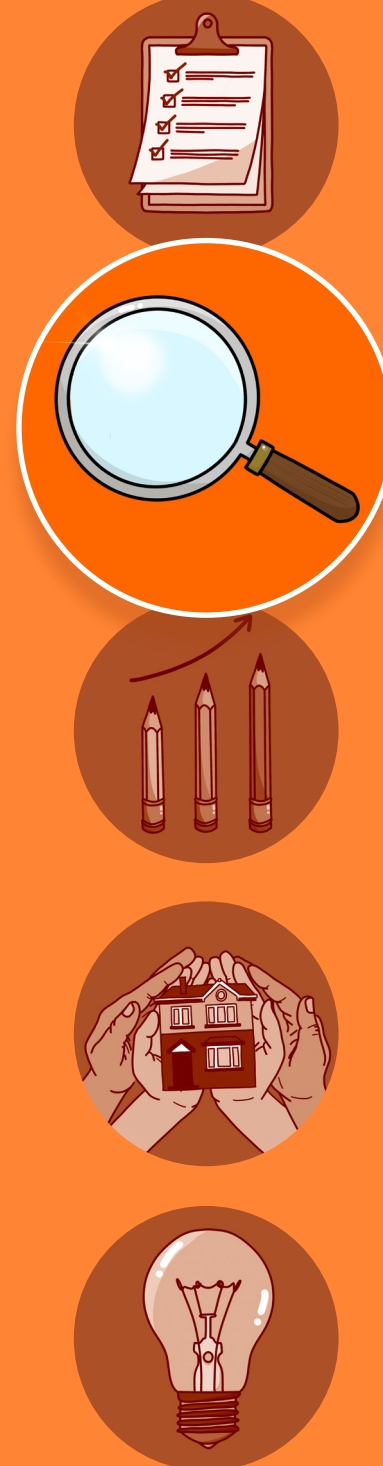


DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



**Local Services & Facilities**

**Local Retail and Services**

Although Caversfield itself is predominantly residential in use, the nearby estates of Elmsbrook and Southwold supply numerous services and facilities, including Primary Schools, a nursery, Business Centre, convenience store, takeaways and a hairdresser.

Additionally, further uses can be reached within a 15-20 minute walk of the Site, or a 5-7 minute cycle ride. These include post offices and GP surgery.

Numerous industrial/commercial estates are located around the eastern periphery of Bicester, and include larger services such as supermarkets, hardware stores, and storage units.

**Employment**

Further business centres and industrial estates (such as Link 9 - a major new distribution, production and headquarters commercial development), and other facilities such as Bicester Heritage and Bicester Village offers extensive local employment opportunities.

Planning permission has been granted for 'Bicester Gateway' - an 'innovation community' including 47,500ft<sup>2</sup> (4,400m<sup>2</sup>) of office and Research & Development space, with a mixed use co-working hub of 8,550 ft<sup>2</sup> (800m<sup>2</sup>), an ancillary gym, and 180m<sup>2</sup> of café space. The Gateway will be located along the south-eastern periphery of Bicester, and could be accessed from the Site via bus of bicycle. Looking to the future, this Gateway will provide hundreds of new employment opportunities available to local residents within the next decade.



Link 9 - New distribution, production and headquarters development (north-east Bicester)

**Local Education**

Bicester offers several options for education, including; Gagle Brook Primary School, Bure Park Primary School, Southwold Primary School, Glory Farm School (Primary), and The Cooper School (Secondary).

Bicester Heritage also offers apprenticeship schemes in historic vehicle restoration, run by Activate Learning and Banbury and Bicester College.



Gagle Brook Primary School (Elmsbrook)

**Walk/Cycle**

Pathways along Fringford Road and the A4421 offer convenient travel by foot into Bicester, giving convenient and safe access to public transport and local services.

There are no dedicated National Cycling Network routes in the immediate vicinity of the Site, however the local roads are considered safe and suitable for cycle trips to Bicester, with several signed shared footway/cycleway routes provided across the local highway network.

These official cycle trails create safe and often vehicle-free links to Bicester North Station (8-10 minute cycle from the Site), Bicester town centre (10-12 minute cycle), and the multiple business/industrial estates to the east of Bicester (8-13 minute cycle).

**Public Transport**

The closest bus stop to the Site is located on Aunt Em's Lane (the Old Vicarage bus stop), just next to the Site boundary. The E1 service operates from here, providing services around every 30 minutes from Elmsbrook to Bicester Village, where a second train station is located.

Further bus stops include that on the A4421 (Caversfield Turn, a 10 minute walk from the Site) which services the X5 bus, connecting Oxford to Bedford via Bicester, Buckingham and Milton Keynes. Both Bicester North and Bicester Village Stations offer national rail services. Connections from Bicester North include Banbury (15 minutes), High Wycombe (25 minutes), London Marylebone (50 minutes), and Birmingham (1 hour).

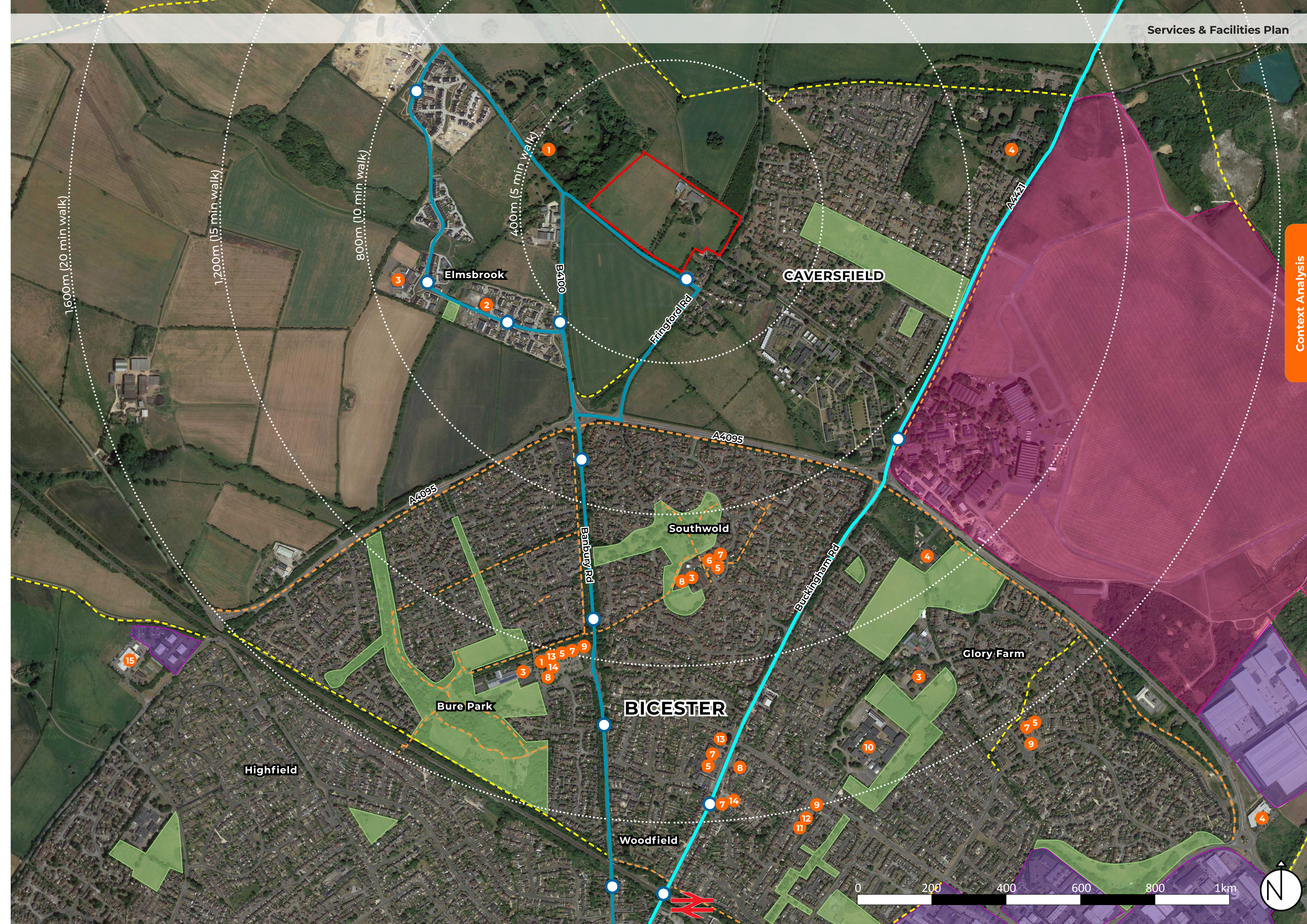
These services provide a realistic option for sustainable travel to both local and national employment locations as well as for recreational, leisure and educational purposes within larger towns and cities.



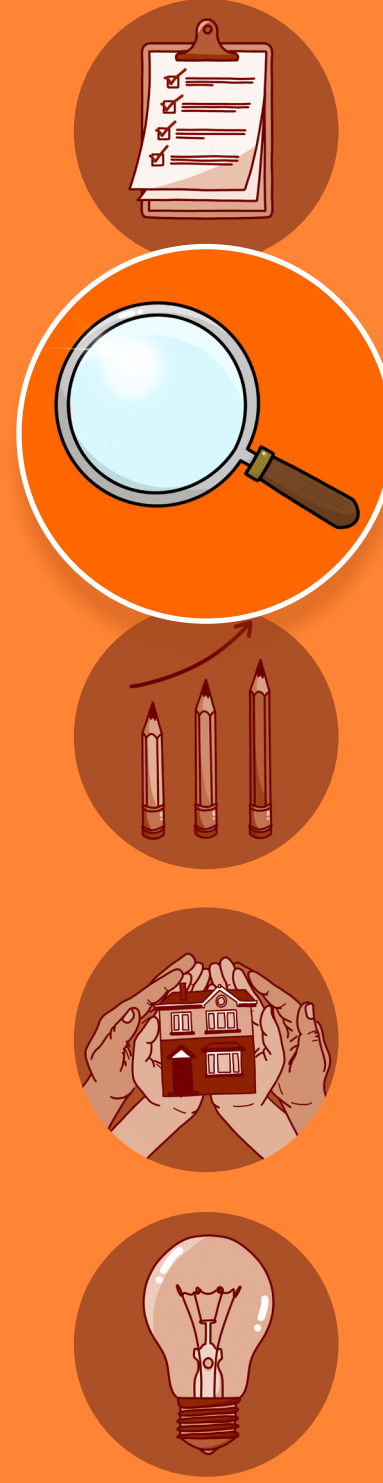
Bure Park Nature Reserve

**KEY:**

- Site boundary
- Place of Worship 1
- The Eco Business Centre 2
- Primary Schools 3
- Nursing/Care Home 4
- Convenience store 5
- Hairdresser 6
- Takeaways 7
- Pre School /Nursery 8
- Public House/Restaurant 9
- Secondary School 10
- Post office 11
- Bakery 12
- Doctors 13
- Pharmacy 14
- Thames Valley Police 15
- Bicester Heritage & The Bicester Aerodrome Company
- Industrial/Commercial Estates
- Existing Green Space (Local Plan 2011-2031)
- Public Rights of Way
- Cycle trails
- Primary bus stop
- E1 bus (Elmsbrook-Bicester Village)
- X5 bus (Oxford-Cambridge)
- Bicester North Station



Context Analysis



## Landscape

### Baseline

With consideration of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (Adopted 2015) Plan 5.2 Key Policies Map: Bicester, the following is noted:

**National landscape designations:** The Site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a Nationally designated landscape such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Park, or within a designated Green Belt location; and

**Local landscape designations:** The Site does not lie within, adjoin, or is close to a locally designated landscape, such as a Significant Gap, Green Space or similar local designation. Additionally, the application Site is found outside of, and not adjoining the RAF Bicester Conservation Area.

### Site description

The application Site is managed for equestrian pasture, and contains typical features such as medium scale rectilinear field pattern and undulating landform. The fields area enclosed by native hedgerows and scattered broad leaf trees. However, it was noted there is a degree of degradation of landscape character noted on Site including outgrown and gappy hedgerows to the eastern and western Site quarters.

The application Site is located along the western edge of Caversfield village. In landscape and village character terms, the Site is found within this transitional area from open countryside to the built core of the village. This village edge is characterised by a concentration of existing residential built form along Fringford Road, with the Site nestled within gently undulating landform and surrounded by mature vegetation.

Landscape fabric to the north and east has a large field pattern defined by extensive hedgerows, scattered hedgerow trees, tree belts and woodland plantations. This encloses the landscape limiting discernibility across the open countryside. To the east, beyond Caversfield and the former RAF Bicester, the large field pattern is enclosed by extensive field hedgerows, riparian tree belts and woodland plantations. There is sight of existing residential development along Fringford Road from the Site, where they bound the site, and are aligned along the route.

The north western and northern edge of the Site is enclosed by a native woodland and extensive tree groups associated with Caversfield House, with the western edge defined by extensive tree groups and native hedgerow, which has some minor. The approach to Caversfield from Bicester is defined by the small field pattern and concentration of trees around its periphery.

### Landscape character Regional

Landscape Character is assessed at County level by the Oxfordshire Wildlife Landscape Study (2004). It provides a background on landscape character, and is explicitly referred to within the Local Plan (Policy ESD13, Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement).

The Site is located within the large Woodlands Estatelands Landscape Type and the sub area of the Middleton Stoney Local Landscape Character Area. The Study comes to the following conclusions:

*'The area is dominated by large arable fields and localised improved grassland. There are smaller grass fields around villages, particularly Bletchington and Kirtlington. Woodland is a strong landscape element, and large woodland blocks are associated with the parklands and estates. It is mainly ancient semi-natural woodland, with species such as ash, oak, hazel, and field maple, as well as mixed plantations. Throughout the landscape, there are belts of young mixed and coniferous plantations next to roadside hedges and they often function as field boundaries.'*

### Local

The most up to date guidance on the local landscape character of the area can be found in the Cherwell District Council Landscape Assessment, which was published in 2010. This assessment provides supplementary planning guidance, and is referred to directly within the pertinent Local Plan policy.

The assessment by the Local Planning Authority finds the Site to be located wholly within the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands Landscape Character Area. The Local Planning Authority describes this Landscape Character Area as follows:

*'This area is characterised primarily by the extensive remains of eighteenth century parklands and estate farmland which I Estate lie in a band across Oxfordshire and continues into Northamptonshire, which was favoured by the gentry since it was J Farmlands within easy travelling distance from London.'*

The Local Planning Authority continues to note the following typical characteristics of this landscape character area:

- This area is noticeably the better wooded than the rest of Cherwell District, with considerable plantations which are associated with extensive areas of parkland. Much of the land is in arable cultivation, with woodlands which divide and enclose the landscape on a large scale, there are also long views across rolling open fields where there are substantial breaks in tree cover;
- Particularly towards the north of the area, woodland cover decreases and the countryside opens out. A typical rolling hill landscape with a patchwork of fields punctuated by hedgerow trees and copses. In

some areas this is disappearing, resulting in a more open landscape where only lines of trees remain to mark a previous field boundary.

- Areas of 18th century parklands, are the most notable features of interest within this character. Many of which still surrounded by their original limestone walls, contain a pastoral scene with scattered trees and small woods, with beech oak and horse chestnut.
- Large scale arable farmland enclosed by woods and copses are found across this area, where the landscape is structured on a large scale by woodland belts. The fields tend to be large and open without any boundary. Plantations are located along watercourses, roads or other natural boundaries.
- To the north of Bicester the landscape opens out into a rolling arable landscape with strong field pattern copses and trees. The patchwork of arable and pasture is given definition by well maintained hedges. Many of the Hedges contain regularly spaced mature hedgerow Oaks.'

The application Site demonstrates a limited number of the foregoing key characteristics, which are mainly landform, field pattern, hedgerows and scattered hedgerows trees. Open, gently undulating landform with agricultural fields managed for arable and pastoral grassland is typical of the host landscape character area. Around the settlement edge of Caversfield and the edge of the Former RAF Bicester, there is more discernible concentration of tree cover. The representativeness of particular landscape features: as noted above, is seen within the Site and its immediate setting.

### Arboriculture

Arboricultural information confirms that there are no trees on Site that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

### Current and future development

The Site is situated on the northern periphery of Bicester town. It is pertinent to reflect on the current and future development initiatives which are taking place within the context of the application Site. These approved and strategic allocated developments will neighbour the Site and planned for delivery primarily over the lifetime of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (Adopted 2015).

However, this situation is fluid and is currently altering with the delivery of new housing and employment built form, tourism facilities and the associated road and engineering infrastructure to support this expansion of Bicester town.

## Design Considerations

A number of key design considerations have emerged following the baseline review, and should be incorporated into the evolving masterplan.

These are summarised below:

- Creation of a landscape - led scheme which retains and enhances the key features of the Site;
- Retention of existing on Site trees where possible, to ensure the proposals are introduced into a mature landscape setting;
- Use of native tree and shrub species of local provenance to respect and enhance the local landscape character of the area;
- Introduction of new public open space (POS) with opportunities for recreation, relaxation, formal and informal play;
- Enhancement of the ecological value and habitat connectivity of the Site through the landscape - led design;
- Creation of a variety of safe and accessible green spaces to meet the amenity, recreational and functional needs of the growing community, ensuring people have easy access to high quality and spacious local green spaces, close to where they live;
- Play locations to be multi-functional, incorporating imaginative, versatile spaces that can support play, relaxation and learning opportunities, as well as supporting the natural environment through new sensory planting and ecological enhancements; and
- Play spaces located and designed in such a way that they benefit from natural surveillance from surrounding properties.



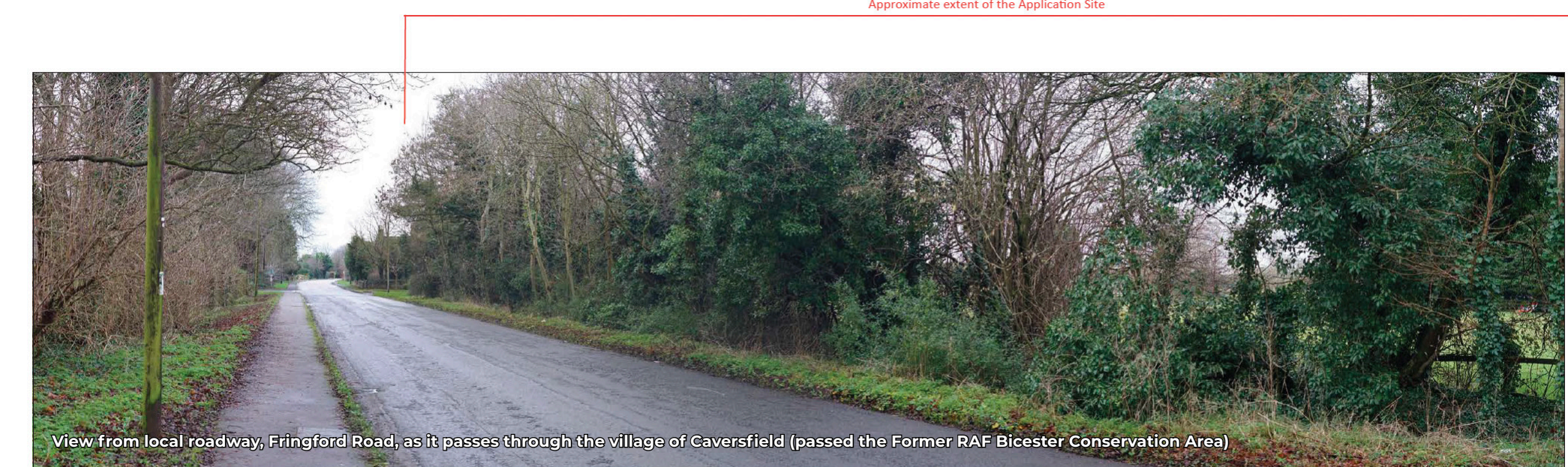
Example of natural play area



View from PRoW (LPA ref:153/1/10) passing through open countryside on the village edge of Caversfield



View from the junction of B4100 Bicester Road and the local minor roadway, Aunt Ems Lane, to the north west of Caversfield



View from local roadway, Fringford Road, as it passes through the village of Caversfield (passed the Former RAF Bicester Conservation Area)

**Ecology**

A detailed ecological and biodiversity assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken by EDP to demonstrate a technical understanding of the ecological constraints of the Site.

This involved baseline data collection, providing input into the scheme design to maximise ecological opportunities, assessing impacts on important ecological features and preparing an appropriate mitigation strategy.

The baseline ecological conditions within and around the Site were established through a desk study data search together with range of field surveys between 2021 and 2023, namely an Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey; hedgerow survey; pilot breeding bird survey; bat roosting and activity surveys; great crested newt survey; and reptile survey.

**Statutory & Non-statutory sites**

The assessment concludes that there will be no impacts upon any statutory designations of international or national importance. Bure Park Local Nature Reserve is located approximately 1km downstream of the Site, however potential hydrological impacts can be readily avoided through surface water management during construction and the sustainable drainage system (SuDS) embedded in the development design.

The majority of the Site is made up of semi-improved and poor semi-improved grassland habitats which are of Local-level and less than Local-level importance respectively. Some boundary hedgerows are present which are of Local level importance and are also priority habitats. All other habitats present are of Site-level importance or less.

**Protected Species**

With respect to protected, priority or other notable species, the Site supports a breeding bird assemblage of Site-level importance only; a single tree of Low suitability for roosting bats; one building found to support a minor bat roost; an assemblage of foraging/commuting bats of Local-level importance; and small populations of common lizard and grass snake.

The development layout retains important habitats as far as possible, including those important in supporting protected and priority species.

**Habitats**

Some habitat loss is unavoidable to make way for the proposed development, however habitat enhancement and creation is proposed, including a dedicated ecological enhancement zone with no public access on the western edge of the Site, which would mitigate such losses and result in net gains in the Site's biodiversity value.

This has been demonstrated using a biodiversity metric, which indicates that the scheme is capable of achieving at least 10% net gain in Habitat Units and in Hedgerow Units. The proposed ecological strategy for the development also includes:

- Measures to protect habitats and avoid harm to species during construction;
- Measures to enhance opportunities for protected and priority species; and
- Measure to maintain and manage features of ecological importance in the long-term.

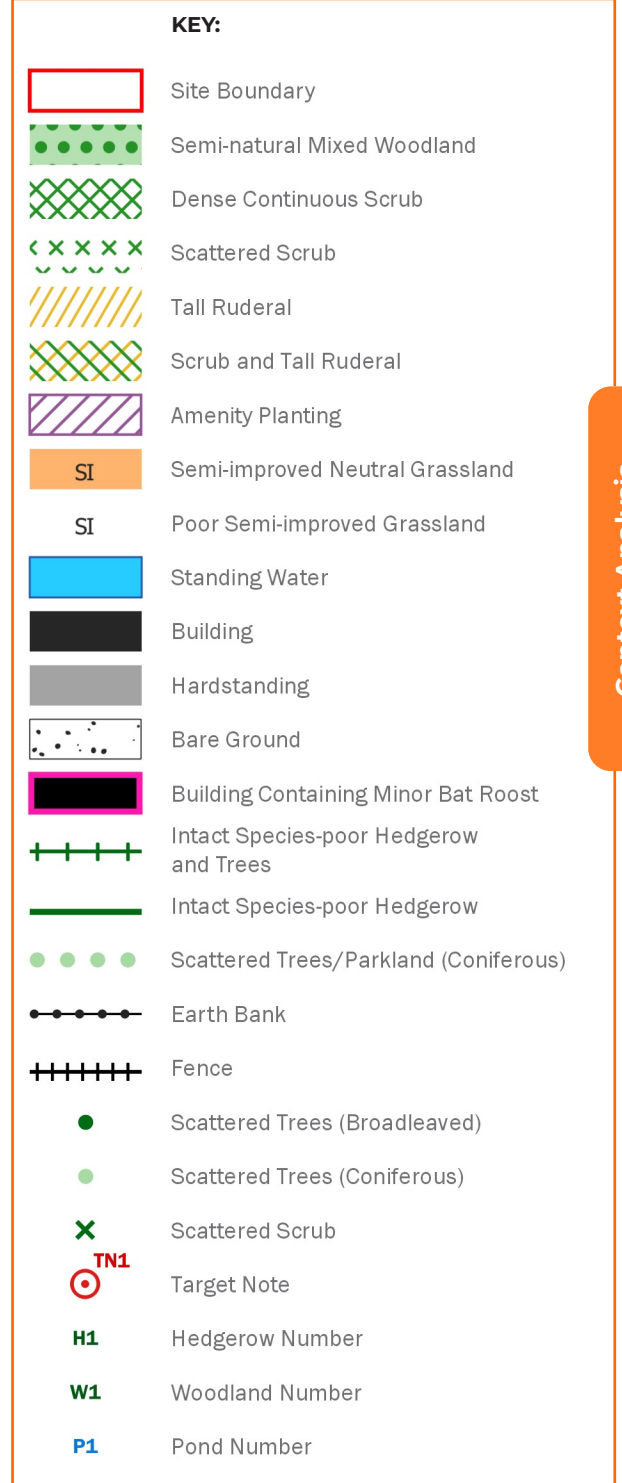
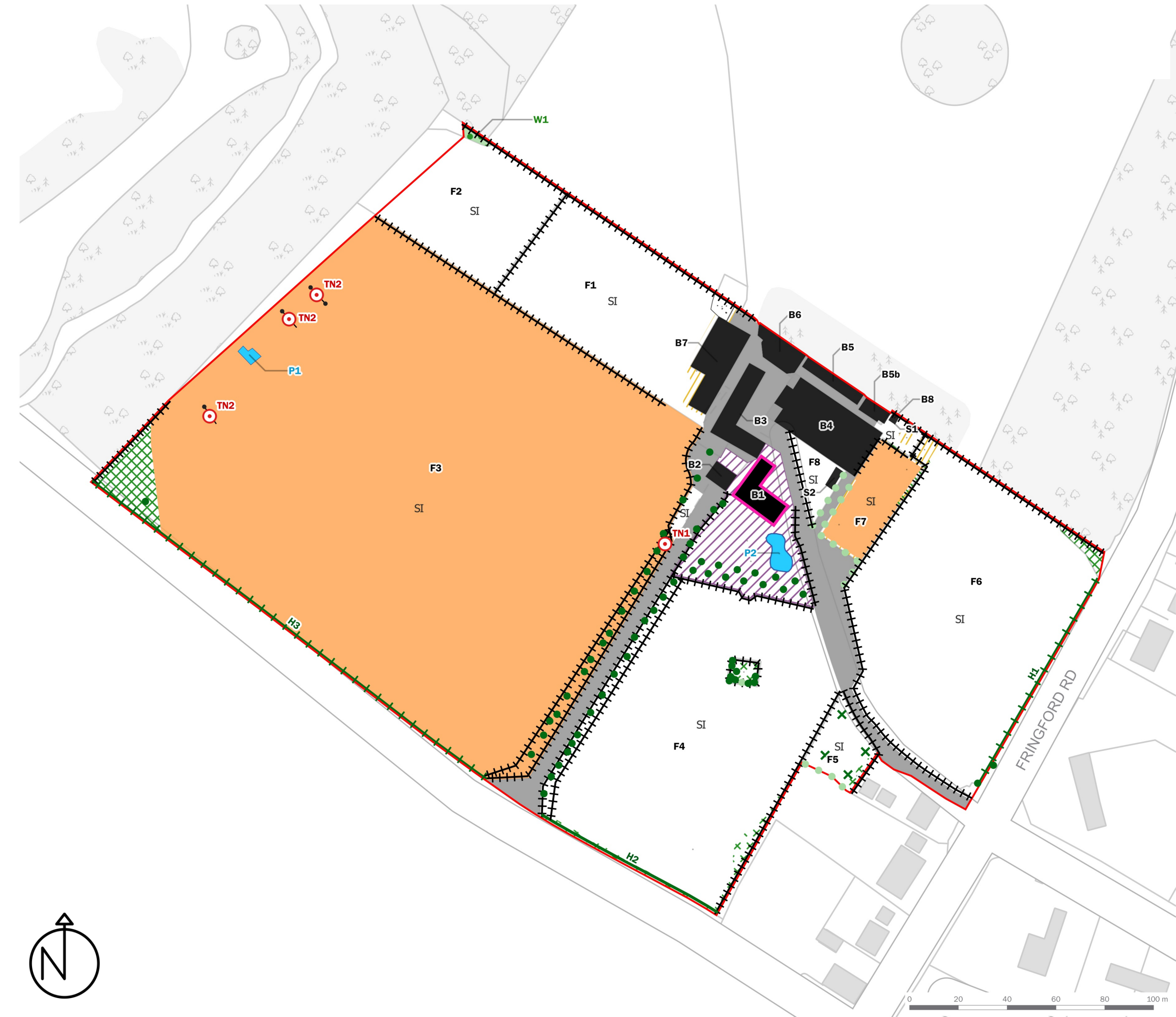
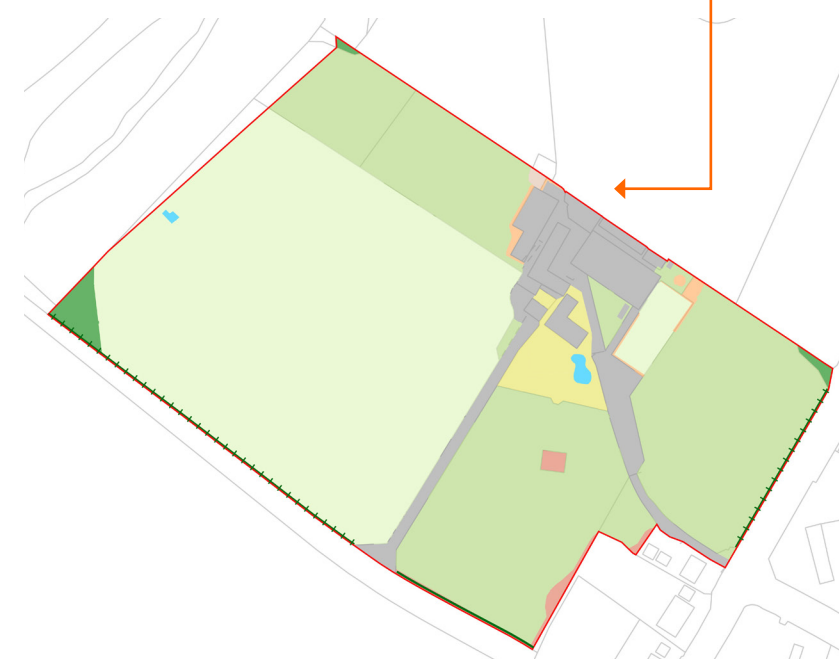
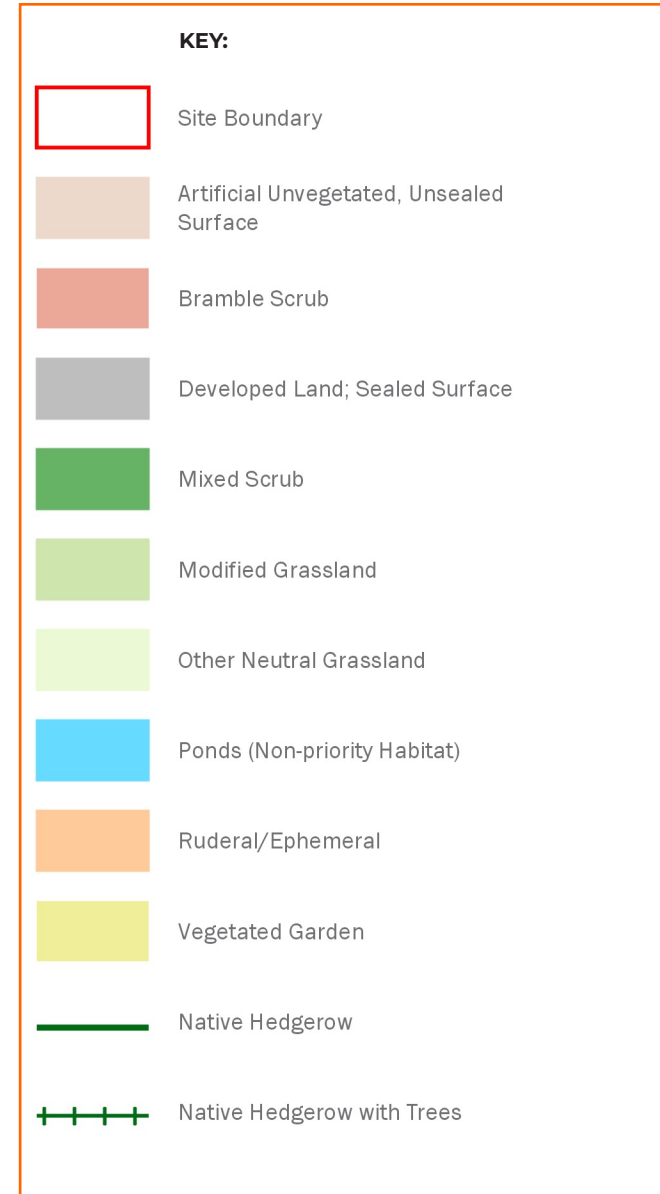
In light of the above, EDP's assessment concludes that the proposed development is capable of compliance with relevant planning policy and legislation and can deliver significant benefits for wildlife and biodiversity.

**Design Considerations**

A number of key design considerations have emerged following the detailed ecological and biodiversity assessment, and should be incorporated into the evolving masterplan.

These are summarised below:

- Existing vegetation where at all possible should be retained;
- Existing boundary hedgerows of Local-level importance should be retained and enhanced;
- Important habitats as far as possible, including those important in supporting protected and priority species, should be retained and celebrated;
- Where unavoidable habitat loss occurs, habitat creation and enhancement should mitigate this;
- Proposal of a dedicated ecological enhancement zone with no public access on the western edge of the Site, should be designed into the layout. This would mitigate such losses and result in net gains in the Site's biodiversity value.
- Measures should be taken to protect habitats and avoid harm to species during construction;
- Measures to enhance opportunities for protected and priority species should be undertaken; and
- Measures to maintain and manage features of ecological importance in the long-term should be prioritised.





## Transport & Movement

### Access

Vehicular access to the development Site is proposed off Fringford Road via a new priority-controlled T-junction c. 50m north of the existing Fringford Road junction with Skimmingdish Lane.

Appropriate visibility splays can be provided at the access junction in line with the observed traffic speeds along the Site frontage; however, the development will propose a revised speed limit of 30mph to be delivered along the Site frontage via TRO, to be discussed with the Local Highway Authority (LHA) in due course.

As part of the access strategy, a number of traffic calming features are proposed to support the speed limit reduction and assist in prioritising travel by sustainable modes. This includes relocating the existing gateway feature on Fringford Road some 15m south of its current location at which point the speed limit reduction to 30mph is proposed.

Three sets of speed cushions are proposed at a distance of c.70m apart, with the new access junction and Skimmingdish Lane forming a raised table junction, which will also incorporate a new 'Tiger' pedestrian/cycle crossing facility on Fringford Road, between the two junctions.

The Site access junction itself has been designed to accommodate all vehicles that will require access, including large refuse vehicles.

### Local Highway Network Capacity

Observations carried out during peak periods on the local highway network have indicated that the junctions in the immediate vicinity of the Site operate well within capacity, with minimal queues and delays.

The proposed residential development will have a low trip generation of just over one vehicle per minute during the peak periods, and the Site access junction is forecast to operate well within capacity at all times.

Further afield, the impact across the wider highway network is expected to be acceptable but is being assessed following a scoping agreement with the Local Highway Authority.

### Sustainable Travel Options

The proposed development Site is close to a range of local services and facilities, which include schools, a medical practice, local convenience stores, restaurants and places of worship.

Access to all these facilities is available via the existing footway and cycle network in the vicinity of the Site.

Shared pedestrian and cycle facilities are present at the Fringford Road/A4095 junction to the south of the Site, as well as at the Skimmingdish Lane/A4421 junction; providing access south, via a network of traffic-free

routes into Bicester, and connecting to the railway stations, Bicester Town Centre and Bicester Village.

National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 51 runs through the centre of Bicester and is accessed at Sheep Street/Bell Lane.

The proposed development will deliver a new 3.0m wide shared pedestrian and cycle facility along the eastern side of Fringford Road, therefore providing a traffic-free connection from the Site down to the existing provision at the A4095 junction; this will deliver a significant benefit to both existing and future residents in Caversfield, promoting travel by sustainable modes and significantly improving the existing connectivity between the settlement and Bicester to the south.

Existing bus stops are located within walking distance and provide a good level of service in each direction between the Site, Bicester, Brackley, Milton Keynes, Buckingham, Bedford and Oxford; a new pedestrian connection is proposed along the northern side of Aunt Ems Lane, connecting the Site to the consented zebra crossing scheme at St Laurence Church.

A Travel Plan will also support the development Site and seeks to promote sustainable travel from the development, including the provision of public transport vouchers for residents.



### Design Considerations

A number of key design considerations have emerged following the baseline review, and should be incorporated into the evolving masterplan.

These are summarised below:

- The layout of the Site should be designed to promote access for pedestrians and cyclists;
- The arrangements for on-site parking should be determined in line with Cherwell District Council's parking standards; and
- The layout of streets should respect the existing topography of the Site as well as promote a permeable and legible movement network to aid in wayfinding.

## Flood Risk & Drainage

A Flood Risk Assessment prepared by MEC has been undertaken to provide an overview of pertinent flooding and drainage matters related to the promotion of the proposed Site for residential development.

### Flood Risk

The Environment Agency flood maps shows the Site lies within Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk). This means that this area has a chance of flooding each year of less than 0.1%.

### Surface Water

The Environment Agency surface water flood maps indicate the majority of the Site is designated to be at very low risk from surface water flooding.

### Groundwater

Soil infiltration testing identified the presence of perched groundwater or damp soils. It is unlikely that the perched groundwater will have the same hydrologic characteristics as natural groundwater and based on preliminary investigations the risk of groundwater flooding is likely to be low.

### Flood Mitigation

In terms of mitigation, Site wide drainage infrastructure, including the use of permeable paving, will manage surface water flows and direct them to a point of discharge. If groundwater is encountered, any affected dwellings should have suspended ground floor slabs.

### Drainage



In accordance with the drainage hierarchy, surface water will be stored, treated, and discharged via gravity, at a controlled rate of 2.0l/s, into the existing public surface water sewer within Fringford Road.

Surface water flows will be conveyed to the proposed attenuation basin on-site. A storage volume of 1,759.4m<sup>3</sup> is required within the proposed attenuation basin and geo-cellular tank for all events up to and including the 1%AEP40CC plus urban creep. Additional drainage features including swales, permeable paving and rain gardens will be used across the site and will provide extra storage on site. Permeable paving will act as a first treatment stage for any run-off and will ensure adequate surface water treatment is provided.

### Foul Water

The disposal of foul water from the Site will be via a connection into the foul water sewer within Fringford Road at MH5901. Given the levels on site, foul water will discharge via gravity, subject to a formal Section 106 agreement.

### Design Considerations

A number of key design considerations have emerged following the baseline review, and should be incorporated into the evolving masterplan.

These are summarised below:

- The proposed attenuation basin should be located within the Site in such a way that it responds to existing Site levels, root protection zones and so that it able to discharge into the existing drainage ditch.
- The proposed basin should be sized and positioned to accommodate the requirements of the new development and the existing constraints of the Site.
- Opportunities should be provided for on-street (planted) swales both for drainage and to help characterise the development.

