

# Symmetry Park, Bicester

## Economic Benefits Assessment



Site Layout. Source: Tritax Symmetry, pHp Architects, 2024.





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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose

1.1 Savills has been commissioned by Tritax Big Box Developments (TBBD) to assess the economic benefits of the proposed Symmetry Park Bicester Phase 3 development (the Proposed Development) in Cherwell District.

## 1.2. Economic Benefits Summary

1.1 We have estimated the number of jobs and gross value added (GVA) which could be generated by the Proposed Development. Cherwell District is the area to which the development's impacts are measured to.

1.1 The Proposed Development consists of the construction of two units and associated infrastructure on the land adjacent to Symmetry Park, Bicester Phases 1 and 2. The total floor area proposed consists of 25,856 sqm (gross external area, GEA) of logistics floorspace (Use Class B8), with ancillary office space (Use Class E (g)(i)).

1.1 We estimate that the construction phase, which is expected to last two years<sup>1</sup>, would support around 80 net additional construction jobs per annum on average.

1.1 Once complete the Proposed Development is anticipated to generate around 300 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) net additional onsite and offsite jobs in Cherwell. The onsite operational phase jobs are expected to add around £11 million in GVA to the local economy per annum.

1.1 The proposed development is considered to be beneficial for the local economy. Benefits are summarised in **Table 1.1** below.

**Table 1.1 Economic and Social Benefits Summary**

Outcome	Amount
Total construction jobs supported per year in Cherwell	80
Total operational onsite jobs (gross, rounded)	380
Total onsite and offsite operational jobs generated in Cherwell (net additional, rounded)	300
Total GVA p.a. (rounded)	£11 million

Source: Savills, 2024.

## 1.3. Report Structure

- Section 2 – Site and development context
- Section 3 – Economic benefits
- Section 4 – Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> A construction period of 2 years presents a 'worst-case' scenario as the construction may be delivered in 1 year according to BCIS.

## 2. Site and Development Context

2.1 This section first details the Proposed Development and its context, including the subject site's current use and location.

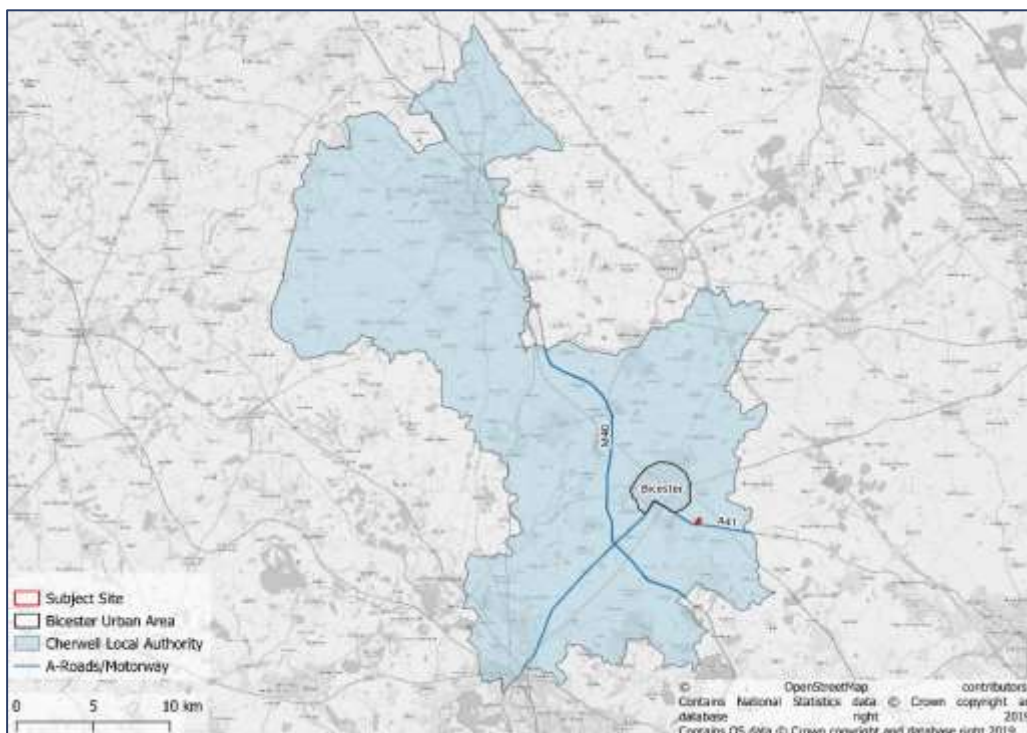
### 2.2. Site Description

2.1 The application site is within Cherwell District and is located 1.6 miles to the south east of Bicester town, adjacent to the A41.

2.1 The surrounding area mainly comprises of agricultural land and a number of small businesses. Bicester Caravan and Leisure and L C Hughes Metal Recycling & Car Breakers are both adjacent to the site. There are also two dwellings, 'The Bungalow' and 'Windmill Cottage' located to the east. To the north of the site is agricultural land, beyond which is allocated as housing in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (Policy Bicester 12 South East Bicester). There are three vacant agricultural buildings in the north-east corner of the site.

2.1 The subject site is approximately 6.7 hectares in size and is currently in use as agricultural land. The subject site is close to key infrastructure, as well as good transport connections, with direct access to the A41. The site's location within Cherwell is shown below in **Figure 2.1** and **Figure 2.2**.

**Figure 2.1 Site Location in Cherwell DC**



Source: Savills, 2024.

Figure 2.2 Site Location Relative to Bicester



Source: Savills, 2024.

### 2.3. Development Proposal

2.1 The Proposed Development consists of the construction of two units and associated infrastructure on the land adjacent to Symmetry Park, Bicester Phases 1 and 2. The total floor area proposed consists of 25,856 sqm (GEA) of logistics floor space (Use Class B8), with ancillary office space (Use Class E (g)(i)).

2.1 Each unit has the following floorspace:

- Unit 06: 14,836sqm (GEA) of logistics floor space (Use Class B8) which includes ancillary office space (Use Class E (g)(i));
- Unit 07: 11,020 sqm (GEA) of logistics floor space (Use Class B8) which includes ancillary office space (Use Class E (g)(i)).

2.1 The proposed site layout is shown in **Figure 2.3** below, which also details proposed car/heavy good vehicles (HGV) and cycle parking provision. Vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access to both units is proposed to be off the internal estate road. An emergency access is proposed to be created on the eastern boundary.

Figure 2.3 Proposed Site Layout



Source: Tritax Symmetry, pHP Architects, 2024.

## 2.4. Policy Context

2.1 Below we set out some of the policies relevant to our assessment of economic benefits. The national and local policy context emphasises the importance of supporting economic growth. This report quantifies the anticipated economic benefits and so is relevant to this policy context. Cherwell DC does not give any specific guidance on requirements to assess economic benefits, but does state the requirement of an Economic Statement for this development proposal. As set out in chapter 3 we have used relevant national guidance and standards on economic benefits assessments.

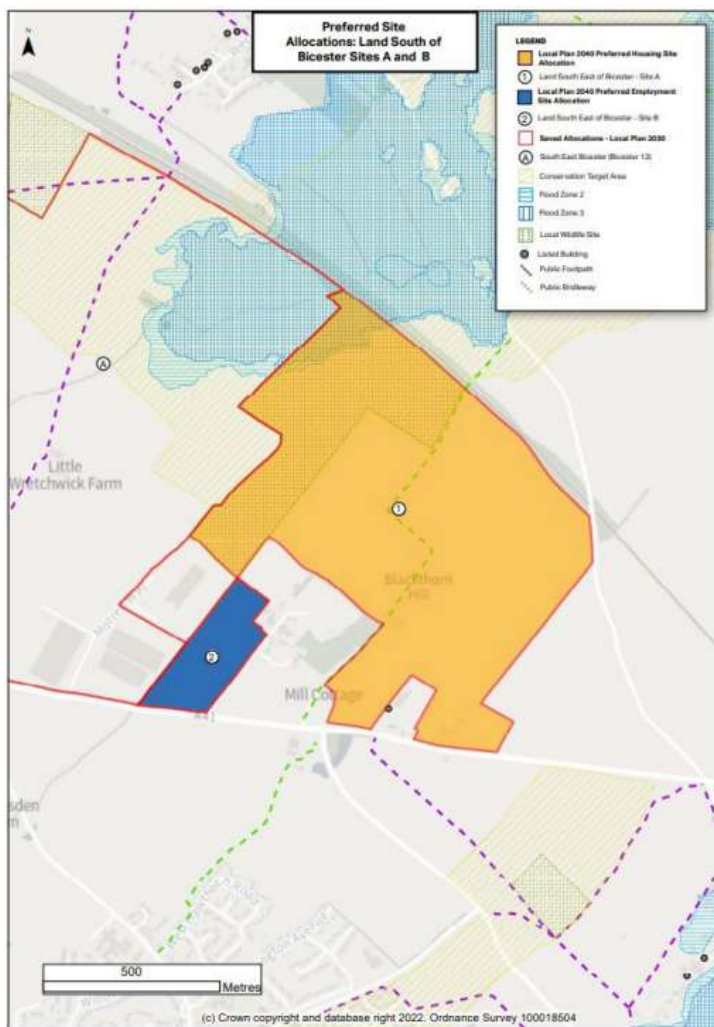
2.1 Cherwell DC's Developers Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2018) and Reg 18 Emerging Local Plan are also of relevance to the Proposed Development. Both documents seek to secure plans surrounding employment and skills, including an Employment, Skills and Training Plan (ESTP) (SPD, 2018) and Community Employment Plan (Emerging Local Plan). This report provides context for both plans, but does not cover all specified requirements, which we anticipate to be secured via condition.

### Designation of the Site

2.1 The majority of the existing Symmetry Park site (which the Proposed Development is adjacent to) is located in an area allocated for development in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 as a strategic allocation for employment development: Planning Policy Bicester 12: South East Bicester.

2.1 The site which is subject to this planning application is not allocated for development in the current Local Plan. However the site is identified for development in the emerging in the Cherwell District Council Local Plan Review 2042 (Regulation 19) Proposed Submission Plan, which was published on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and is due to go out for public consultation in December 2024. The Site is identified as a preferred employment site allocation and an extension to the successful Symmetry Park Phases 1 and 2. The allocation is for employment uses E(g)(i)/(ii)/(iii)/B2/B8 floorspace (Site Reference BIC 5).

**Figure 2.4 Site Allocation as per the Local Plan Review 2042 Submission Draft**



Source: Local Plan Review 2040 Consultation Draft (Regulation 18)

2.1 The relevant policy documents to the proposed development are set out below. Further details of the relevant planning policy context is given in the Planning Statement supporting the application for the Proposed Development.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023) gives policy direction on how development should be delivered sustainably, with a focus on community interest and social benefit. Development should perform an economic role by building a strong economy, perform a social role by supporting strong vibrant economies, and should perform an environmental role by contributing to and enhancing the natural, built, and historic environment. Paragraph 10-11 of the NPPF outline that at the ‘...heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development’.
- 2.1 The policy framework set out within Chapter 6 'Building a Strong, Competitive Economy' is of importance to this assessment. Paragraph 83 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.
- 2.1 The NPPF states that the economic objective of sustainable development is to ‘...help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.’
- 2.1 The Government has commenced consultation on an amended NPPF. This is a ‘growth focused’ NPPF with the scope of the consultation stating:
- ‘1. The Government has made clear that sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people. Our approach to delivering this growth will focus on three pillars: stability, investment and reform.*
- 2. Nowhere is decisive reform needed more urgently than in our planning system. The December 2023 changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) were disruptive to the sector and detrimental to housing supply. The Chancellor’s speech on 8 July committed to consulting on reforms to the NPPF to take a different, growth-focused approach.*
- 3. Today, we set out specific changes we propose to make immediately to the NPPF following this consultation. These changes – amending the planning framework, and universal, ambitious local plan coverage – are vital to deliver the Government’s commitments to achieve economic growth and build 1.5 million new homes. Specifically, they will:....*
- i. support economic growth in key sectors, aligned with the Government’s industrial strategy and future local growth plans, including laboratories, gigafactories, datacentres, digital economies and freight and logistics – given their importance to our economic future;...*
- 4. The proposed changes are explained in this document and set out in an accompanying draft NPPF.’*
- 2.1 The proposed amended NPPF policies are as follows (paragraph 84 and 85). The additional wording is on bold:
- ‘84. Planning policies should:*



a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;

b) set criteria, or and identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. **Appropriate sites for commercial development which meet the needs of a modern economy should be identified, including suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics...**

85. Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for: ...

b) storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations **that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation;...**

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

2.1 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (Live Document) is an online resource which provides further detail on the policies set out within the NPPF. The PPG is relevant to the Proposed Development and highlights the need for local authorities to identify economic needs in their areas in order to plan efficiently and effectively. This can be informed by the analysis of market signals, and engagement with logistics developers and occupiers to understand the changing nature of requirements in terms of the type, size and location of facilities.

### **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031**

2.1 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (2015) is the local planning policy of relevance to the Proposed Development, specifically 'Policy SLE 1: Employment Development' which supports new employment development subject to meeting criteria set out within the policy. The Local Plan's Strategic Objectives include: 'SO 1 To facilitate economic growth and employment and a more diverse local economy with an emphasis on attracting and developing higher technology industries; SO 2 To support the diversification of Cherwell's rural economy; and SO 3 To help disadvantaged areas, support an increase in skills and innovation, improve the built environment and make Cherwell more attractive to business by supporting regeneration.'

2.1 Cherwell DC's Appendix A: 'Validation of planning applications' sets out the document requirements that applicants need to submit to enable the proper validation and determination of planning applications. For Phase 3 Symmetry Park Bicester, 22 documents including an Economic Statement, Health Impact Assessment and Sustainability Statement are required. The full list of documents are outlined within the Planning Statement document.

- 2.1 Of relevance to this report Appendix A states that an Economic Statement should include '*regeneration benefits from the proposed development, including: details of any new jobs that might be created or supported; the relative floorspace totals for each proposed use (where known); and community benefits; and reference to any regeneration strategies that might lie behind or be supported by the proposal*'.

***The Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 Submission Draft (Regulation 19)***

- 2.1 The Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 Submission Draft (Regulation 19) states in the supporting text for Policy LEC 1 Meeting Business and Employment Needs (paragraph 3.152) that '*the total employment need for the District is around 280 hectares to 2042.*'*The Housing a*

- 2.1 y Core Policy LEC 3 New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites' states:

*'Proposals for new employment development (Use Classes E(g), B2 or B8) will be supported on unallocated sites in or on the edge of, the built-up area of main Towns, Local Service Centres and Larger Category A Villages, provided that the benefits are not outweighed by any harmful impacts, taking into account the following, a demonstrable need for the employment that cannot be accommodated on existing allocated sites....'*

### 3. Economic Benefits

#### 3.1. Introduction

3.1 The proposed development is expected to generate significant economic benefits for Cherwell including new jobs and GVA.

#### 3.2. Approach

3.1 Our assessment follows the established guidance including the Homes and Communities Agency Additionality Guide (HCA, 2014) and the Appraisal Guide (DLUHC/MHCLG, 2023). It assesses leakage, displacement and multiplier impacts of development projects. The overall economic benefits of the proposed development are assessed by calculating:

- Construction jobs (onsite & offsite)
- Operational jobs (onsite & offsite); and
- Gross Value Added (GVA) benefits.

#### 3.3. Employment Impacts

3.1 The proposal will generate temporary jobs during the construction period and permanent jobs at the operational stage.

##### ***Construction Jobs – 80 Construction Jobs Supported in Cherwell***

3.1 To calculate construction jobs generated by the proposed development we have used the anticipated construction cost estimate<sup>2</sup> and data on the output per construction worker in the South East of England<sup>3</sup>.

3.1 We estimate that the construction phase will generate around 70 onsite construction job years over the duration of the construction process. Assuming a 2-year construction period<sup>4</sup>, this equates to an average of 35 gross construction jobs per annum. This is referred to in the Additionality Guide (HCA, 2014) as the 'gross direct' employment and can be considered as the average number of workers on-site during the construction period. The precise number will depend on the phase of work and specific construction activities on-site.

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<sup>2</sup> Based upon Cost Plan No 04 (V1a), Tritax Symmetry, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Business population estimates for the UK and regions (2023) Department for Business and Trade.

<sup>4</sup> A construction period of 2 years presents a 'worst-case' scenario as the construction may be delivered in 1 year according to BCIS. If the construction period is 1 year, this will result in a higher number of average on-site construction jobs per annum.

3.1 We have also estimated how much of this employment is likely to be taken up by residents of Cherwell. Based on our detailed analysis of travel to work patterns in the area we assume that 26% of the construction workforce will live outside of Cherwell<sup>5</sup>. We allow for a low level of displacement (25%) from existing construction projects this is based on the Additionality Guide (HCA, 2014) recommendations and market reports. We then apply a multiplier of 2.1<sup>6</sup> which provides an estimate for the indirect construction employment effects (offsite benefits down the supply chain and from expenditure by the workers in the local area).

3.1 **Table 3.1** presents the estimated total on and off-site construction jobs created by the proposed development. The proposed development is expected to support around 80 net additional construction jobs for residents of Cherwell for the duration of the construction period.

**Table 3.1 Estimated Construction Phase Jobs**

Steps	Jobs
<b>Gross Direct Construction Jobs per annum</b>	68
<i>Leakage (26%)</i>	-18
<b>Onsite Jobs (for residents of Cherwell)</b>	<b>50</b>
<i>Displacement (25%)</i>	-13
Onsite Jobs (for residents of Cherwell) with displacement	38
<i>Multiplier: *(2.1-1)</i>	42
<b>Offsite Construction Jobs (Displacement + Multiplier)</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Net Direct and Indirect Construction Jobs per Annum (rounded)</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: Savills, 2024. Figures may not add up due to rounding.

### **Operational Jobs – 300 Operational Jobs for Cherwell**

3.1 The proposed development will generate direct onsite and indirect offsite operational jobs. Operational phase jobs would be generated once the construction has been completed and the Proposed Development is occupied. The assessment also considers displacement of jobs elsewhere, and indirect multiplier effects as a result of the new jobs on-site.

<sup>5</sup> This assumption is based on the 'Distance Travelled to Work by Industry (Workplace Population)' based on Census 2011 data. It is comprised of the proportion of employees with a commuting distance longer than 10km. The category used is F: Construction. Census 2011 data is used instead of Census 2021 data to avoid misrepresented commuting distances resulting from Covid-19.

<sup>6</sup> ONS, Input Output Analytical Tables, 2015.

- 3.1 Employment was calculated by applying the standard job density ratios from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Employment Density Guide (2015) to the floorspace of the Proposed Development. For B8 floorspace, the job density is estimated at 82.5 sq.m GEA per Full Time Equivalent (FTE)<sup>7</sup>. For E(g)(i) floorspace, the job density is estimated at 9.6 sq.m NIA per FTE<sup>8</sup>.
- 3.1 The total net local employment effects incorporates leakage, multiplier and displacement effects. Additionally, appropriate vacancy levels typical to the local market are accounted for:
- Leakage assumptions are based on Census 2011<sup>9</sup> and comprise the proportion of employees with a commuting distance longer than 10km (34%). The categories used are G, I Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants, and H, J Transport and Communication.
  - Displacement effects (25%) are based upon the Homes and Communities Agency Additionality Guide (2014).
  - ONS Input-Output Analytical Tables 2015 are used to estimate multiplier effects (1.60).
  - Vacancy rates (10%) are based upon CoStar local market data.
- 3.1 **Table 3.2** summarise the estimated onsite and offsite operational jobs generated by the proposed development. The proposed development is expected to generate approximately 380 gross on-site jobs. Once leakage, displacement and multiplier effects have been considered the proposed development is estimated to generate around 300 FTE net additional on and offsite jobs for residents of Cherwell.

**Table 3.2 Estimated Operational Phase Jobs**

Steps	Jobs
<b>Gross Direct Operational Jobs per annum</b>	<b>381</b>
<i>Leakage (34%)</i>	-129
<b>Onsite Jobs (for residents of Cherwell)</b>	<b>251</b>
<i>Displacement (25%)</i>	-63
Onsite Jobs (for residents of Cherwell) with displacement	188
<i>Multiplier: *(1.60-1)</i>	113
<b>Offsite Operational Jobs (Displacement + Multiplier)</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Net Direct and Indirect Operational Jobs per Annum (rounded)</b>	<b>300</b>

Source: Savills, 2024. Figures may not add up due to rounding.

<sup>7</sup> Homes and Communities Agency Additionality Guide (2014). The employment density uses the mid-point of 70 sq.m (GEA) per FTE for Regional Distribution Centres (RDCs) and 95 sq.m GEA per FTE National Distribution Centres.

<sup>8</sup> British Council for Offices, Office Occupancy, Density and Utilisation, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Census 2011 data is used instead of Census 2021 data to avoid misrepresented commuting distances resulting from Covid-19.

### 3.4. Gross Value Added

- 3.1 GVA is an indicator of wealth creation that measures the proposed development's contribution to the local economy. We have based our estimates on the average GVA generated per worker in the South East and the estimated number of operational jobs supported by the proposed development.
- 3.1 The average GVA per worker per annum for South East England is based on industry H: Transportation and Storage in the ONS Region by Industry Labour Productivity (2019).
- 3.1 **Table 3.3** present a summary of our GVA estimates. It shows that the GVA that the proposed development is expected to generate is c.£11 million per annum.

**Table 3.3 Estimated GVA**

Steps	GVA
Average GVA per worker per annum in the south East - H: Transportation and Storage	£57,876
Net additional Onsite Operational Jobs (Onsite Operational Jobs* Displacement 25%)	188
<b>Total GVA p.a. (Rounded)</b>	<b>£11 million</b>

Source: Savills, 2024.

## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The proposed development is considered to be beneficial for the local economy.
- 4.1 We have estimated the number of jobs and GVA which could be generated by the Proposed Development.
- 4.1 It is estimated that the construction phase, which is expected to last two years, could support around 80 construction jobs per annum on average.
- 4.1 Once complete the proposed development is anticipated to generate around 300 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) net additional onsite and offsite jobs in Cherwell. The on-site operational phase jobs are expected to add around £11 million in GVA to the local economy per annum. A summary of estimated benefits is shown in **Table 4.1** below.

**Table 4.1 Economic Benefits Summary**

Outcome	Amount
Total construction jobs supported per year in Cherwell	80
Total onsite and offsite operational jobs generated in Cherwell (net additional, rounded)	300
Total GVA p.a.(rounded)	£11 million

Source: Savills, 2024.










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## Appendix 1: Economic Benefits Infographic

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The Proposed Development	Capital Expenditure
 <p>The proposed development consists of the construction of two units and associated infrastructure on the land adjacent to Symmetry Park, Bicester Phases 1 and 2.</p>	 <p><b>Up to 25,856 sq.m of new floorspace</b></p> <p>The total floor area proposed consists of 25,856 sqm (GEA) of logistics floorspace (Use Class B8), with ancillary office space (Use Class E (g)(i)).</p>  <p><b>£27.6m</b></p> <p>To be spent on the construction of the Proposed Development</p>

Construction Jobs	Operational Jobs		Gross Value Added
 <p><b>80</b></p>	 <p><b>250</b></p>	 <p><b>50</b></p>	 <p><b>£11m p.a.</b></p>
<p>On-site full time equivalent (FTE) construction jobs per annum over a two year construction period.</p>	<p>Permanent on-site FTE jobs.</p>	<p>Permanent off-site supply chain jobs for residents of Cherwell.</p>	<p>Generated by on-site net additional employment.</p>

## Appendix 2: Glossary, Definitions and Accuracy

### Glossary

CDC	Cherwell District Council
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
ESTP	Employment, Skills and Training Plan
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GEA	Gross External Area
GVA	Gross Value Added
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPV	Net Present Value
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance

### Definitions

Relevant concepts used in the analysis are:

Term	Definition
Leakage	'The proportion of output that benefit those outside of the intervention's target area or group'.
Displacement	'The proportion of intervention outputs/outcomes accounted for by reduced outputs/outcomes elsewhere in the target area'.
Multiplier effects	'Further economic activity (jobs, expenditure or income) associated with additional local income and local supplier purchases'.
On-site Jobs	Jobs created on-site.
Off-site Jobs	Jobs in a supply chain and services. The result of multiplier effects after allowing for leakage and displacement.

### Accuracy

By its nature estimation of employment, GVA benefits are subject to a range of uncertainties. Our estimates are based on good practice guidance and information made available to us. A degree of uncertainty exists regarding our estimates. We estimate that actual impacts are likely to be in a range of +/-20% of figures given.

The analysis and conclusions presented in this report assume that there are no major macro-economic shocks to the UK economy. On-going issues include the war in Ukraine, tensions in the Middle East and high inflation. The potential impact of such external factors means these figures should be kept under review into the future.

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