

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Cherwell

Application no: 21/04275/OUT

Proposal: OUTLINE - with all matters reserved except for Access - Mixed Use Development of up to 3,100 dwellings (including extra care); residential and care accommodation(C2); mixed use local centre (comprising commercial, business and service uses, residential uses, C2 uses, local community uses (F2(a) and F2(b)), hot food takeaways, public house, wine bar); employment area (B2, B8, E(g)); learning and non-residential institutions (Class F1) including primary school (plus land to allow extension of existing Gagle Brook primary school); green Infrastructure including formal (including playing fields) and informal open space, allotments, landscape, biodiversity and amenity space; burial ground; play space (including Neaps/Leaps/MUGA); changing facilities; ground mounted photovoltaic arrays; sustainable drainage systems; movement network comprising new highway, cycle and pedestrian routes and access from highway network; car parking; infrastructure (including utilities); engineering works (including ground modelling); demolition

Location: Adj Lords Lane And SE Of Hawkwell Farm, Lords Lane, Bicester

Response Date: 02/10/2023

This report sets out the officer views of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on the above proposal. These are set out by individual service area/technical discipline and include details of any planning conditions or Informatives that should be attached in the event that permission is granted and any obligations to be secured by way of a S106 agreement. Where considered appropriate, an overarching strategic commentary is also included. If the local County Council member has provided comments on the application these are provided as a separate attachment.

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General Information and Advice

Recommendations for approval contrary to OCC objection:

If within this response an OCC officer has raised an objection but the Local Planning Authority are still minded to recommend approval, OCC would be grateful for notification (via planningconsultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk) as to why material consideration outweighs OCC's objections, and to be given an opportunity to make further representations.

Outline applications and contributions

The anticipated number and type of dwellings and/or the floor space may be set by the developer at the time of application which is used to assess necessary mitigation. If not stated in the application, a policy compliant mix will be used. The number and type of dwellings used when assessing S106 planning obligations is set out on the first page of this response.

In the case of outline applications, once the unit mix/floor space is confirmed by reserved matters approval/discharge of condition a matrix (if appropriate) will be applied to establish any increase in contributions payable. A further increase in contributions may result if there is a reserved matters approval changing the unit mix/floor space.

Where a S106/Planning Obligation is required:

- **Index Linked** – in order to maintain the real value of S106 contributions, contributions will be index linked. Base values and the index to be applied are set out in the Schedules to this response.
- **Administration and Monitoring Fee -TBC**
This is an estimate of the amount required to cover the monitoring and administration associated with the S106 agreement. The final amount will be based on the OCC's scale of fees and will be adjusted to take account of the number of obligations and the complexity of the S106 agreement.
- **OCC Legal Fees** The applicant will be required to pay OCC's legal fees in relation to legal agreements. Please note the fees apply whether a S106 agreement is completed or not.

Security of payment for deferred contributions - Applicants should be aware that an approved bond will be required to secure a payment where a S106 contribution is to be paid post implementation and

- the contribution amounts to 25% or more (including anticipated indexation) of the cost of the project it is towards and that project cost £7.5m or more
- the developer is direct delivering an item of infrastructure costing £7.5m or more
- where aggregate contributions towards bus services exceeds £1m (including anticipated indexation).

A bond will also be required where a developer is direct delivering an item of infrastructure.

The County Infrastructure Funding Team can provide the full policy and advice, on request.

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Transport Schedule

Recommendation:

Objection for the following reasons:

- The traffic impact of the full development would be severe without the mitigation provided by the proposed A4095 realignment, and there is currently no certainty of when this scheme will be delivered. The application seeks to bring forward some development in advance of it, on the basis of an interim off-site highway mitigation scheme, which remains unacceptable to OCC. (Further assessment work is being done on the impact of bringing forward some development without the interim scheme).
- Changes are needed to some access arrangements and the on-site active travel framework in order to better provide for active travel.
- The applicant is not committing to provide a key element of off site mitigation, by contributing the full cost of the infrastructure to enable cycling on the footpath between the site and Bicester town centre, which OCC considers to be proportionate.
- Further assessment is required on off-site traffic impact in some locations.

OCC has been consulted on a Technical Note, Jubb TN17 v3 dated August 2023. The TN comprises the applicant's response to OCC's highways and transport response dated 23 April 2023. This is divided into the following sections:

1.2 deals with points raised by OCC in response to Jubb TN09, which covered various OCC points of objection;

1.3 refers to use of the Bicester Transport Model;

1.4 covers initial traffic capacity assessment of off-site junctions, and an assessment of the removal of the 'Bucknell Hook' from the plans, on traffic through Bucknell;

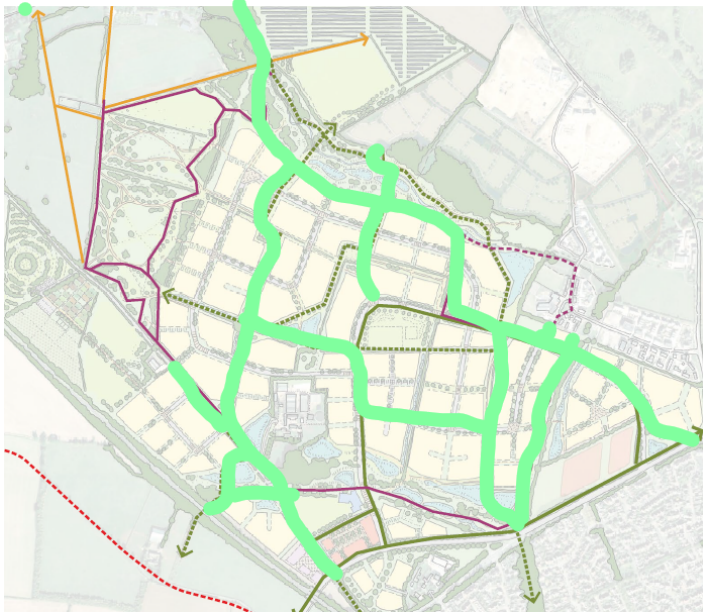
1.5 covers the proposed interim mitigation scheme for the junction of Howes Lane/Bucknell Road/Lords Lane;

1.6 covers proposals for the above junction once the A4095 realignment is completed.

1.2.1 to 1.2.3 Additional active travel access points:

- Appendix A shows the requested connection point onto Bainton Road. The route will incorporate a bridge over the watercourse within the site. The track should have a bound surface, suitable for onward connections for all types of cycle.

- Appendix B shows a connection point into the Firethorn development to the north. This corresponds to an approximate connection point secured in the Firethorn S106 agreement (ref 21/01630/OUT), and the exact connection point will need to be agreed with the adjacent landowner. The detail of the cycle network within the development will be subject to later approval – the turns for cyclists look too tight and the shared area at the ped/cycle junctions will need to be increased – more in line with Appendix D.
- Appendix C shows the proposed connection point into Cranberry Ave (Elmsbrook). It is understood this connection has now been secured through a legal agreement between landowners. This is to be a bus/active travel connection only and should therefore be designed with a narrowed carriageway. The drawing does not reflect agreed arrangements for the school extension, however. It has been agreed that the car park extension will be accessed from the existing Gagle Brook car park so there is no need for general traffic to use any part of this road. Enforcement camera and signage will need to be provided. As this is close to a school, it will need an off-carriageway cycle facility, which should be designed into the connection. Also, the road connection into the school playing field to the west is not required, as it has been agreed the access will be through the car park.
- Appendix D shows internal cycle/ped routes connecting to the ped/cycle route through Bure Park, via a signalised crossing of the A4095 realignment. This will need to be changed in line with the agreed cross section for the A4095 realignment.
- Appendix E shows a signalised crossing where the Bucknell Road (active travel only part) crosses the A4095 realignment. This will need to be revised to take into account the agreed cross section of the A4095 here, which will provide cycle facilities on both sides. It also shows a priority junction to the south – it is understood this is to access an electrical substation but this should be clarified.
- Appendix F shows the connection into the site from Bucknell Road. This is still the subject of discussions in relation to the A4095 realignment and the layout of the school site. We have no objection to an access into the site at this location, but the off carriageway cycle provision should be continuous.
- Appendix G shows a revised walking and cycling strategy plan, titled 'Principal Active Travel Routes'. There are insufficient direct commuter cycle routes through this development, with many of the off road routes being shown as 'commuter/pedestrian' routes when they should be for cyclists too. Additional routes should be provided too, as per the example below, to allow cyclists the most direct route to the cycle route connections off site. These routes should have a bound surface, suitable for all types of bike, year round.



1.2.4 to 1.2.10 Off-site Active Travel Improvements

- This section proposes financial contributions to an upgrade of the route alongside the railway from Lords Lane to Banbury Road, as well as improvements on routes through Bure Park. Clarification is needed on the latter.
- Appendix H presents a proposal for two options for upgrading the route alongside the railway. Given that this will be such an important and well used route, OCC will require option 1, where pedestrians are segregated from cyclists, though it is recognised that there will be some constraints where widths of paths will need to be reduced. A costing exercise has been carried out by the applicant and OCC is carrying out its own exercise to determine whether the amount will be sufficient.
- While it accepts that the route would be used by some residents south of the railway, OCC considers that this application site should cover the cost of this route in full. Developments at NW Bicester south of the railway are contributing to active travel improvements on Middleton Stoney Road and Shakespeare Drive. Comparison with Himley Village (1700 dwellings south of the railway) shows this is well within what could be considered proportionate. The Himley Village S106 agreement secures over £1.3 million (when indexed to Aug 23) to active travel improvements on Middleton Stoney Rd and Shakespeare Drive, on top of other contributions for public transport, highway schemes and public rights of way, and proportionate contributions will be sought from the anticipated application at Aldershot Farm. The smaller Firethorn development (530 dwellings) S106 agreement secures £362,465 towards pedestrian/cycle improvements on Banbury Road, as well as other proportionate contributions.

1.2.11 Travel Plan

- We note that an updated travel plan is to be submitted.

1.2.12 to 1.2.22 Main access junctions

- Appendix I shows drawings for the main access junctions, onto the A4095 realignment, and onto Lords Lane at Germander Way. Layouts have been revised to provide straight across cycle crossings, which is welcomed, but the detail will need to be refined to show traffic signal heads, and the drawings will need to be amended to show the agreed cross sections for the A4095 and the development access roads, which are the subject of discussion.
- The required layout of the junction will be influenced by traffic modelling work to be carried out in relation to the A4095 realignment, where the interaction of junctions will require linked modelling of the whole corridor. This is to ensure that journey times along the A4095 do not adversely impact the strategy to promote active travel on the central corridor through Bicester town centre, by diverting vehicle trips to the central corridor.
- The introduction of straight across junctions is shown to significantly reduce vehicle capacity, with Degree of Saturation over the 90% threshold of acceptability. However, in the context of policy supporting active travel, this is in principle acceptable, subject to the corridor modelling mentioned above.

1.2.23 Primary street cross section

- OCC would accept a minimum of 6.5m carriageway, in line with the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide. The 6.3m proposed is too narrow, given the importance of public transport in mitigating the impact of the development, and the need to avoid delay to buses. The fact that the bus would run in one direction is not relevant, because there would still be the requirement for large vehicles to pass, and ahead of the full spine road loop being constructed, there may be a need for buses to enter and leave the site by the same access.
- The cross section has been discussed separately, and we are expecting revised drawings to be submitted.

1.2.25 to 1.2.28 Accesses onto Bucknell Road and Bainton Road

It is proposed to update the description of the development to reflect the fact that some of the access positions cannot yet be fixed. I am reasonably content with this provided the main accesses onto the A4095 are fixed, because this is required to model journey times on the A4095. The position of the main access from Bucknell Road must also be fixed because this impacts on the layout of the school site/employment area/local centre. Other accesses could be within a zone indicated on the parameter plan and subject to a condition including details of their exact position, which would be for subsequent approval, taking into account achievable visibility and other safety factors.

1.1..29 Connection to Elmsbrook Spine Road

Agreement has been reached with the adjacent landowner, which is welcomed. This is to be a bus and active travel connection only. See comments above relating to the submitted plan.

1.3 Use of Bicester Transport Model

Given the age of the base model, OCC has recently carried out traffic counts around Bicester to confirm that the model is still reliable. There were some links within Bicester where counts were lower (or in some cases higher) than expected, and select link analyses are being carried out to understand the differences. However given the location of these links, they are not likely to significantly change the outcome for NW Bicester, and therefore there is no requirement to revisit the BTM model runs already carried out for Hawkwell Farm.

1.4 Impact on wider highway network

The impact of the development has been tested by running the Bicester Transport Model model scenarios agreed with OCC, using two alternative scenarios for trip generation from the site: the assumed trip generation within the BTM, and a 'vision' trip rate which assumes a strong sustainable transport package delivered by the site to reduce car modal share. The resultant turning movements have then been used in detailed junction modelling software to assess the traffic capacity impacts on key junctions. The 2031 base used, and therefore the modelling test outputs assume that the A4095 realignment is in place.

- Queens Ave/St John St/Field Street mini roundabout – Queues and delays are already predicted to be very long in the 2031 base. The development traffic does have a significant impact, but given the strategy to improve provision for sustainable transport on the central corridor, OCC will not be looking for traffic capacity improvements here. This highlights the importance of the bus and active travel mitigation for the site in minimising vehicle trip generation from the site.
- Banbury Rd/Field St mini roundabout – as above.
- Banbury Rd/Lords Lane junction – this has been modelled as a roundabout, whereas in fact it is expected to be changed to a signalised junction in the near future. This needs to be addressed.
- B4100/Caversfield priority junction – this relates to the junction of B4100 and Aunt Ems Lane. Modelling has not been carried out, but a 20mph scheme in Caversfield is referred to. This is about to be implemented and does not require funding from this development. However, there have been concerns that the development will result in rat-running through Caversfield. The impact of the development on re-routing through Caversfield should be presented. Contributions may be sought towards traffic calming or other safety measures.
- Howes Lane/Bucknell Rd/A4095 – the 2031 scenario assumes the A4095 realignment is in place, which would mitigate the congestion impact at this junction. We are aware that alternative road layouts are being investigated, which will require further modelling.

- The development has a modest impact on Middleton Stoney Rbt, taking it slightly over theoretical capacity, but this does not result in severe queuing or delay.

1.4.22-33 Traffic through Bucknell village

A journey time analysis has been carried for traffic that would be diverted from Bucknell Road as a result of the scheme. To mitigate the traffic impact of NW Bicester on Bucknell village, as part of the masterplan, traffic heading into Bicester on Bucknell Rd would have faced a diversion through the development, via the 'Bucknell Hook'. Under the currently proposed layout, the diversion would be shorter, but traffic calming on Bucknell Road is instead proposed. The different routes are shown in Figure 1.1.

Different assumptions of speed limits are proposed and set out in the scenarios in Appendix M. None of these assumptions represents the speed limit of 20mph which would be in place all the way through the built up area of the development, including the spine road and probably including Bucknell Road where it passes through the development. The results are presented in Table 1.7, which shows a difference of only a few seconds in journey time, but it's not clear which scenarios are being used. This needs to be clarified.

1.4.29-35 Baynards Green roundabout

It is stated that this junction (junction of A43 and B4100) forms part of M40 J10 and as such it does not fall in the remit of OCC. I do not accept this, as the B4100 is a county road and an important route between Bicester and Banbury, as well as being on a bus route. OCC has an interest in the assessment of this junction and will expect to be consulted on the results of junction modelling here. It is noted that TN12 (impact on strategic road network) did not include this junction and that National Highways have issued a holding objection until 13 November.

1.4 Interim junction scheme at Howes Lane/Bucknell Rd

1.5.2 By catering for increased motor vehicle flows but not for cyclists, I maintain that this scheme would not be consistent with policy to prioritise active travel. Arguably there may be some slight improvement in safety for cyclists negotiating the junction under signal control than under the current priority arrangements, but there is a loss of convenience. With the volumes of traffic at this junction, LTN 1/20 sets out that on-carriageway cycling is not suitable for all users, even if the speed limit was reduced to 20mph.

Whilst there would be some advantages for pedestrians compared with the current layout, the scheme shows the loss of an informal crossing on the Howes Lane Arm, forcing pedestrians to deviate along Howes Lane to a zebra crossing well off the desire line.

It could be investigated whether removing the right turning lane from Howes Lane would have a significant impact on capacity, as this might allow for some additional space to be allocated to provide an off carriageway cycle facility. However, the assessment

shows that although the scheme, if it were approved and deliverable, would provide some relief for traffic capacity, there would still be significant queueing and delay, and removal of the lane would inevitably cause some reduction in vehicle capacity.

A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been provided, which has identified no areas of concern 'within the scope of what the auditors were asked to audit'. However, paragraph 2.2 regarding the vehicle tracking, acknowledges that manoeuvres are 'difficult', which picks up the point I previously made about the difficult left turn out of Howes Lane for HGVs. Very slow manoeuvres through the junction will mean that the capacity indicated by the modelling cannot be achieved in practice.

Section 3 of the RSA picks up a point about junction intervisibility, although this should not have been considered out of scope of a safety audit. It states that 'junction intervisibility envelopes for both junctions may be at least partially obscured by the existing railway infrastructure'. This has been a stumbling block in previously proposed schemes to signalise the junction, and OCC maintain it that intervisibility is required for the safe operation of the junction.

It also picks highlights potential driver confusion over correct positioning to turn right into Howes Lane and the need for mitigation 'to ensure turning movements are not held by stationary vehicles'.

The modelling presented still uses a 180 second cycle time, which OCC considers unsafe as pedestrians would have to wait too long for a green signal and are likely to cross unsafely. OCC would need to set the cycle time at a max of 120 seconds, which would reduce the capacity from that presented in the modelling.

In terms of cost, the deliverability of A4095 realignment is of great concern to the highway authority, as this is vitally important transport mitigation required for NW Bicester. I do not agree with the statement that 'the highway authority should only consider whether the interim scheme is suitable in terms of its design'. It has not been demonstrated financially how delivering this costly scheme alongside an initial first phase of housing, would better enable the developer to deliver part of the A4095 realignment.

It is understood that further assessment is being carried out of the impact of bringing forward some development without making changes to the junction.

1.5 Final scheme (post A4095 realignment)

While improvements could be made to the scheme as presented, I am aware that an alternative scheme is being considered and will shortly be submitted for consideration.

Officer's Name: Joy White

Officer's Title: Principal Transport Planner

Date: 2 October 2023