

PLACE AND GROWTH INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From: Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Team

To: Senior Manager – Development Management
FAO – Carlos Chikwamba

Our Ref: Application Response **Your Ref:** 24/03259/F

Ask for: Holly Jones **Ext:** 1642 **Date:** 23/01/25

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

This response raises the key planning policy issues only.
All material planning policies and associated considerations will need to be taken into account.

Planning Application No.	24/03259/F
Address / Location	Land adjacent to Symmetry Park, Morrell Way, Bicester, OX26 6GF
Proposal	<p>The erection of two Use Class B8 floorspace units (with ancillary office floorspace (Use Class E(G(i))) with associated infrastructure including: a building for the use as an energy centre (details of the energy generation reserved for future approval); loading bays; service yards; external plant; bin stores, vehicle parking (HGV, lorry, car and motorcycle); cycle parking, amenity areas, landscaping including permanent landscaped mounds; sustainable drainage details. Demolition of three vacant agricultural building (and two smaller structures) to the north east corner of the site. Access from the existing Symmetry Park estate road.</p>
Key Policies / Guidance	<p>2015 Adopted Cherwell Local Plan</p> <p>Policy PSD 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development Policy SLE 1 Employment Development Policy ESD1 Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change Policy ESD3: Sustainable Construction Policy ESD 5: Renewable Energy Policy ESD 6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Policy ESD 8: Water Resources Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment</p> <p>Saved Local Plan</p> <p>Policy TR10: Heavy Goods Vehicles Policy C7: Landscape conservation Policy C28: Layout, design and external appearance of new development Policy C30: Design Control</p>

**Key Policy
Observations**

The application site is located adjacent to the existing Symmetry Park employment site at the edge of Bicester. The site is bordered to the south by the A41 Aylesbury Road, to the east by employment land and to the north by agricultural land and to the east by agricultural land and scattered small businesses and residential properties.

This a full planning application that is accompanied by illustrative plans and technical reports such as the Location Plan, Planning Statement and Transport Statement.

The application proposes to erect two B8 floorspace units, including an energy centre with access to be taken from the existing Symmetry Park estate road.

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan

The adopted 2015 Local Plan has an urban focus with the bulk of the District's strategic growth to 2031 directed to Banbury and Bicester.

In the rural areas growth is limited and directed towards larger and more sustainable villages. Development in the open countryside is strictly controlled.

A strategic objective of the adopted local plan (SO 1) is to facilitate economic growth and employment and a more diverse local economy with an emphasis on attracting and developing higher technology industries.

Paragraph B.30 of the plan explains that that the aim is to secure

- business-friendly and well-functioning towns
- an eco-innovation hub along the Oxford – Cambridge technology corridor
- internationally connected and export driven economic growth
- investment in people to grow skills and the local workforce
- vibrant, creative and attractive market towns
- family housing
- measures to reclaim commuters where possible
- measures to increase labour productivity.

The principle of employment development is assessed against Policy SLE1. Policy SLE 1 states that in the rural areas employment development should be located within or on the edge of Category A villages (see Policy Villages 1) unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

The policy sets out a list of criteria for assessing new employment proposals within the rural areas on non-allocated sites. These include the applicant demonstrating why the development should be located in the rural areas on a non-allocated site; and that proposals should be small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of a village or surrounding area.

Policy SLE 1 also requires the applicants to demonstrate a need for, and the benefits of, the employment development in the location proposed supported by an explanation of why the proposed development should not be located at the towns, close to the proposed labour supply.

The planning statement sets out why exceptional circumstances exist to justify the accommodation of this development. These are summarised as the need for logistics floorspace, economic benefits and the draft allocation of the site in the emerging Local Plan Review 2042. These are not very detailed, though there is a recognition that there is an existing need for logistics floorspace.

	<p>The site is located outside, but adjacent to the built up area of Bicester and as such this would not comply with this element of the Policy. It is also the case that whilst not a confirmed allocation, it is a proposed allocation for employment in the emerging Local Plan. It has been identified in earlier stages of the Local Plan Review 2042 and remains in the version of the Plan that is expected to be submitted for examination later this year.</p> <p>The NPPF will be a material consideration in the determination of this proposal, particularly NPPF requirements for planning policies and decisions to:</p> <p>‘...help create the conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.’ (NPPF Paragraph 85); and</p> <p>‘Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. (NPPF paragraph 89)</p> <p>The views of the Council’s economic development team should be sought on the economic and locational evidence submitted in support of the application. Policy SLE 4 seeks to deliver key transport connections, supports a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport and supports employment growth in more sustainable locations.</p> <p>The proximity of the application site to Bicester and its location on a strategic transport corridor provides an opportunity to meet employment needs, whilst facilitating modal shift, with a focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions as encouraged by Policy SLE 4.</p> <p>The views of the Highway Authority should be sought for compliance with this policy, including to ensure that the proposals makes the most of opportunities in the area to provide public transport and safe walking and cycling to Bicester and nearby settlements.</p> <p>Sustainable Design</p> <p>Officers will need to weigh up the merits and flaws of the scheme’s overall design and should consider this in the context of Policies ESD1, ESD3, ESD7 and ESD10 of the adopted Local Plan. Particular consideration should be given to the provision and/or access to sustainable travel options to/from the site, the inclusion of sustainable construction methods, the implementation of SuDs and planned biodiversity net gain.</p>
<p>Policy Recommendation</p>	<p>This proposal is generally consistent with the overall objectives of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan although it is not on an allocated employment site. However, the emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review will allocate further employment land to meet Cherwell’s needs up to 2042. The site has been proposed within the emerging Local Plan for employment development up to and including Regulation 19 stage. The development of this land for employment uses aligns with the proposed Local Plan Review 2042 though this should be afforded only limited weight at most.</p> <p>The NPPF is generally supportive of this type of proposal. The proposal is</p>

reasonably related in scale to its adjacent employment land use on a site that would be best suited for this type of land use.

Whilst not strictly in line with the locational aspect of this policy, this proposal does satisfy the other criteria set out in Policy SLE1.

No objection.