

## **3.0 Planning Policy Context**

### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 This chapter provides an explanation of the policy context for the proposed development as is relevant to the EIA process. A policy analysis, including appraisal of the project against that policy, is provided within the Planning Statement which is submitted in support of the outline application for that part of the North West Bicester Development known as Hawkwell Village. Where specific policy considerations apply to individual assessment areas, further detail is provided within those topic chapters.
- 3.1.2 This chapter describes the policy context at the time of preparation of the application in December 2021.
- 3.1.3 For the purposes of this application, the development plan comprises the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1), adopted in 2015. Saved policies of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 remain part of the statutory Development Plan to which regard must be given in the determination of planning applications. The saved policies are those that were originally saved on 27 September 2007 and which have not been replaced by policies within the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1). Appendix 7 of that Plan lists those policies that have been replaced.
- 3.1.4 A review of the Local Plan is currently being progressed to update some of the current local plan policies and looking to address the needs of Cherwell up to 2040.
- 3.1.5 Whilst the preparation of the local plan review continues, the adopted Local Plan is the principal planning policy document for the assessment of planning applications. This section sets out relevant statutory development plan policies and other material considerations and explores their position in relation to the development proposals.

### **3.2 Regulatory and Policy Context**

#### ***National Planning Policy Framework 2021***

- 3.2.1 The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, originally published in 2012, with the most recent version published in July 2021. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further guidance on the NPPF.
- 3.2.2 The NPPF (Paragraph 8) sets out the principle of sustainable development in terms of the pursuit of economic, social and environmental objectives, which are interdependent and

need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. A presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the NPPF (Paragraph 11) which, for decision taking, means approving proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay, or that if the policies which are the most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF itself.

- 3.2.3 The NPPF, at part 5, supports the government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and Paragraph 62 expects the affordable housing requirement to be met on site in accordance with the local need identified by policy. This section also includes paragraph 73 which advises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often best be achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Paragraph 73 (d) advises a realistic assessment of likely rates of delivery, and supporting rapid implementation should be considered.
- 3.2.4 Part 8 paras 92 to 103, states that decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and provide social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs. It highlights that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. It states that it is also important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.
- 3.2.5 In terms of sustainable transport, Paragraph 110 urges that applications for development give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas, and secondly to facilitate as far as possible access to high quality public transport. Paragraph 103 acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in decision making.
- 3.2.6 In order to achieve appropriate densities, Paragraph 122 stipulates that development that makes efficient use of land should be supported. Paragraph 123(a) specifies that appropriate locations for increasing density include city and town centres and 'other locations that are well served by public transport.' Moreover, Paragraph 123(c) urges authorities to refuse applications which do not make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies within the Framework.
- 3.2.7 The NPPF at Section 12 seeks to achieve well-designed places and which is a key aspect of sustainable development. It refers to the preparation of design guides and codes providing

a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks and 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. The NPPF at paragraph 131 highlights the importance contribution made by trees to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- 3.2.8 Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding and the transition to a low carbon future is part of the role of the planning system. Paragraph 154 advises that new development should avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and should help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, through its location, orientation and design. It expects compliance with local requirements and policies and also an assurance that risk of flooding is not increased elsewhere.
- 3.2.9 Planning decisions should also contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment as set out in NPPF Section 15 advising that valued landscape should be protected and enhanced, the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside is recognised and impacts should be minimised on biodiversity and net gains for biodiversity should be pursued and secured. New and existing development should not contribute to, or be put at unacceptable risk from unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution. Advice on conserving the historic environment is set out at Section 16.

***Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (2015)***

- 3.2.10 The substantial majority of the Site is allocated in the adopted plan and identifies the Site as one parcel within North West Bicester Eco-Town strategic allocation. This was identified in Annex A of the Eco-towns PPS (2009) as one of the four potential locations for the development of an eco-town. North West Bicester will play a major role in delivering the strategic growth identified in Bicester during and beyond the plan period.
- 3.2.11 Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-Town allocates the location of the North West of Bicester eco-town proposals which comprises a total development area of 390 hectares. The proposal is described as 'A new zero carbon(i) mixed use development including 6,000 homes'.
- 3.2.12 The policy details key aspects of development that is expected to be delivered across the whole of the North West Bicester development allocation including: employment, housing, infrastructure needs, monitoring, key site-specific design and place shaping principles.

- 3.2.13 The Local Plan also includes policies for building sustainable communities and of relevance are policies BSC2, BSC3 and BSC 4.
- 3.2.14 BSC 2 which requires housing to make effective and efficient use of land at a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare.
- 3.2.15 Policy BSC 3: Affordable Housing advises that all proposed developments that include 11 or more dwellings will be expected to provide at least 30% of new housing as affordable homes on site. It goes on to say that all qualifying developments will be expected to provide 70% of the affordable housing as affordable/social rented dwellings and 30% as other forms of intermediate housing.
- 3.2.16 Policy BSC4: Housing Mix requires a mix of homes to be provided to meet current and expected future requirements and to have regard to the Council's most up to date evidence on local market conditions. It also advises that housing sites of at least 400 dwellings will be expected to provide a minimum of 45 self-contained extra care dwellings as part of the overall mix. Should it be agreed with the Council that extra care housing would not be desirable in a particular location, an equivalent amount of alternative specialist housing (use class C3) for older people will be sought.
- 3.2.17 The Local Plan includes policies for ensuring sustainable development which complement policy Bicester 1 in seeking zero carbon development and high environmental standards across the District, including policies ESD 2: Energy Hierarchy and Allowable Solutions, policy ESD:3 Sustainable Construction and policy ESD 5: Renewable Energy.
- 3.2.18 Local Plan policy SLE4 sets out that new development should facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport to make the fullest possible use of public transport, to deliver key connections and to support modal shift and which is also emphasised in Policy Bicester 1.
- 3.2.19 The Local Plan includes other relevant policies, including, for instance, design, landscape, open space and local standards (ESD13, ESD15, ESD17, BSC10 and BSC11) and infrastructure (INF1).

**Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (Nov 1996)**

- 3.2.20 There are policies originally saved on 27 September 2007 and which are still retained and remain part of the statutory Development Plan to which regard must be given in the determination of planning applications. The retained policies are set out in appendix 7 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (2011-2031) and those which of some relevance to the determination of this application include Policy C15 which advises that the council will prevent the coalescence of settlements by resisting development in areas of open land, which are important in distinguishing them. The policy comments that each town or village

has its own identity; it refers to particularly vulnerable gaps but does not include Bicester and Bucknell.

**North-West Bicester Eco-Town Supplementary Planning Document (2016)**

- 3.2.21 The NW Bicester Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) expands upon Policy Bicester 1 and provides a means of implementing the strategic allocation. It was informed by key elements of the NW Bicester Masterplan Vision and Objectives document prepared by A2Dominion in 2014. In 2009, the site at NW Bicester was identified as having potential as an eco-town location in the Planning Policy Statement (PPS): Eco-towns a supplement to PPS1 now superseded.
- 3.2.22 The vision for NW Bicester is for a high quality development, well integrated with the existing town, which provides homes, jobs and local services in an attractive landscape setting, conserves and enhances heritage assets including historic landscape features, increases biodiversity and addresses the impact of climate change. Infrastructure requirements will be future-proofed so that the development can adapt to change. Renewable energy generation from on-site sources is supported in moving towards delivering zero carbon emissions from energy used in buildings on the site.
- 3.2.23 Although not development plan policy, the SPD sets out the standards it wishes to be achieved by the NW Bicester proposed development. The document advises that developers will be encouraged to exceed these standards where possible and apply new higher standards that arise that reflect up to date best practice and design principles.
- 3.2.24 Paragraph 1.20 of the SPD lists a series of relevant guidance which should be considered alongside the policy documents referred to above and which includes several design documents, which have been considered through the design evolution of the proposals set out in the DAS.