

## APPENDIX 2

### 1.0 PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS AND SCREENING OPINION

1.1 The Applicant entered into pre-application discussions with Cherwell District Council relating to the Siemens Healthineers proposal. The key points in the Council's response to the pre-application are set out below:

- Securing the economic future of the district is set out as the primary priority of the Cherwell Local Plan (Part 1) 2011-2031 (CLP). It seeks to focus development at the existing main urban areas of Bicester and Banbury and within the built-up limits of other settlements or on allocated site.
- The proposed development site is not an allocated employment site and as such would be inconsistent with the CLP strategy in this regard.
- Policy SLE1 of the CLP does support new employment proposals in rural areas if they meet the criteria set out.
- This includes demonstrating the need and benefits of the proposed development at the specified site and providing an assessment of alternative available sites consistent with the CLP policy that would not be suitable for accommodating this particular development.
- An assessment of alternative sites should not only include employment and mixed-use allocations within Bicester but should also include strategic sites in Banbury.
- Existing employment sites or previously developed sites should also be considered, and any assessment should seek to examine unallocated sites on the edge of the urban areas where possible.
- A detailed and robust Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken to identify and assess the effects of the development and any application will also need to be supported by a detailed landscaping scheme, which responds to the built form of the development within its context.
- Tree and Hedgerow surveys and Ecological surveys should be undertaken to inform the layout design and subsequent landscaping scheme, having regard to the need to provide for biodiversity gain within the development.
- The design and orientation of the buildings should therefore be carefully considered.
- High quality and well-designed landmark/gateway buildings which would be place making and mark the principal entrance to Bicester.
- The sustainability credentials of the scheme, not just economic but also social and environmental, should be a key factor in making a case for the development proposals.
- The nature and scale of the proposed development provides a significant opportunity to introduce sustainable infrastructure and exemplary operational practices and should form an integral part of the development proposals.
- The traffic and transport implications of the proposals will be key considerations in justifying and bringing the development forward.
- The location of the proposed development site is sub-optimal, being some distance from Bicester and sustainable travel opportunities such as walking and cycling will be reduced.

- An Air Quality Assessment, to include damage cost calculations will be required and should assess the impact on the Bicester Air Quality Management Area.
- There is a known issue of flooding in this area and in Wendlebury village where this site drains to and given the high groundwater water table, and this will need to be addressed as part of the proposals.

1.2 The Applicant undertook further pre-application discussions to agree with the Council the extent of the sites to be considered in the site search to demonstrate that there were no other alternative available sites consistent with the CLP policy that would be suitable for accommodating the SHMT operation. The Council included, in its advice, the following parameters for the site search.

- Urban settlements, Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. Policy SLE1 states that the Local Plan has an urban focus and the assessment of allocated sites (1) identifies those sites allocated for strategic employment development within the Local Plan. However, the policy does not provide for development of land beyond the built-up limits of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington on non-allocated sites. Whilst it could be argued that greenfield sites on the edge of towns should be assessed as part of any site search exercise, it is considered more appropriate that the assessment considers land within the built-up limits of towns and it is suggested that existing employment areas, as identified on the Local Plan Proposals Maps should form the basis for this.
- Category A Villages: The assessment of sites should include existing employment sites within, and any potential sites on the edge of the villages. The assessment could be high level and consider matters such as impact on the character of the village, and infrastructure issues but need not necessarily be undertaken in detail on a site-by-site basis.
- Other Rural Sites: This should include existing employment sites and not land in other uses or isolated greenfield sites.