

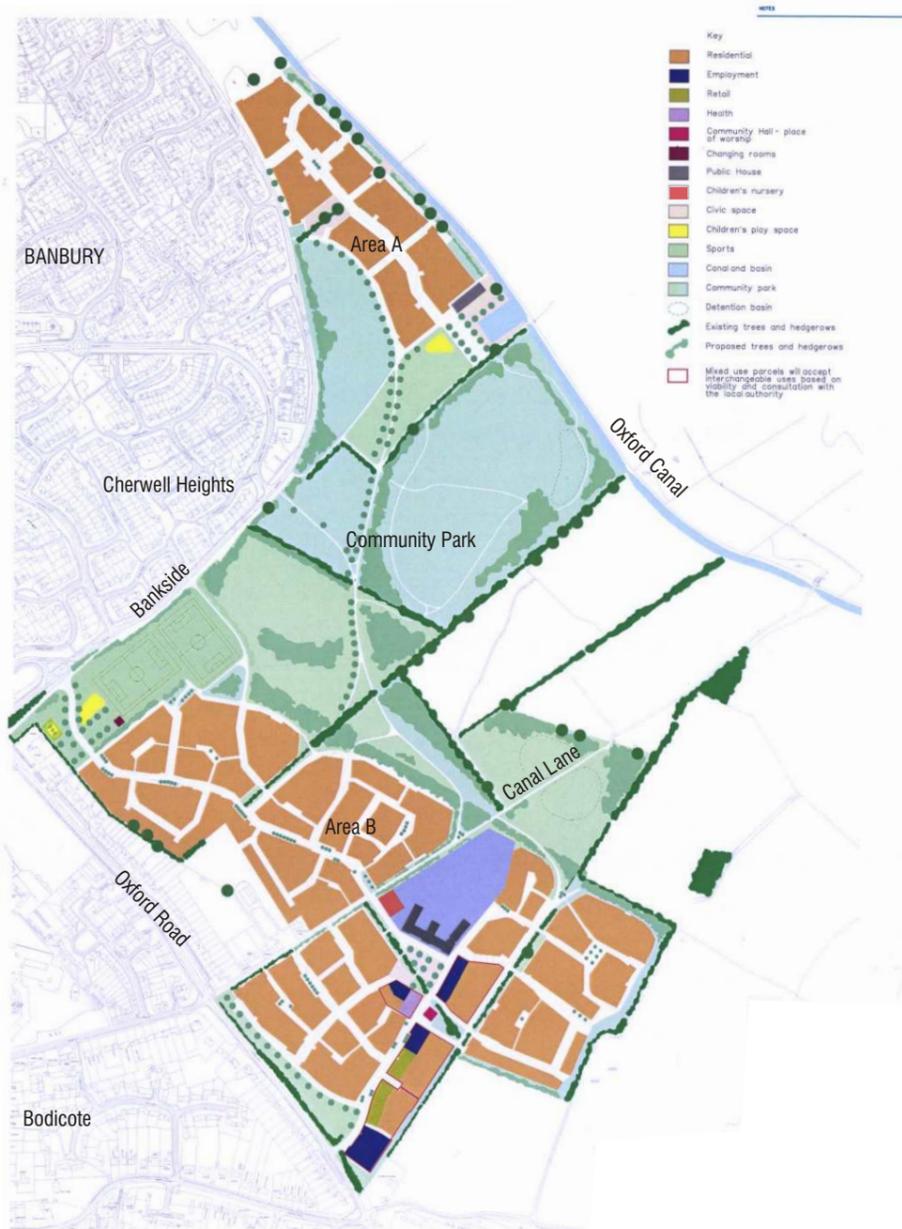
College Fields, Banbury.

Environmental Statement

Non Technical Summary

June 2005

Outline Planning Application for a new mixed use development of 1070 dwellings and community facilities at land off Bankside, (College Fields, Banbury)



INTRODUCTION

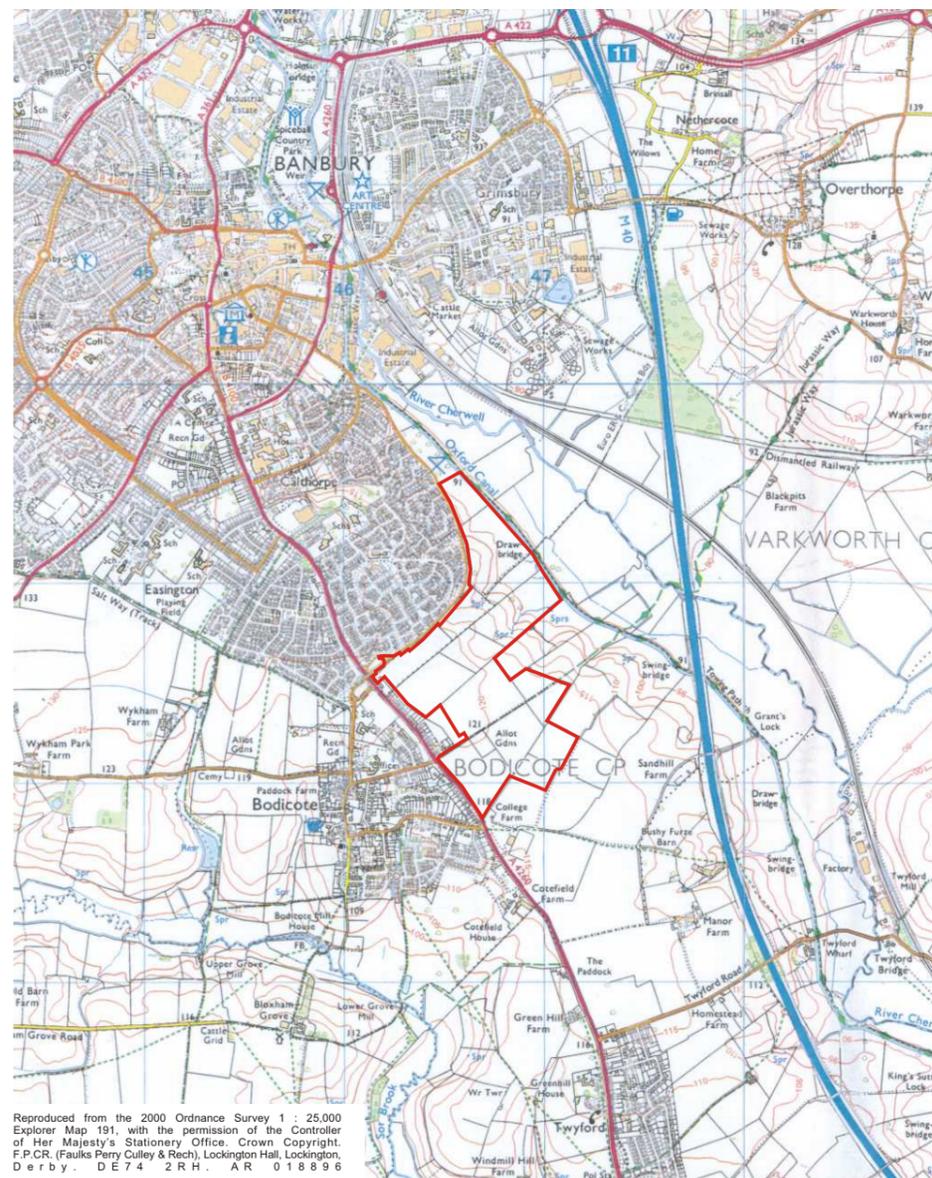
The Environmental Statement (ES) is a supporting document to accompany an Outline Planning Application for the proposed development at College Fields, Banbury.

This Non Technical Summary provides a review of the development proposals and the findings within the ES. The ES addresses the most concentrated amount of development that could occur, in order to demonstrate that the predicted environmental impacts can be successfully mitigated and that unacceptable harm will not result.

The application site for College Fields, Banbury covers an area of 78.09 hectares (192.9 acres). The site is located on the southeastern edge of Banbury adjacent to the existing residential edge of the Cherwell Heights estate, off the Bankside distributor road. The site lies to the east of the A4260 Oxford Road.

The Oxford Canal forms part of the eastern boundary, and beyond is the Cherwell Valley which includes the River Cherwell, M40 Motorway and the Oxford-Birmingham Railway line. Canal Lane Public Bridleway crosses the site connecting the Oxford Road with the Canal.

The land is used for intensive agricultural use. The majority of the site, east of the Oxford Road lies on a broad plateau above the valley, at 123 metres above ordnance datum (AOD). The land falls eastward forming the 'valley slopes', descending to the flatter land by the Canal at approximate 90 metres AOD.



THE DEVELOPMENT

The development proposals have involved extensive site survey work and assessment, and long standing (ongoing) dialogue with, amongst others, Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

This has led to proposals that seek to *minimise* any adverse environmental impacts and to fully *maximise* social, economic and environmental benefits for the local area.

The development has been designed to meet the aspirations of National, Regional and Local planning policy to provide:

a high quality mixed use sustainable community in which to live work and play.

The proposed development can be seen on the Concept Masterplan on the front of this leaflet.

The proposals include two built mixed use development areas, set either side of a large Community Park. Area A (7.21 hectares/ 17.8 acres) lies to the north east of the site adjacent to Bankside, Bankside Park and the Oxford Canal. Area B (31.77 hectares / 78.5 acres) lies to the south west of the site adjacent to the Oxford Road.

Area A includes:

- 237 dwellings (a mix of house types from 1-5 bedroom properties).
- Provision of land for a new Canal Basin and associated facilities to include a new Public House;
- A new footway-cycleway running along the western edge of the Canal, set within a landscape corridor of retained trees and new hedgerow and tree planting.
- New vehicular access from the Bankside road.

Area B includes:

- 833 dwellings (a mix of house types from 1-5 bedroom properties).
- A 310 place Primary School with its own playing fields,(2.09 hectares/5.16 acres)
- Provision of community facilities to include land for:
Small scale employment -business units (0.80 hectares, 1.97 acres);
Primary Health Care Facility;
Community Centre-Place of Worship;
Childrens Nursery
Local small scale retail facilities;
New Vehicular access from Bankside (a new roundabout junction) and access from the Oxford Road.

A provision of 30% affordable homes will be provided across the development.

College Fields will follow best practice urban design guidance to create a high quality well designed place. Areas A and B will be set within a landscape framework of retained- where practicable- existing site hedgerows and trees, and new areas of hedgerow and tree planting.

- A Community Park (38.51 hectares /96.26 acres)

Located between Areas A and B, this provides a substantial area of open informal recreational space. This will include a new footway-cycleway linking Areas A and B, together with other informal footway routes across the park. All existing hedgerows and trees are retained and protected. The park will include new habitats of grassland, a series of broadleaved woodland copses, hedgerows, individual tree planting and wetland habitats. The canal swing bridges and the canal itself are fully protected. The park will also include sports playing fields (4.29 hectares/10.6 acres), and childrens equipped play areas.

- Canal Lane bridleway is safeguarded and enhanced by new tree and hedgerow planting.

PLANNING

The District Council concludes within the “Cherwell Urban Housing Capacity Study 2001”, that in order to meet the housing requirements for Banbury as set out in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011, a ‘greenfield site’ in the form of an urban extension is needed.

Land off Bankside, known as College Fields, is therefore allocated for development within the Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (NSCLP).

The proposed development forms part of the balance of new housing growth set out in the Structure Plan and the NSCLP. No adverse social or economic impacts are predicted, and the proposed development is an important component in the current and proposed future growth of the local economy.

It is considered that the development fully embraces the National, Regional, Strategic and the Local planning framework, embracing the principles of sustainable development and providing a clear vision in which to satisfy key planning objectives.

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

Neither the site area nor the surrounding landscape is designated as being of National, Regional or Local landscape importance. The built development areas (AREAA and B) are located on flatter land away from the more sensitive ‘valley slopes’ and the ‘break of the slope’, which are well protected by the design proposals.

The site is an intensively managed agricultural landscape. Overall, assessed as having limited features of landscape and ecological value. The proposed new landscape framework, includes the retention and reinforcement of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with substantial areas of new hedgerow, tree and woodland planting. This will provide a significant enhancement of the local landscape.

A high quality mixed use development set within a high quality setting will not result in a significant landscape impact.

Visual impact from the development would be limited as a result of a comparatively restricted visual envelope, due to screening effects of the landform, and the residential areas of Banbury and Bodicote. Many of the views of the proposed development are typically localised or internal, with a small number of adjacent properties experiencing some initial adverse impact. These will be fully mitigated by a high quality urban design and new woodland planting, filtering and screening views of the built development.

Siting and layout considerations are combined with a comprehensive landscape structure to ensure there are no significant adverse landscape or visual impacts from the development. Carefully located new woodland and hedgerow planting around AREAS A & B and within the Community Park will assimilate development into the surrounding countryside, and in addition help screen the existing exposed edge of Cherwell Heights as it spills down the valley.

The most valued components would be conserved as a strong element of the development. This includes the protection of the ‘valley slopes’, dedicated as land for the Community Park.

ECOLOGY

The site is assessed as being low in nature conservation value with limited habitats for wildlife.

Some features are present such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees and the Canal. Hedgerows are of varying quality with some occasional mature trees, such as Oak and Ash. The Canal itself supports a limited diversity of species.

Existing habitats of value and worthy of retention are retained. Hedgerows and the mature trees are protected-where practicable- and enhanced with new hedgerow and tree planting, to form important wildlife habitats within the development.

New ecological habitats will be created within the Community Park, such as broadleaved woodland copses, areas of grassland, wetland areas, and individual tree planting. Plant species will be based on local character.

The establishment of the Community Park will provide a significant long term benefit to the local ecology, providing a variety of wildlife habitats.

ARCHAEOLOGY & HERITAGE

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, locally designated archaeological sites or features, Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings *within* the application site.

Several prehistoric cropmarks are recorded beyond the site to the southeast near Manor Farm. Evidence of Romano-British settlement has been found between Bodicote and Adderbury, 1.3km south of the site. The site of the medieval Weeping Cross stood on the Oxford Road.

Recent aerial photographs show very faint traces of an extensive ridge and furrow system (medieval and post medieveal field systems). These are located outside the application boundary or within the edge of the Communty Park. These are of local importance.

Adjacent to the application boundary on the Oxford Canal are two 18th century Grade II Listed swing bridges. The bridges and their setting are fully protected as part of proposals.

A Geophysical Survey, (magnetic scanning of the underlying geology for archaeological features) has been undertaken of the entire site. Very few areas of interest are recorded, the commonest features being land drains or remnants of ridge and furrow. Such remains are not significant.

Overall assessment has confirmed that the site has low potential for archeological remains. No significant adverse effects on archaeology will result from the development

GEOLOGY, WATER & DRAINAGE

Published geology for the site suggests a solid geology of Liassic clays of the Jurassic period.

Assessment has shown no contaminated ground across the site. The development proposals will not materially impact on soil or ground water quality.

The majority of the site falls within the catchment of the River Cherwell. Storm water is conveyed from the land towards the Canal and Cherwell. A Flood RiskAssessment has been undertaken, and concludes that the application site lies *outside* the Environment Agency’s definitive 1 in 100 year floodplain. Two stretches of the site near the Canal have small areas of ponding, resulting from a local drainage deficiency, rather than flooding.

Surface water from the development will be treated to remove pollutants, to avoid discharge in to the Cherwell and Canal. This will be achieved by a best practice Sustainable Drainage System of water filtering into open shallow channels (Swales), and then filtering into Detention Basins (periodically wet areas) located within the Park. These design proposals ensure that the existing water discharges to the Cherwell are not increased, and therefore do not adversely affect the River and other local watercourses. This system will include planted of appropriate species to establish new habitats and increase bio-diversity across the site.

Foul water discharges from the site will be efficiently conveyed to the most appropriate point of connection on the public sewerage network, that being the Thames Water Spital Farm Sewage Treatment works.

Careful development of the site infrastructure, including suitable mitigation measures, will ensure that the proposed development will not impact on the Cherwell and the Oxford Canal.

AGRICULTURE

The site is covered by the soils of the ‘Banbury Association’, being well drained brown soils with an iron rich subsoil, common to the area.

The combined survey of the semi detailed MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture Farming and Fisheries) classification, and more detailed ES survey classifies the agricultural quality of the land: as follows: Grade 2 (covering approximately 0.3% of the sites agricultural land), Grade 3a: (57.5%)

;Grade 3b; 38.6% and Grade 4; 2.9%. (Grade 1 to 3a is regarded as being ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land.) Approximately 43.7 hectares of Grade3a and a very minor component of Grade 2 land (0.25ha) will be taken up by the development. Grade3a is the lowest quality of land considered to be best and most versatile. Agricultural land is a non-renewable resource and though some of this would be permanently lost to built development, land *could* if required, be brought back into future agricultural use within the 38.51 hectares of the Community Park. Some of this land is therefore assessed as being a temporary loss rather than a permanent loss.

The survey carried out by FRCA around the Banbury fringe shows agricultural land as being characterised by areas of Grade 3b, and large tracts of the better quality Grade 3a and Grade 2 land.This is common to Banbury and the County as a whole. College Fields avoids the loss of higher quality agricultural land.

Overall impact on agricultural land is therefore considered to be low. Of the three farm business across the site, the development and the loss of land will have no significant adverse impact on their livelihood.

NOISE & AIR QUALITY

Noise levels resulting from the development have been assessed with regard to the impact upon key sensitive locations in and around the development. Any noise impact upon existing properties around the development would be expected to be negligible, a combination of the planning process and careful design would ensure that properties both in and outside the development would have an acceptable acoustic environment.

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

A fully detailed Transport Assessment has been carried out for the development.

Area A will be served by a single priority junction with Bankside. Area B will have two access points. A new roundabout would be constructed on Bankside, and a signalised new junction on Oxford Road connecting into Weeping Cross.

It has been assessed that the traffic impact of the development, together with the overall traffic growth of Banbury can be fully mitigated by providing improvements to existing key junctions and by improved sustainable modes of transport.

There are 3 bus services that currently pass near to the site, one is a town service (B1/B2), the others are less frequent rural services (X59,499). Area A is served by the B1/B2 service. The County Council are proposing a number of modifications to bus services near the site. This will allow an opportunity to divert the B2 town service into the development, providing a frequent bus service into Banbury.

New footway and cycleway routes are proposed across the development, including a new dedicated footway-cycleway linking Areas A and B and running alongside the Canal to provide a connection into the town

CONCLUSION

The development proposals at College Fields have been formulated in consultation with Cherwell District Council, stakeholders and the public over several years. The development accords with the NSCLP, and follows best practice guidance for new sustainable development. Moreover the proposals have been formulated following a thorough and detailed analysis of environmental constraints, ensuring that any initial disruption is minimised. A comprehensive package of mitigation measures is included to maximise social, economic and environmental benefits for the site and the Banbury area as a whole.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Environmental Statement Volume 1 and 2, (which includes the Urban Design Framework and Transport Assessment), together with the Planning Statement is available for inspection at the Cherwell District Council Offices at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury Oxfordshire OX15 4AA, Tel 01295 2525356.

Alternatively copies of the above can be purchased on CD, at a cost of £5.00. Please contact **FPCR Tel 01509 672772**, to order copies. The Non Technical Summary is available free of charge.