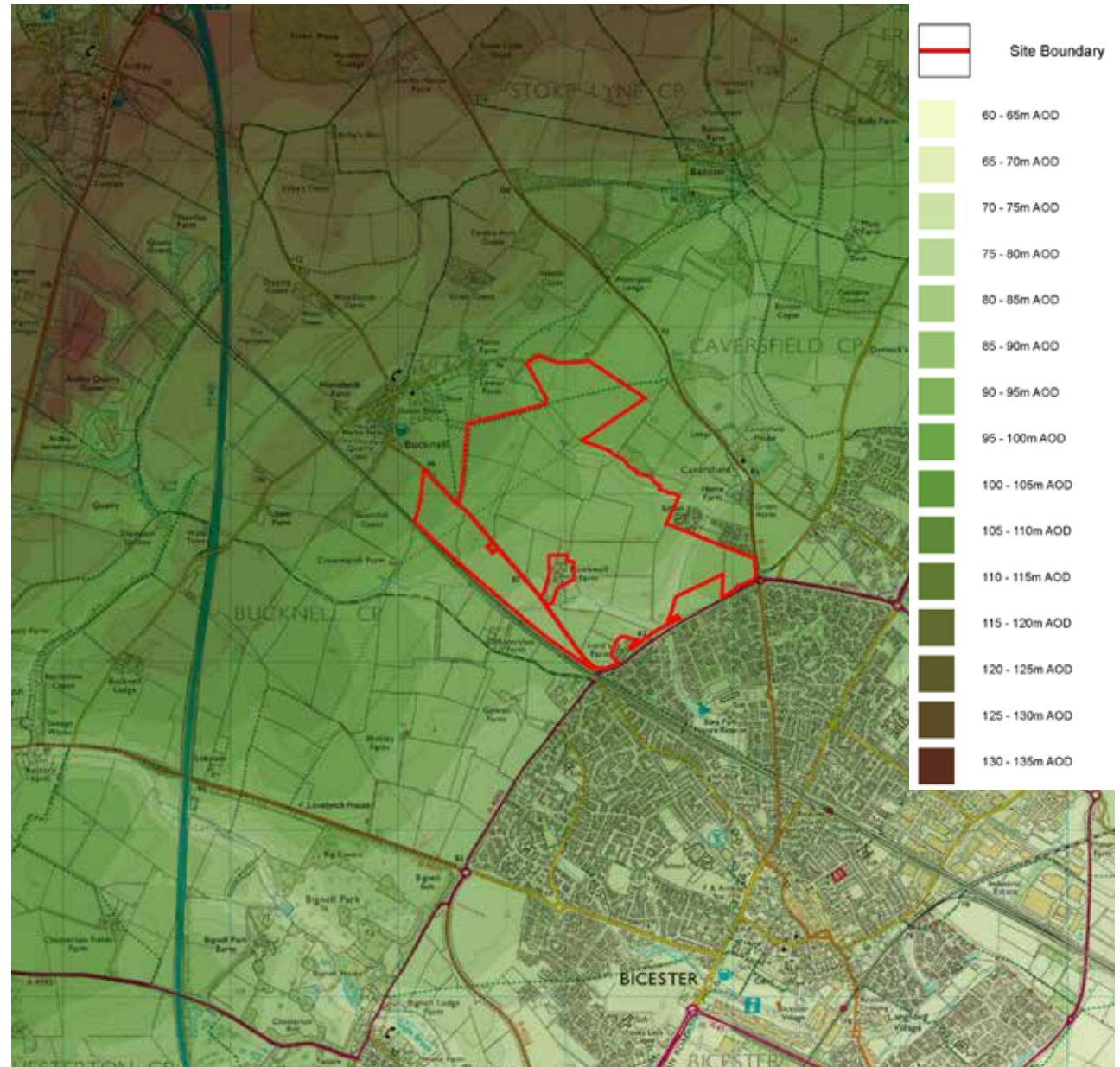


SURROUNDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Ardley Cutting and Quarries SSSI lies 400m to the west of the Site. This is linear in form extending along the railway line. There are no direct public rights of way from the Site to the SSSI, although a public right of way extends from Bucknell alongside part of the designation and crosses through it at Ardley Wood.

Bure Park Local Nature Reserve lies to the east of the Site. A path extends from the eastern side of the A4095 opposite the south-eastern corner of the Site, to join the LNR. A further public right of way extends from the A4095 north of this, passing through the existing housing and into the LNR.

There are several play areas and a playing field in the housing estate to the south of the A4095. The new development of Elmsbrook also has play parks.



Topography plan (FPCR)

HISTORIC CONTEXT

THE EVOLUTION OF SURROUNDING AREA

The settlements that formed, what is known today as Bicester, historically followed a pattern of moving up hill out of the river flood plains to higher ground. The town over time has made a shift to the North West of its historic centre. It is a continuation of this natural progression that sets out the concept for NW Bicester.

The Romans built the first settlement which lies south of Bicester, as it is located today. The fort of 'Alchester' was on the confluence of the Gaggle Brook and the Bure stream; at a Roman crossroads near to 'Graven Hill', a rare high point in the flat landscape. When Roman 'Alchester' fell into disrepair, around 400AD; the Saxons moved the settlement up hill, out of the flood plains and the second fort of 'Bernecestre' grew on the border between Mercia and Wessex in a strategic location near to the Roman roads, using Graven Hill as a vantage point for military defence. 'Bernecestre' thrived for 600 years and was destroyed by a Viking raid in 912AD.

The 11th century settlement again moved up hill, growing around two medieval manor houses, which form the core of today's historic town centre. The two manors of Kings End and Market End grew on the opposite banks of the Bure stream and were supported by 200 tenant farmers who farmed the burgage plots around the Manor houses. As the success of these manors grew and farming began to prosper, 'the Causeway' was built between the two manors bridging the Bure stream. Land to the

North was used for agriculture with market fields next to the streams for irrigation and fertile ground.

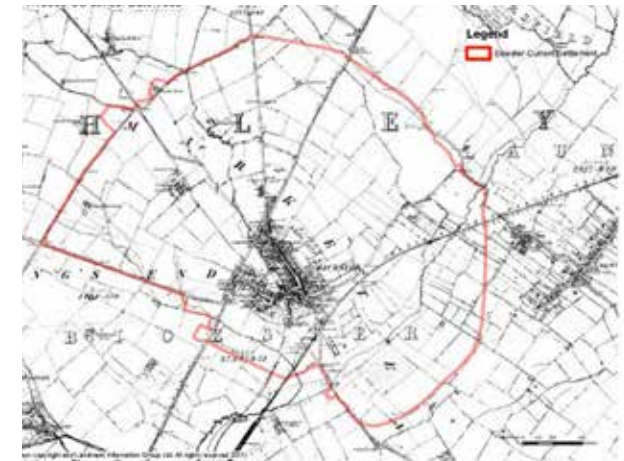
The town grew northwards, with settlements forming around the Bure tributaries and around natural springs that fed water towers which supported the rail network. Streams now provide the corridors for green infrastructure in Bicester, providing opportunities for recreation and natural habitats. Kings End and Market End were granted market charters in 1377 and 1406; substantial houses were built along 'the Causeway' and Sheep Street was built to bring sheep to the Market square. Sheep Street provided a route for sheep and agricultural products to be transported from the fields in the north of Market End. These medieval routes still form the street patterns of Bicester today.

Following the field enclosure act in the 1800's, ownership boundaries shifted and Kings Inn Farm and a later quarry, diverted the top of Sheep Street - two parallel lanes became one lane which extended to Bucknell.

Bicester remained as an historic market core surrounded by farms and small manors until the late 18th century when it gradually began to expand its centre with large footprint uses growing to the North West of the town centre core - with a school and the workhouse. This lopsided growth was further confined by the introduction of the railways in 1830 and 1906 with more accessible

land becoming available for development to the North West of the town centre.

Bicester, since Roman times has had an association with the military. During WW1, the RAF opened an airfield in Caversfield as a training base, this grew in importance in WW2 and was supported by the Ministry of Defence's largest ordnance depot, to the south of the town. The influx of military personnel in the town, and of evacuees from London during the war saw the need for housing increase and the town grew toward the current ring road with new housing estates from the 1960's.



Historical Map of Bicester 1885 (taken from NW Bicester SPD)

HERITAGE

A 2014 archaeological evaluation involved the excavation of a large number of trenches across the NW Bicester site. Of the 529 trenches, 130 contained features of archaeological origin, including 26 that had only furrows or modern features. Of those 130 trenches containing features of archaeological origin, 44 were located within the current application site. An updated Heritage Impact Assessment by Orion has been submitted as part of this application.

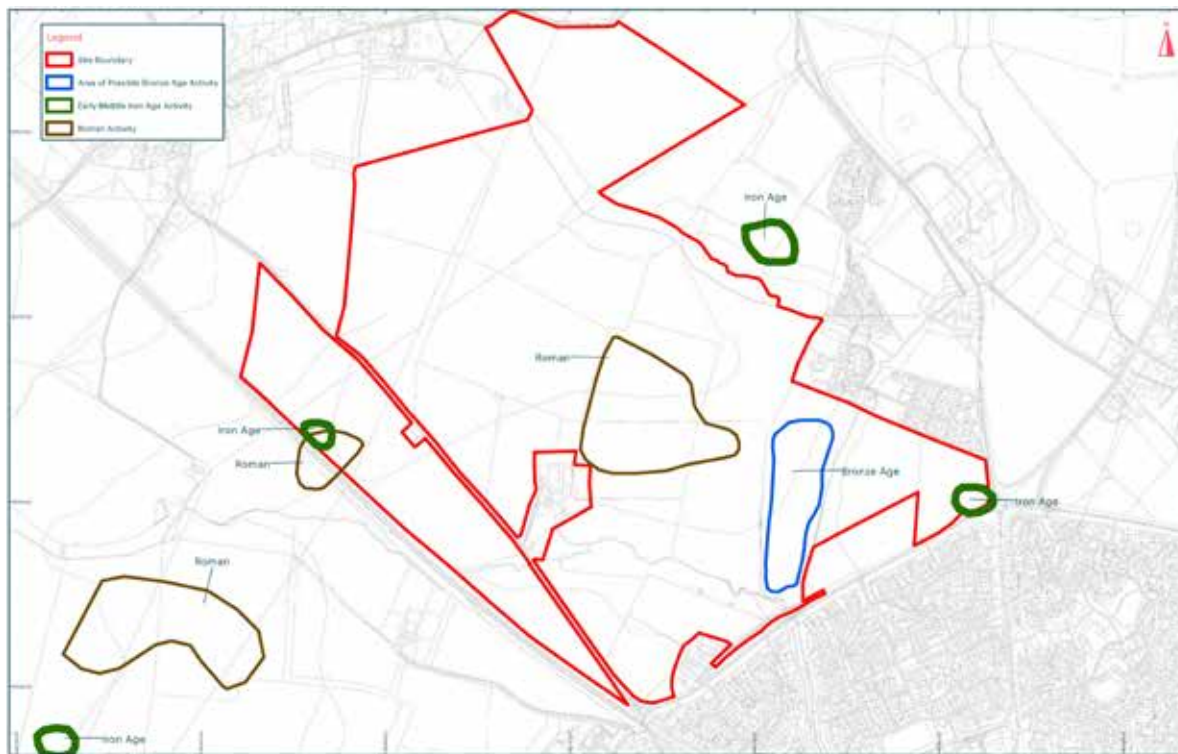
This concludes that within the application site, one main area and one subsidiary area of Roman activity were recorded, as were two small, dispersed areas of early to middle Iron Age activity and one area of potential Bronze Age activity. Furrows were present in a number of the evaluation trenches, which suggests that much of the study site was under arable cultivation during the medieval period and later.

No evidence of medieval or later settlement was recorded within the study site, aside from the extant farmhouses Hawkwell Farm and Lord's Farm, which are excluded from the proposed development. A review of readily available historic mapping indicates that the study site has been enclosed agricultural land since the late 19th century, containing no building stock.

Within the village of Bucknell, to the north, there are fourteen listed buildings/structures which includes the Grade I Church of St Peter and the Grade II listed, Trigger Pond Public House, and Bucknell Manor House. To the east, beyond development at Elmsbrook there is a Grade II Listed building at Home Farmhouse, and the Grade II* listing of the Church of Saint Laurence.

Middleton Grade II Registered Park & Garden lies some distance, approximately 3km at its closest point to the southwest of the site. As a consequence of distance and the screening effects of the railway embankment and hedges and trees within the intervening landscape there is no relationship between the site and the Registered Park & Garden.

The site is not covered by any Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings.



Areas of archaeological activity (Orion Heritage)

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL CONTEXT

NATIONAL CHARACTER

The wider landscape around Bicester is covered by three National Character Areas. The site and the landscape to the north lies in, and on the very edge of, the Cotswolds NCA with Bicester. The landscape to the south which encompasses Bicester is located within The Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA, whilst the wider landscape to the east lies within the Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands. The key characteristics of the Cotswolds NCA are:

- Defined by its underlying geology: a dramatic limestone scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with steep combes, and outliers illustrating the slow erosion of escarpments. The limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Open and expansive scarp and high wold dipping gently to the southeast, dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while permanent pasture prevails on the steep slopes of the scarp and river valleys with pockets of internationally important limestone grassland.
- Drystone walls define the pattern of fields of the high wold and dip slope. On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.

- Ancient beech hangers line stretches of the upper slopes of the scarp, while oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- Large areas of common land, important for unimproved calcareous grassland, are characteristic of the scarp and high wold around the Stroud valleys and along the crest of the scarp to Cleeve Hill.
- The majority of the principal rivers flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames with the exception of rivers in the west which flow into the River Avon and then the Severn Estuary.



- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts, Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.

- Locally quarried limestone brings harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned. Bath stone is also famous and has been used for building since Roman times, both locally in the principal buildings and streets of Bath and more widely, for example for Buckingham Palace in London. Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes feature on the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Lawrence Johnston's garden at Hidcote, and Heather Muir's garden at Kiftsgate, parkland at Stanway, Chastleton and Blenheim Palace.



- Prominent natural and built features in the landscape include the City of Bath World Heritage Site (WHS), Brailes Hill, Broadway Tower, Cleeve Hill, the Tyndale monument, Freezing Hill, Kelston Round Hill and Blenheim Palace WHS.

LOCAL CHARACTER - COUNTY

Landscape Character is assessed at County level by the Oxfordshire Wildlife Landscape Study (2004). Whilst now dated, it continues to provide a background on landscape character in addition to biodiversity.

The site is located within the large Woodlands Estate lands landscape type and the sub area of the Middleton Stoney Local Landscape Character Area. The Study, when examining landscape character, comes to the following conclusions:

“The area is dominated by large arable fields and localised improved grassland. There are smaller grass fields around villages, particularly Bletchington and Kirtlington. Woodland is a strong landscape element, and large woodland blocks are associated with the parklands and estates. It is mainly ancient semi-natural woodland, with species such as ash, oak, hazel, and field maple, as well as mixed plantations. Throughout the landscape, there are belts of young mixed and coniferous plantations next to roadside hedges and they often function as field boundaries. Hedgerow trees such as ash, sycamore and occasionally oak are found in some roadside hedges, but they are sparser to the north where there is more intensive arable cropping. In parts there are dense corridors of willow and ash, belts of semi-natural woodland and poplar plantations bordering watercourses. Hedgerows vary from tall, thick species-rich hedges with shrubs such as wayfaring tree, dogwood, hazel, field maple, spindle and wild privet through to low, gappy internal field hedges. Parklands are a prominent feature throughout and they include Middleton, Bignell and Tusmore Parks in the north and Kirtlington and Bletchington Parks in the south”

SITE CHARACTER

The site comprises primarily arable farmland with associated field margins, and a number of fields of species poor semi-improved and improved grassland which have been subject to grazing or silage production. Other habitats include hedgerows, tree cover and areas of dense and scattered scrub. Farm buildings at Hawkwell Farm and Lord’s Farm lie within the context of the site.

The site’s fields are regular in their form and are sub-divided by hedgerows of varying quality and structure, together with field ditches. There are two narrow watercourses that flow through the site connecting with the River Bure that lies to the south within Bicester.

The site contains woodland belts and tree groups, such as along the A4095, the railway line which borders the site to the west and along the site’s watercourses. There are also a number of mature trees that mostly located within the site’s hedgerows. The majority of the trees are moderate to low quality, although there are five grade A trees.

A Public Footpath skirts the western edge of the site, and this provides a connection between the Bucknell Road- Bicester Road and the B4100.

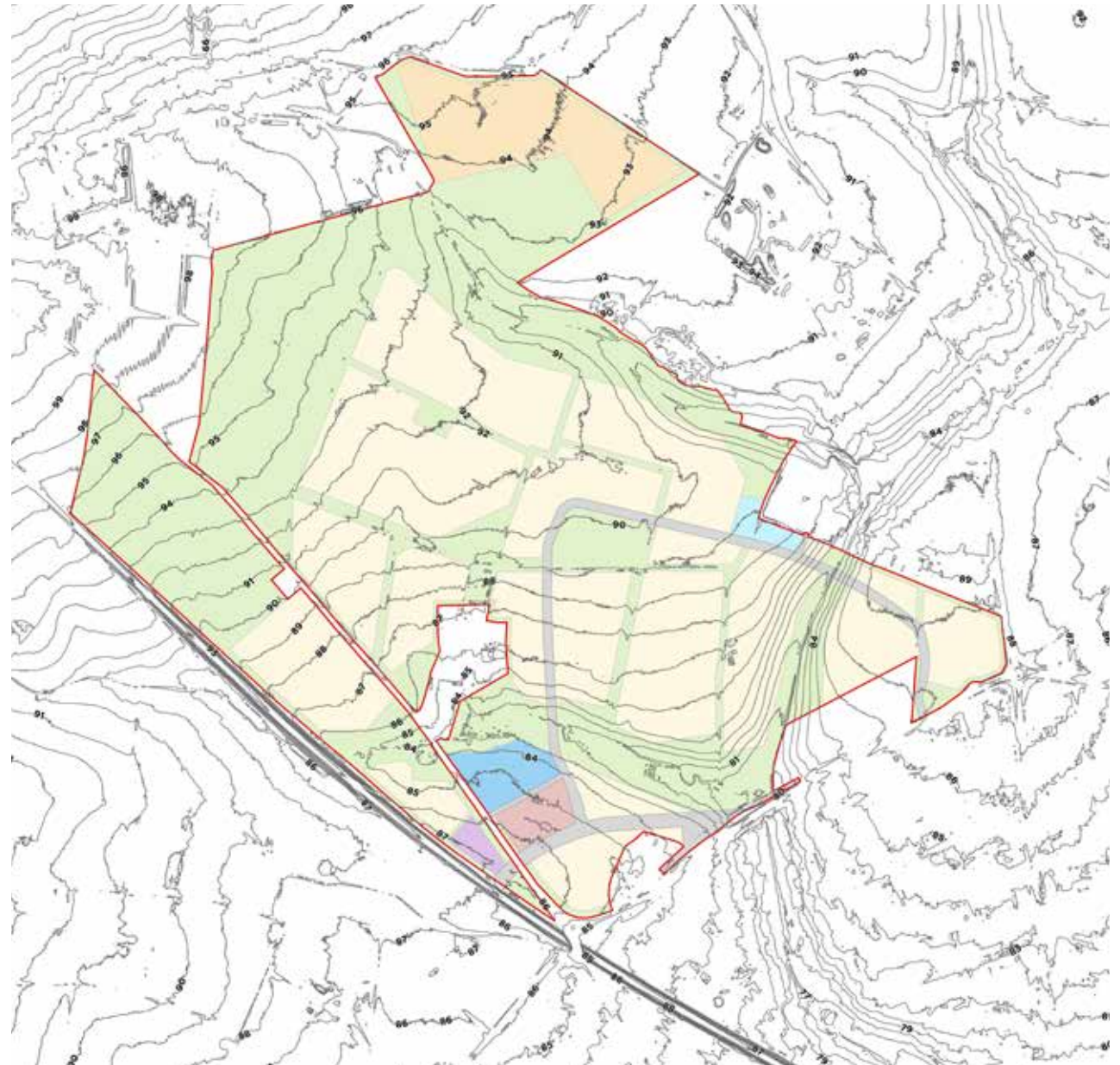


LANDFORM

The surrounding landscape is shaped by the River Bure, whilst within the site the topography is defined by the two watercourses. The site and the local landscape is comparatively flat, in character with the local landform, gently falling from west to east towards Bicester. The site's landform ranges from 98m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 80m AOD on its eastern point.



River Bure



Site Topography

LANDSCAPE VALUE

The site and immediate area is not a designated landscape, and it has no pronounced sense of scenic quality, tranquility, and distinctiveness such that it sets it apart.

The site, itself, is not subject to any cultural or ecological designation, comprises fairly common place arable fields, and has very limited recreational value. Indeed, the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Appraisals concluded that the Site was “relatively generic in its composition” with arable farmland, hedgerow boundaries, scattered farmsteads and field drainage ditches.

The site and the local area are in a moderate landscape condition. The natural habitats of the watercourses, site's hedgerows and trees are of local landscape and ecological value, although hedges and trees vary in quality. The site's landscape character is influenced by the modern built edge of Bicester to the south and at Elmsbrook to the north. Additional on-going and consented developments in this landscape as part of the North-West Bicester allocation will create further urbanising influences on this landscape. The site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium landscape value.

VISUAL AMENITY

The mature trees and established well-defined hedgerows along the roadside boundaries prevent, obscure and filter views into the site. As an example, mature vegetation along the A4095 more or less acts a visual screen between the site and the edge of Bicester. A tall, established hedgerow runs along the site's western boundary which follows the lines of the Public Footpath that creates a strong boundary feature, and combined with mature trees and pockets of woodland in and around Bucknell prevents views of the site from the wider landscape to the north. The embanked and well-vegetated railway corridor that forms the western most boundary, contains the site from the wider landscape to the southwest.

To the east, visibility of the site from the wider landscape is prevented by the screening effects of the built form of Elmsbrook, which borders the site, such that there are no clear views from the landscape to the east within the vicinity of Caversfield.

The majority of viewers of the site are users of the roads located on the site boundaries. These viewers receive intermittent sequential views through hedgerow vegetation and field gates over the arable land. The railway line enables elevated views from the route as it passes through the centre of the site with most of the site area visible.

Views of the site from sensitive visual receptors are broadly limited to those within the immediate vicinity of the site, this being residents directly adjacent, such as those at and close to Hawkwell Farm and Lord's Farm, residents on the edge of Elmsbrook, and to a much lesser degree those in Bicester (along the A4095) where there are glimpsed views through the roadside vegetation. The Public Footpath that runs along the site's western edge provides users with localised views of the site, together with filtered views of buildings at Elmsbrook.

Views of the site from Bucknell are prevented by mature vegetation around the village and by mature established hedgerows within the immediate landscape, which combine to provide a strong sense of separation between Bucknell and the Site.



Hawkwell Farm

ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

SURVEYS

To establish the biodiversity value of the site and assess potential effects from the proposed development, a suite of ecological surveys have been undertaken following best practice guidance.

These surveys include:

- Desk Study
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- GCN Survey
- Badger Survey
- Bat Survey including activity and tree roost assessment
- Breeding Bird Survey
- Wintering Bird Survey
- Reptile Survey

DESIGNATED SITES

No international level statutory designations (SPA/SAC/RAMSAR) are within 5km of the site. Four statutory designated sites are within 2km of the site. These include the Ardley Cutting and Quarries SSSI (400m west), Ardley Trackways (1670m west), Stratton Audley Quarries (2km east) and the Local Nature Reserve Bure Park (to the immediate east of the A4095). Three non-statutory designated sites, comprising the Bicester Airfield Local Wildlife Site (1km east); Skimmingdish Lane Balancing Pond a Cherwell District Wildlife Sites (CDWS) and a proposed CDWS at Skimmingdish Lane Balancing Pond (East) (965m east). Sections of two Conservation Target Areas (CTA) for 'Ardley and Heyford and Tusmore and Shelswell Park' are within 1km of the site. Two priority habitats of woodland are within the site and adjacent to the north and west.

HABITATS

Overall the site comprises managed agricultural land, with a mix of arable and pastoral field compartments, largely bound by hedgerows, many of which support mature and semi-mature trees, and which form a network through and around the Site. Small areas of other habitats exist including a linear compartment of tussocky grassland, two substantial ditches and a watercourse, more or less seasonal in nature, run through the Site, with other smaller field ditches, wood and scrub habitats and a single pond.

Bucknell Road bisects the site towards its south, with hedgerows either side. Surrounding land use includes open fields to the north, east and south, largely managed as agricultural land. New development adjoins to the north and the existing development of the western edge of Bicester is located beyond the A4095, which broadly forms the eastern boundary.

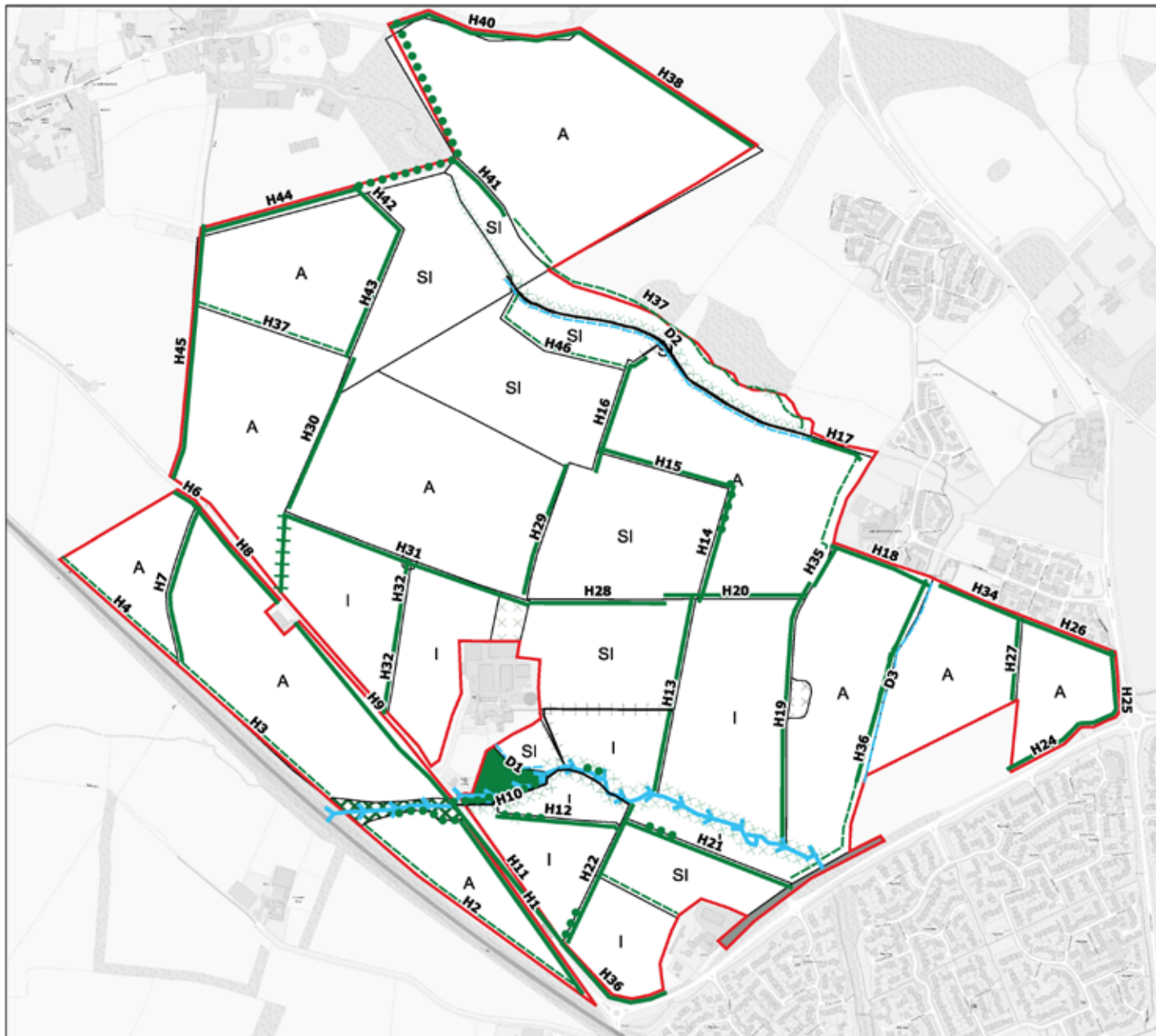
PROTECTED SPECIES

The Site supports a number of protected species, including bats, great crested newts, and badger as well as a range of notable bird species.

Key

Habitats

- Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
- Built Environment: Buildings/hardstanding
- Arable
- Cultivated/disturbed land - ephemeral/short perennial
- Improved grassland
- Poor semi-improved grassland
- Scrub - dense/continuous
- Scrub - scattered
- Standing water
- Broadleaved trees
- Hedgerow (with ref)
- Defunct hedge
- Hedge with trees - species-poor
- Scrub - scattered
- Running water
- Dry ditch (with ref)
- Fence



Hallam Land Management
North West Bicester
Bicester
PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN

Scale: 1:7500
Date: 25/11/2022
Figure 9.2

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT CONTEXT

HIGHWAYS : WIDER CONTEXT

The Site is located on the northern edge of Bicester, some 2.5km to the north west of Bicester Town Centre. Access to the site is from the A4095, the B4100 or Bucknell Road. The B410 to the north east links Bicester to junction 10 of the M40.

Oxfordshire County Council were granted approval for the North West Strategic Link Road - the realignment of the A4095 - within and to the south of the site. Phase 1 of the scheme, funded by Homes England and the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, has been completed and has delivered the rail underbridge to accommodate the realigned Howes Lane and a separate underpass which will provide a new route for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.



HIGHWAYS : LOCAL CONTEXT

To the north is the village of Bucknell. The site is either side of Bucknell Road/Bicester Road and is bordered, to the west, by the London to Birmingham Railway, and to the south by the A4095 (Lord's Lane).

WALKING & CYCLING

Running along the northwest boundary is a Public right of Way, linking Bicester Road with Bainton Road to the north. A footpath also runs through the most northerly section of the site. To the west in the proposed Himley Village is a bridleway. A new footpath/cycleway is intended to connect Himley Village to Hawkwell Village under the railway line. There is a National Cycle Network running through south Bicester. There is also a network of local cycle routes which are either on-road cycle lanes or shared use footway/cycleway routes



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus service provision within the area offers a number of services providing access to the surrounding area. As part of the Elmsbrook development, bus stops are provided along Charlotte Avenue which is within walking distance to the site. Bus stops on Charlotte Avenue (i.e. that stop at one or more of these stops) encompass service E1. Bus services operating along the B4100 include the 505 and E1 bus services.

The site is well situated in relation to Bicester North Railway Station, which lies broadly 2.3km (approximately 10-minute cycle) from the centre of the site to the south. Approximately 3.4km (or 15-minute cycle) south of the site lies Bicester Village Railway Station.



ASSESSMENT

TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS: STUDY AREAS

The surrounding settlement pattern in Bicester and surrounding villages is diverse and the result of a variety of natural and historical influences. As such, towns and villages differ in terms of their character and typology. Some settlements have maintained their historic nature contrasting with new development in the locality.

This section seeks to assess urban character and built form in the local area. The following areas have been chosen as relevant precedents due to their historic character, proximity to the site and to consider the evolving character of the new development of NW Bicester.

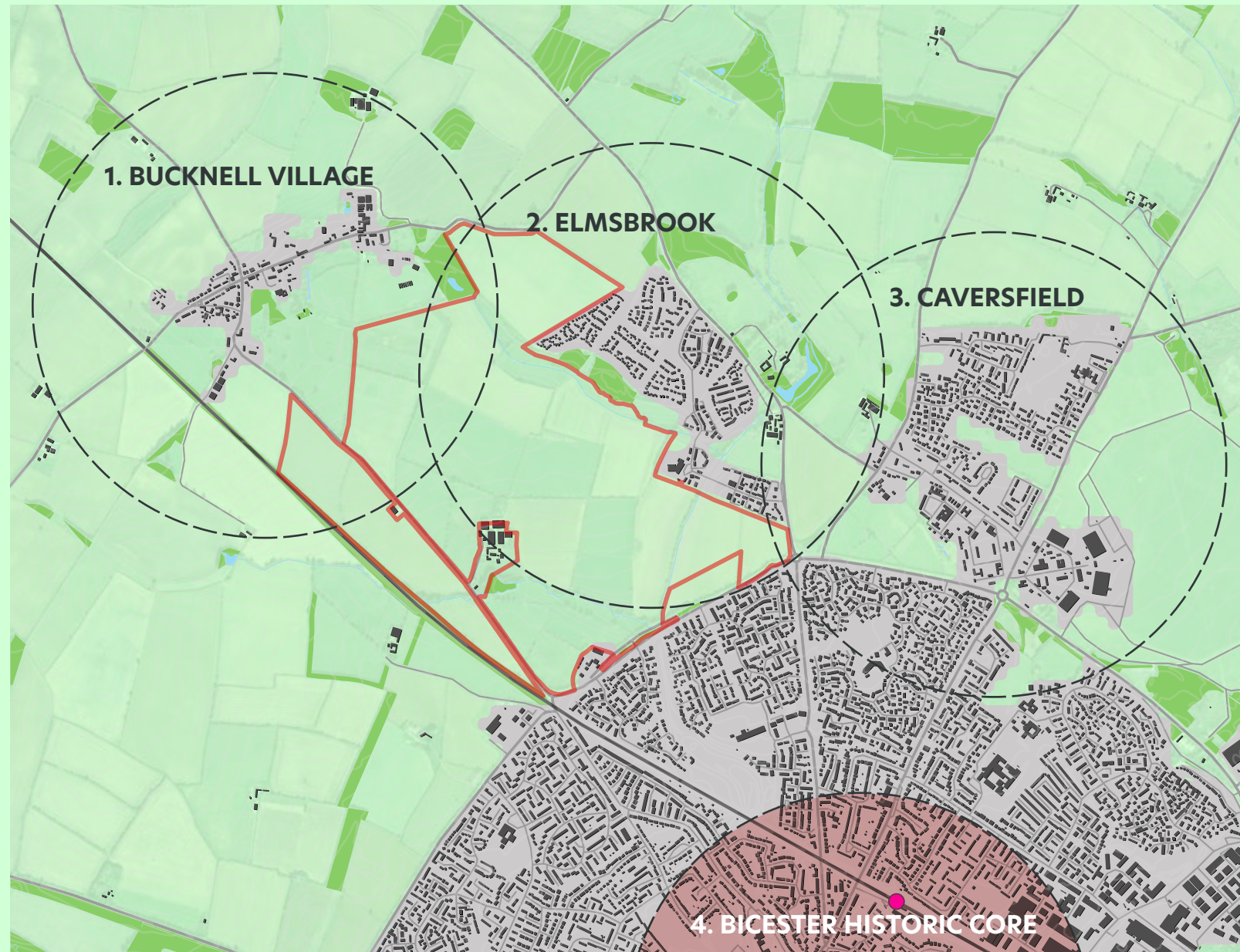
1. Bicester Historic Core
2. Bucknell Village
3. Elmsbrook
4. Caversfield



TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS: APPROACH

The focus for this is on the micro scale as opposed to settlement wide analysis. It highlights qualitative and quantitative elements which contribute to a particular sense of place. The character analysis includes the following categories:

- **Urban Form** - Block composition, frontages, density.
- **Built Form** - Building scale, typology, boundary treatment and curtilage.
- **Public Realm** - Elements of street character, parking and landscaping.
- **Details and Materials** - Analysis of traditional architectural features and patterns of facing materials.
- **Positive Influence** - A broad assessment of the precedent and key lessons learned.





BICESTER HISTORIC CORE

This character area is identified by the market square and its historic streets that once served the surrounding agrarian society. The town still retains its original grid layout often associated with a market town. The streets have a formal configuration, with historic terraces presenting a repeated pattern of windows, roof forms and architectural detail. Higher density residential accommodation is centred around the Market Square, in three storey, semi-detached and terraced properties. In the Market Square, commercial uses are accommodated on the ground floor and residential accommodation on the upper floors.



Material Palette:

The historic core is characterised by a variety of materials; red bricks, render in light and pastel colours and stone, are the commonly used walling material in this area. Red brickwork with burnt and buff brick headers are also seen around the Market Square area. Slate and red clay tile roofs are the predominant roofing material.

Architectural style and detailing:

The area is defined by a myriad of styles, reflecting its evolution through the layers of its history. Decorative quoins, window surrounds, detailed lintels, classic rectangular proportions for window openings and sash windows narrate its Victorian and Georgian history. Later additions that do not conform to these styles can also be found.



Positive influence:

The layout is typically rectilinear in shape with the Market Square wedged between the blocks. The blocks are configured as perimeter blocks, with well overlooked parking courtyards, accessed from the street through drive under openings. This configuration helps in providing a strong building edge and enclosure to the Market Square.

Higher density is centered around the Market Square with retail and commercial elements on the ground floor and residential uses on the upper floors.

One positive aspect of the historic core that could be adopted in the masterplanning of Hawkwell village, is its success in creating attractive active frontages, by distributing different land uses and overall densification.



Typical street elevations

MATERIAL PALETTE





BUCKNELL VILLAGE

Bucknell Village is a small village to the north of the application site. The village originally evolved by the cross roads of Bainton Road and Bicester/Ardley Road. Most buildings are located in a linear fashion along Bainton Road where the church and manor house are located. More recent development has spread to the west along Middleton Road and New Row to join up with previously scattered farmsteads.



Details and materials:

Stone perimeter walls with vernacular details and long uninterrupted hedges are commonly used boundary treatments.

Stone, light coloured render and red bricks are the most common walling material. Some timber cladding is also seen on farm buildings. Roofs are predominantly made of slates and red clay tiles with some instances of thatched roofs.

Positive influence:

Bucknell has an informal edge to the village with linear hedges and vernacular stone details as boundary treatments providing enclosure to the streets and outlining the edge of the village.

The streets generally have generous verges and landscaped deep front gardens.

The modern built form is typically made of 2 storey, semi-detached properties, with simple geometry; symmetrical, repeating architectural elements and rhythm.

Farmsteads have enclosed courtyard spaces defined by buildings and walls providing residential and employment uses. This is a sensitive solution that has been successful in locating employment uses at the village edge and could potentially be replicated in places within Hawkwell Village.







Urban Form:

The Elmsbrook layout responds well to the strong hedgerows that form the boundary constraints to the development.

The properties are predominantly 2 storeys in height with a few 3 storey apartments at key locations.

Elmsbrook has a rectilinear perimeter block configuration with parking courtyards. The built form along the primary street has a strong and continuous frontage.

Green/landscape corridors are integrated within the block structure

ELMSBROOK

Elmsbrook is the exemplar element of the development of North West Bicester, and adopts the principles of eco-efficiency and sustainable living. It is located west of Banbury road and north to its junction with A4095.

Public Realm

Parking is enclosed in landscaped parking courts accessed from the primary street, thereby, avoiding a parking dominated public realm whilst providing a strong and continuous frontage to the primary street. Terraces and apartments are served by parking courts, while detached and semi-detached units located at the site edges have been provided with on-plot parking.

Public realm is well designed and detailed with high quality materials and landscape design

Built form:

Architecturally buildings have simple geometry in form and are in domestic scale.

Repetitive use of architectural form and the rhythm helps Elmsbrook present a cohesive form.



Material palette:

This contemporary scheme is characterised by continuous frontage and the use of simple materials. Taking cues from the wider Bicester character; stone, light coloured render and red bricks are the most common walling material used. Some timber claddings are also seen on apartment blocks and on a few dwellings.

Positive Influence:

Elmsbrook presents a built form edge that has a sensitive boundary treatment like a hedgerow.

The 'sustainable living' credentials of Elmsbrook are intended as exemplary, elements of which could be considered at Hawkwell Village.

Elements of an architectural style of modern, simple and uncluttered form could also be considered at Hawkwell village.

