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Your Ref: 22/00747/OUT
Our Ref: ATE/23/00246/OUT
Date: 28 July 2023

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: Cherwell District Council

Application Ref: 22/00747/OUT

Site Address: Land at Bicester Road, Kidlington

Description of development: Outline planning application for the development of up to 370 homes, public open space (including play areas and woodland planting), sports pitches and pavilion, drainage and engineering works, with all matters reserved (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) except for vehicular and emergency accesses to Bicester Road.

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

- a. ~~**No Objection:** ATE has undertaken a detailed assessment of this application and is content with the submission.~~
- b. ~~**Conditional approval:** ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.~~
- c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.
- d. ~~**Refusal:** ATE recommends that the application be refused for the reasons set out in this response.~~

1.0 Background

Active Travel England (ATE) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above outline application proposing the construction of up to 370 homes, public open space, sports pitches and associated works, which is the subject of an allocation under policy PR7a in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan Partial Review. The site is one of six sites allocated in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Partial Review for residential development.

In line with the allocation under policy PR 7a, the site layout is to prioritise access for walking and cycling, considering the connections for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchairs, providing links from the development towards Gosford and Kidlington, PR7b and Begbroke, Oxford, the surrounding countryside, sports facilities including Stratfield Brake and public transport services including bus stops and Oxford Parkway Station.

2.0 Summary

The development site is located circa 2km from the centre of Kidlington and with Oxford located circa 8km to the south. The site comprises three arable fields extending to approximately 27.75ha. There will be some 17.72 ha of Green Infrastructure within the site. The masterplan proposes permeability throughout the site, with a proposed shared footway and cycleway along the primary street link. Active Travel England considers there would be significant merit to segregating the footway/cycleway to reduce potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.

ATE notes that the pedestrian and cycle movements would be catered for through on and off-carriageway provision. However, the segregation provided to walkers, wheelers and cyclists is not clear. Bicester Road is currently limited to a single shared footway/cycleway on its western side. It requires users to cross the carriageway whether they are travelling north into Kidlington or South into Oxford. It is noted from the Transport Assessment that crossing points are to be provided across Bicester Road to access the existing footway/cycleway, and the location of a crossing is shown on drawing 10669-SK-05 included in the Transport Assessment, but the type of crossing is not specified. This design requires further consideration in accordance with LTN1/20.

Concerns are raised about the suitability of the Oxford Road / Bicester Road roundabout, particularly for cyclists' use. It is therefore recommended that improved segregation be provided to ensure safety across the roundabout, including suitable crossings for all users in line with LTN 1/20. It is crucial that these matters are addressed to achieve sustainable development through the provision of attractive, safe and direct routes for non-motorised users - a commitment that is pledged within the Planning Statement at paragraph 2.10.

3.0 National Policy and Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:

104. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals, so that:

c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;

110. In assessing... specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location; [and]

b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users

112. ...applications for development should:

a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas...;

b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport; [and]

c) create places that... minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles...;

Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) provides guidance to local authorities on delivering high quality cycle infrastructure.

Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking is the Government's cycling and walking plan for England. This sets the Government's vision for cycling and walking to be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030, while also recognising that that school active travel can play a greater role in preventing obesity and supporting healthier weight. Active Travel England's responsibilities for walking also extend to "wheeling", such as the use of wheelchairs (self-propelled or powered) and mobility scooters.

Inclusive mobility: making transport accessible for passengers and pedestrians provides guidance on designing and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of public transport and pedestrian infrastructure.

4.0 Opportunities

Active Travel England notes that in accordance with the Local Plan policy TR1 (Transportation Funding), before permitting development, the Council must be satisfied that transport measures needed as a consequence of allowing the development to proceed will be delivered. Active Travel England considers the six allocated sites for residential development an opportunity to contribute towards the vital infrastructure needed to support this extent of growth in the area. Such improvements in relation to the application site are discussed below.

In terms of local amenities near the site, there is a local primary school, a supermarket, and a pharmacy, all within 1km of the site. Oxford Parkway Railway Station and Park and Ride are located around 1km to the southeast, offering an 8-minute train journey to Oxford, a 10-minute train journey to Bicester, or a 12-minute bus journey to Oxford City Centre.

It is considered that improvements could be made to the quality of the routes to Edward Field Primary School and Gosford Hill Secondary School from the site. Both routes would first require crossing Bicester Road. The direct route to primary school would require school children and parents to travel north along the shared footway/cycleway and

continue left at the junction along Bicester Road on a much narrower footway, approximately 150 metres in width, for a further 80 metres. The route continues along the narrow footway to the secondary school, turning left onto the A4260, a busy road that is unlikely to be suitable for safe and attractive cycling in view of the high traffic volumes when considered against Table 4-2 of LTN 1/20.

The layout of the site provides an opportunity to support travel for all users. However, and in consideration of whether the site provides suitable permeability for walkers, wheelers and cyclists, further detail is required of how non-motorised users would approach and safely cross junctions, noting a key objective from Oxfordshire County Council Street Design Guide (section 1.5) is that *"street design within a masterplan should provide a clear and permeable hierarchy of streets, routes and spaces which are inclusive and create safe, convenient ease of movement by all users."*

5.0 Areas of Concern

Assessment of Surrounding Infrastructure

It is noted that the submitted Transport Assessment does not provide a qualitative assessment of the walking and cycling provision in the local area or identify key routes to amenities. This is expected as part of NPPF paragraph 104 and necessitates / informs further more detailed discussions on how the current situation can be improved to meet the needs of the new population and bring about the step change necessary to deliver sustainable, active and healthy communities in line with current government policy.

Bicester Road

The Kidlington Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Figure 14 - identifies Bicester Road as part of the proposed cycling network and future residents of the proposed development would need to make use of this a daily basis if the development is to fulfil the policy criteria stated above.

It is not considered that the existing highway infrastructure along the Bicester Road corridor is suitable due to its lack of width and segregation. An existing footway is located on the west side of Bicester Road, however, it is noted from the plans that a footway would be provided along the access frontage of the proposed development, which would include a crossing to the east side. The applicant and the LPA, in conjunction with the Local Highway Authority (LHA) will need to ensure that new pedestrian / cycling facilities along the site frontage will connect to adjoining infrastructure to be delivered by any adjoining sites (or active travel schemes delivered by the LHA) that come forward in the future and built to a specification that meets current standards to avoid inconsistent provision.

In line with Policy PR4a (Sustainable Transport), it is required that a contribution is obtained to provide a segregated footway cycleway along the western side of the Bicester Road to support Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) plans of the road being part of the proposed cycling network and to ensure the route is in line with LTN 1/20 Table 4.2 and Inclusive Mobility , ensuring an accessible and inclusive environment for all walkers, wheelers and cyclists.

Bicester Road Pedestrian / Cyclist Crossing

In accordance with paragraph 104 of the NPPF, Active Travel England notes the location of the proposed pedestrian crossing in the Transport Assessment (drawing 10669-SK05) and would welcome further detail on the type of crossing to ensure its suitability for all users.

Oxford / Bicester Roundabout (Kidlington Roundabout)

The data presented in the Transport Assessment identifies two collision clusters on the roundabout approaches from Oxford Road and Bicester Road with four collisions recorded on each arm, two of which were severe injuries, with all eight involving cyclists. Consequently, and in consideration of the wider growth proposed for the area, it is recommended that these issues are addressed, with a solution for safe and attractive infrastructure progressed through the obtaining of developer contributions in line with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy PR4a (Sustainable Transport).

Route between the Bicester Road and A4260 Oxford Road

The Kidlington LCWIP identifies that future routes are intended to run through the site, along with the primary route along Bicester Road, as mentioned above. However, it is considered that the connections between Bicester Road and the Oxford Road require further thought, with particular attention to how they link with the site. This is essential in order to provide safe and convenient access for future residents to access the Sainsbury's supermarket and local amenities to the west. The public footpath that runs along the north side of Sainsbury's car park would appear to provide non-motorised access between Bicester Road and the Oxford Road and recommends a proportionate financial contribution is made to enhancing this route, along with the further cycling measures identified in Table 9 of the LCWIP.

Internal Movement Network

The application envisages that internal pedestrian and cycle movements will be catered for through on and off-carriageway provision. In line with this, Manual for Streets (section 3.6.8 - Table 3.2) recommends establishing a user hierarchy where pedestrians are considered first in the design process, followed by cyclists and then public transport users, and the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide also follows this user hierarchy. Further details on the infrastructure provided for pedestrians and cyclists to travel along the Primary Street link would be welcomed, with particular reference to the need to ensure priority at junctions. This information can then be agreed to inform produce a high quality Design Codes that takes into account the requirements of the OCC Street Design Guide.

Travel Planning

The submitted travel plan requires further detail on the level of active travel trips that are forecast to be generated. Details of the infrastructure to be provided and how its use will be embedded by the initiatives in the travel plan should be outlined along with confirmation of the actions to be taken if the targets are not met. These should be outlined and committed to with the intention for these to be secured, implemented, and monitored through planning conditions / S106 obligations. The travel plans should be supported and funded for the whole of the development for an agreed timescale or until the targets are met and sustained for a set period.

6.0 Next Steps

This advice should be provided to the LPA case officer and forwarded to the agent and applicant. ATE would be content to review further submitted information to help address the above identified queries and deficiencies with a view to providing a further response and recommended wording for planning conditions and obligations.