

Suzanne Taylor

From: Suzanne Taylor
Sent: 05 July 2023 13:44
To: Claire Britton
Cc: Caroline Ford
Subject: Update/response re: Hawkwell Farm, NW Bicester for Hallam Land ref: 21/04275/OUT

Hello Claire

I hope you're well and apologise for the delay in responding to you. I've had an opportunity to review the application and your response letter to our original feedback plus the statement on the use of Grampian conditions. I can offer the following comments so far:

Policy Bicester 1

Housing, Heritage Impacts and Net Zero

I'm still waiting for comments from the Conservation Officer about the Heritage Statement which were chased 22 May and 27 June 2023. I understand they are working on them currently and so hope to hear from them soon. The County Archaeologist has reviewed the Archaeology Report and recommends that a field evaluation will be required prior to determination (I understand that this is being discussed between OCC and applicant's archaeologists). We are waiting on your response to the comments from Bioregional (which we will seek further input on from Bioregional) and it is assumed that this will address: 1) how the true zero carbon requirements of Policy Bicester 1 are met, 2) the requests for a feasibility assessment of the potential for significant on site renewable energy provision and 3) a Carbon Management Plan in addition to 4) addressing climate change adaptability. All these matters need to be resolved before I can offer anything substantive on the principle of the proposals in the light of Policy Bicester 1. However, I do acknowledge that the extent of built residential development shown on the Development Framework Plan (DFP) does not extend very far beyond the adopted allocation site and the vast majority of the additional land would provide green infrastructure, excepting the solar arrays to the north. It is also recognised that the Emerging Draft LP 2040 includes the site area within the revised NW Bicester allocation for 7,000 houses; albeit this has very little weight being at an early stage and the review is paused at present. CDC currently have a 5 year housing land supply but this does not preclude LPA's from agreeing to further housing where appropriate.

Employment

It is acknowledged that an estimate of the number of permanent jobs broken down by use class have been set out in the Socio-Economic chapter of the ES and that there would be difficulty in providing an accurate breakdown of job types at this stage without knowing who the end users might be. However, colleagues in Economic Growth have suggested that it should be possible to provide some indication of likely jobs (retail, logistics, production etc) as there are many examples in Bicester to draw from. Presumably, the speculative employment elements within the scheme are based upon some general assumptions about occupiers/end users? I note that the estimated number of permanent jobs generated by the scheme (directly and indirectly) amount to 685 (478 + 207). A condition is likely to be imposed to require the provision of some smaller business units bearing in mind that most recent developments have focussed on larger units. The SPD talks about home working in the 'employment' requirements (para 4.80 on page 24) so could information be provided on how homes could be adapted/designed to give home working opportunities within them please?

Pleased to note that your client is looking to comply with BREEAM 'Excellent' for commercial buildings as recommended and would be agreeable to a condition to this effect. Also welcome your client's willingness to accept a Skills and Training Plan to target apprenticeship starts within the S106 or as a condition.

Site Specific Design and SPD

Welcome the approach to retain as much existing green infrastructure/hedges as possible and support the provision of a substantial green buffer (including the Community Park) between the built development and Bucknell

village. Katherine's email requested clarity in the proposals to show that 20m buffers would be provided for retained/reinforced hedges and 60m corridor for watercourses but this has not been explicitly addressed in your response. This should be provided please.

Discussions regarding the siting of the burial ground are ongoing with Bicester Town Council (BTC). At the current time there is still a desire for the burial ground to remain in the original location identified in the SPD masterplan and BTC have undertaken a detailed study for the original site which assesses its suitability and proposes technical burial solutions appropriate for this land. It is understood that initial assessments by the applicant indicate that the proposed siting would be equally suitable but more details would be required to ascertain this. There is a remaining administrative issue that would also need to be resolved to ensure that the cemetery would serve Bicester bearing in mind that the land currently lies within Bucknell parish.

I understand the logic of introducing areas for employment and residential uses adjacent to the railway line and take on board your observation that the SPD shows residential parcels to the south of the railway line. However, noting that the railway sits on top of an embankment and crosses an elevated bridge in this location I am concerned that an insufficient landscape buffer is shown at present on the Development Framework Plan to provide some visual and acoustic softening. I recommend that a landscaping buffer would need to be shown on the Development Framework Plan between the development and the railway line. Also, whilst this issue could be 'parked' until the detailed stages, I would like to set out now that any development adjacent to the railway line should face towards it and not back on to it. It is envisaged that secondary roads/access drives would be located between the railway and new development thereby allowing for the creation of enclosed perimeter blocks and providing a larger buffer between them. Some cross-sections to show how the development would sit in relationship to the railway would assist us in assessing the potential impacts.

Whilst on the subject of cross-sections, we mentioned previously that it would be beneficial to see some cross-sections to illustrate the differences in ground levels between the area around the new primary school, mixed use area and river corridor. This would help to ascertain that the area shown on the parameter plans is sufficient for the uses proposed bearing in mind the topographical constraints in this area and to give confidence that an appropriate scheme could be achieved.

Acknowledge and welcome the clarification regarding 15 minute communities and public transport/bus stops which are set out in the DAS and the intention to achieve green or amber for the Building for Life 12 Criteria.

The information breaking down the types of GI is helpful thank you. I think your suggestion of providing further visual material about the Country Park and green edge to the north would be helpful (particularly for local residents) in demonstrating the scale and nature of the park. Could this be provided please?

We appreciate that the grain stores lie outside of the application site and that these are shown as being retained in situ within the SPD as is also shown in the current Development Framework Plan. Whilst we clearly would not be insisting on the expansion of the application site to incorporate the grain stores into the scheme we didn't want to miss the opportunity to explore whether this was a possibility in the interests of enhancing the development.

Other Observations

Comparing the height of the proposed solar arrays with other schemes 4.0m seems excessive. It's recommended that their maximum height is reduced to 2.5m to make the solar farm less visually obtrusive.

Need to ensure that any development adjacent to the existing Hawkwell Farm and Lords Farm allows for the creation of enclosed perimeter blocks with new development backing on to their existing rear boundary enclosures. The small triangular area of land to the north east of Lords Farm for example looks tight and so it would be appropriate for more detail to be provided to demonstrate that this would be a suitable development parcel. It appears that green landscape buffers are indicated on the Development Framework adjacent to these boundaries so this would either need to be within private rear gardens or not publicly accessible. This could be problematic because it would be difficult to ensure that the buffer is retained and properly maintained if it is in the control of private occupiers rather than within the managed, public open spaces/GI. Would welcome your views on how this could be dealt with.

Consider that there are currently an inadequate number of play areas shown on the DFP. The Developer Contribution SPD would require over 6ha of space for play areas based upon the population generated by this number of dwellings (as set out in the draft HoTs). This would equate to a minimum of 4 NEAPs (8000sqm) and 6 combined LEAP/LAPS (4000sqm) OR 3 NEAPs, 5 Combined LEAP/LAPS and 4 LEAPs (3600sqm). Therefore, 1 NEAP and 4 LEAPs would not be adequate. A NEAP and a LEAP/LAP play area should be provided to the north of the site adjacent to largest area of GI and the Community Park and a NEAP should also be provided to the west of the Bucknell Road. A NEAP and/or LEAP/LAP should be located close to the primary school sites.

Following on from OCC's comments on the cross-section for the link road (email from Joy White dated 07 June 2023) there appear to be some discrepancies between what is shown on the Illustrative Framework Masterplan (IFM – page 67 of the DAS) and the cross-section. Namely, trees are only shown on one side of the SLR in the cross-section whereas they are shown on both sides for most of the SLR (except at the mixed use/employment frontages) on the IFM. In addition to OCC's other comments on the cross-section I would reiterate that the SLR corridor should be tree-lined on both sides and there should be adequate set-backs for buildings to safeguard the amenities of occupiers from HGV traffic. OCC have stated that a corridor of 26m wide needs to be safeguarded for the SLR so it would be helpful to have this clarified in the proposals.

I note that Katherine made reference to undertaking a Design Review Panel exercise but this was not picked up in your response. Bearing in mind the differences between the proposals and the original masterplan/site allocation it is considered that this would be helpful and experience elsewhere has indicated that DRPs at the earliest stage are beneficial. Are there any plans for a Design Review Panel?

Feedback on Grampian Condition Statement:

I've reviewed your statement regarding the use of a Grampian style condition to allow an agreed 'number' of dwellings to be occupied before the SLR is delivered. At the current time, with no identified funding for this and no timescale for delivery, it is likely that a severe transport impact would occur and therefore the Council has expressed concerns about whether the use of such a condition would meet the test of reasonableness because there is no clear plan or timescale for when any impacts would be resolved. It is appreciated that you would be open to the imposition of such a condition but there are currently too many unknowns and uncertainties for the Council to consider this option at present. The Council is not wholly averse to the use of a Grampian condition but there are a number of pieces of strategic work (e.g. discussion with Homes England, a strategic viability appraisal and questions over the transport modelling) which need to be progressed further before we could consider this. It is understood that all of these key elements are being advanced and so a clearer picture of where things will stand on the delivery of the SLR should begin to emerge and, at that stage, consideration of the phasing of the development would be possible. Discussion relating to the Heads of Terms and contributions towards the SLR are also important in this context and this will need consideration taking into account the wider viability picture.

Amended HoTs:

I will be able to forward these to you very soon. Caroline and I are meeting tomorrow to clarify a couple of points before sharing the latest version with you which takes account of amended comments from OCC and Rec and Leisure.

Best regards

Suzanne

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