the applicant provides further information to show the benefits of an innovation community and it will be important to consider these benefits.

If it is considered that the merits of creating an innovation community in this location outweighs other policy considerations, a limited element of residential development maybe acceptable but concerns are still raised regarding the practicalities of controlling the future occupiers of the proposed dwellings to the target sectors. Safeguards will also need to be in place to avoid a situation where the residential element of the scheme is delivered without the associated employment. Without these safeguards, arguments for an exception to the adopted Local Plan policies may be undermined.

Christina Cherry
Acting Principal Planning Policy Officer
Planning Policy, Conservation and Design
Place and Growth Directorate
Cherwell District Council