

4.2.8 Layout Six – This Application Resubmission

Following the submission of layout five as part of an application pack in November 2010 the Council undertook a large amount of public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and also local residents. Following this consultation and a review of the application submission a series of comments were raised in relation to design and the aspiration for the submitted application proposal to achieve the highest standards possible. In light of these the client and design team resolved to amend the submitted layout to address the majority of comments, a number of which could be achieved through the provision of further information.

The key design comments received from consultation responses were:

- Car parking is too dominant;
- There is insufficient green infrastructure and therefore no net biodiversity gain;
- The proposed layout looks too uniform

especially the northern fields;

- The north / south access road should only be for sustainable travel modes;
- Inadequate buffers are provided around the site boundary and the river corridor; and
- The inter-relationship of properties don't always reflect their scale and massing.

Following the comments received, the proposed site layout has been amended but the site area, housing numbers, mix and designs are primarily the same as within the original submission with the broad distribution of houses within the three areas. Furthermore, the non residential uses are in the same location along the village high street with potential future connections to further phases remaining the same.

North Fields

In the November application the north fields housing layout was designed with a rectangular grid of plots

and roads which followed the existing field boundaries which were aligned at approximately 45 degrees from north / south. This created a uniform appearance that raised objection from the Council and consequently the layout of these fields was reconsidered entirely whilst respecting the previously set out opportunities and constraints provisions.

In the first instance consideration was given specifically to the topography and natural features of the fields (figure 49), the ability to introduce green fingers and the need to have regard to orientation for solar gain (figure 50) and the need to allow for the green fingers to extend and link into future phases of development (figure 51). Collectively these provisions which revolve around landscape matters provided for an opportunities plan specific to the two northern fields as set out in figure 52. The content of these diagrams and how they have linked into the wider application site and the subsequent masterplan area is set out in figure 53.

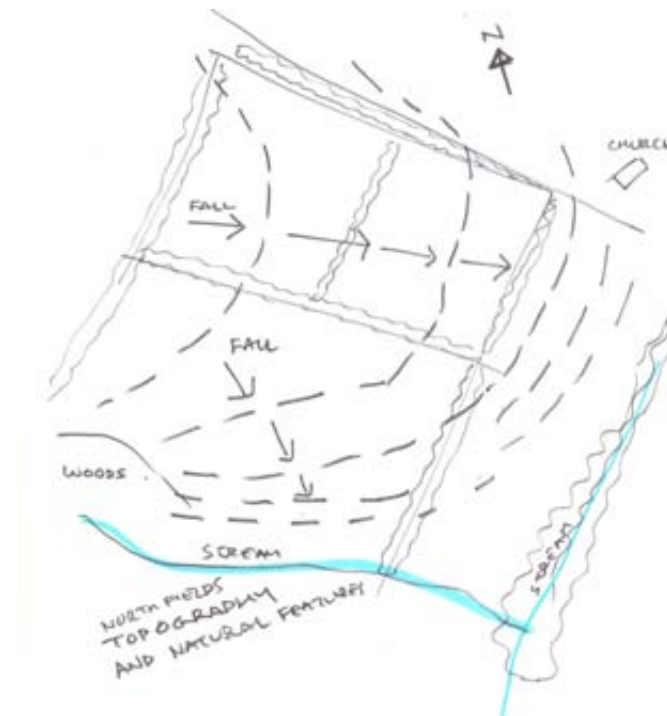


FIG.49 Topography and Natural Features



FIG.50 Green Infrastructure and Links

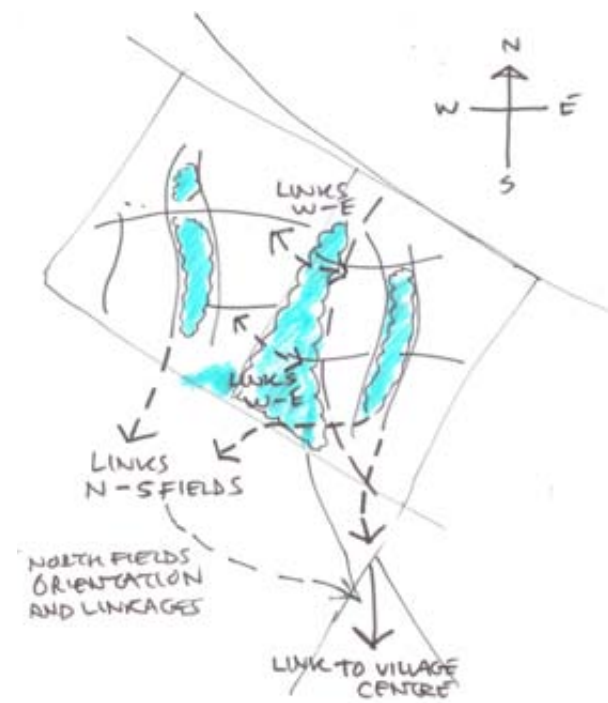


FIG.51 Connectivity to Future Phases

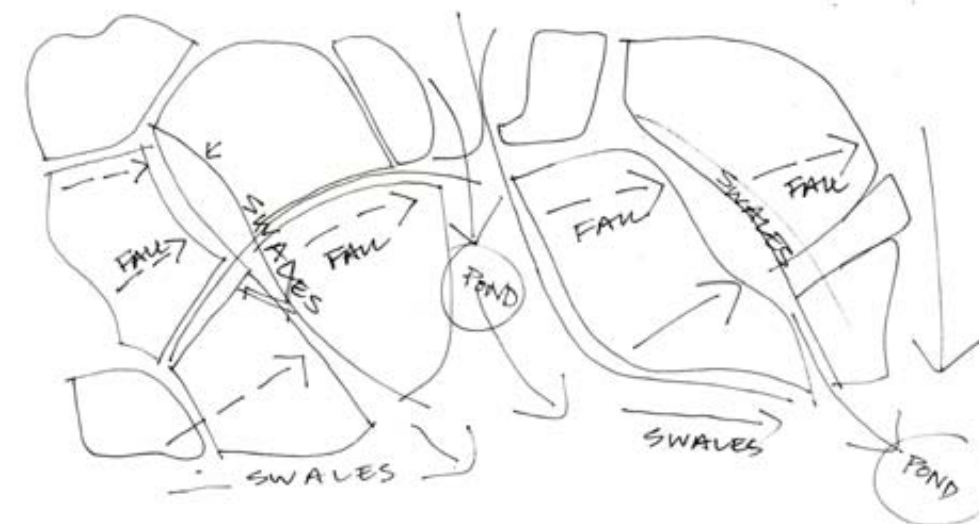


FIG.52 Concept Landscape Diagram



FIG.53 Key Layout Principles



FIG.54 Layout 6

Following a review of the above, the design concept for the northern fields was re-evaluated with the previous grid layout being substituted with a looser framework that takes account of: the west/ east slope of the land, existing field boundaries and hedgerows and also provides an improved orientation for houses to optimise passive solar gain and roofs slopes to the south.

This revised layout has enabled the foot and cycle paths to be realigned to create the most direct connections through the housing directly towards the village centre rather than the previous grid pattern of connections which forced the walking route against natural desire lines.

Whereas the original application had two types of residential character: a perimeter hedgerow facing house type and an inner street house type, the new layout creates more distinctive character areas using wider open green spaces with frontage housing in the residential areas to break up the plots and repetition

and to enable better orientation for residents. This philosophy has followed the need to ensure that landscape forms a key design consideration in the evolution of the application proposal. Finally, the green spaces are aligned with the contours across the slope in the land which enables the green areas to incorporate swales and significantly reduce the quantity of piped surface water drainage and create a more varied habitat and biodiversity.

The size of the perimeter blocks has been increased which allows the creation of longer terraces which provides a sense of enclosure fronting the spaces and a more flexible layout to create different areas of rear parking courtyards. This has enabled the perimeter landscape between the housing and the hedgerows to be revised and the housing perimeter no longer runs parallel to the hedgerows thereby creating a more varied width of buffer to assist the new habitat creation and amenity uses in the landscape.

The hierarchy of access is also revised from the original application so that within the housing area there is less repetition of similar street design and a more gradual hierarchy established from the spine road through to the access lane, the perimeter lanes and paths. Consequently, the layout gradually opens a sequence of views from the centre towards the perimeter thereby optimising the landscape value of the development proposals.

In terms of the perimeter building line which was previously uniform, the revised submission creates a varied building line with glimpse views of the development consequently being fragmented within the landscape screening.

The connecting route between the north and central fields has again been changed from the previous layout which had an all vehicle access road. The revised layout has connections between the north fields and the central area by footpath and cycle and vehicular access

only for bus, taxi and emergency and refuse vehicles.

This revised layout will significantly shorten the distance travelled to access the village centre, school and shops using alternative modes of transport to the private car for which journey distances will be exacerbated.

Furthermore, the bus route has been changed to a one way route picking up passengers in the north fields before travelling south to the village centre and returning to the Banbury Road.

Parking areas within the north fields have been redesigned to include a mix of car courts, off street and on plot parking, which creates flexibility to mix tenures and house sizes whilst providing a range of street environments including home zones and green streets.

Finally, other key changes to the northern fields are the revision to the design by providing a spatial framework for links through to the future development of two fields to the south in terms of both access and green open spaces.

Central and Southern Fields

The principles of the layout, number and mix of the residential units in the central and southern areas have remained the same as for the original submission.

The main change to the layout has been a revision of locations of a small number of houses to provide a wider landscape river corridor to benefit biodiversity and to introduce more variety in alignment and materials to reduce the repetition of similar houses on frontages facing Home Farm. The Pub has been relocated from within the housing areas to the east of bridge within the commercial to reduce impact on the landscape corridor, provide improved natural surveillance of neighbourhood play and enable shared facilities with other commercial uses.

In the southern area the village centre on the proposed high street and the housing area either side have been retained as the original layout with potential pedestrian links to the future development in fields to the south.

There have been revisions to the location of a few houses near the Banbury Road frontage to improve the frontage views and to vary the frontage the houses on the perimeter.

In terms of parking provision the proposed levels have been reduced from the original submission, with the larger dwellings having fewer on plot spaces and the smaller dwellings having the flexibility to have one unallocated parking space. The larger houses have therefore been provided with additional ground floor home working or storage space within the original attached garage space. The unattached garages in the parking courts have been increased in size and have all been provided with green roofs.

Collectively the changes to the layout have resulted in a significantly amended scheme to that which formed the original submission that has responded to the comments raised to date but whilst not forgetting the initial detailed analysis that was undertaken that informed the design concepts of the exemplar scheme.

Application Site
An application for the exemplar phase of the NW Bicester Eco Development
Design & Access Statement

In addition to considering the detailed layout evolution regard has been had to specific elements of the proposal and commentary on design evolution of these is as follows.

The High Street setting begins at the southern entrance onto the Banbury Road where the character for the whole southern field is established. A green landscape buffer is formally framed by terraced buildings providing a frontage onto on the Banbury Road and focusing the view along the High Street sequence (figure 55).

The impact of forming a junction at this point is mitigated by trans-locating the hedgerow by splaying the green edge and offering improved views into and out of the site.

The High Street sequence develops westwards with a 6m carriageway with large formal tree planting to the north (to afford a sunny environment to the thoroughfare) and an engineered SuDS feature to the south, that allows reed planting to grow from a metal

grid covered channel. The controlled nature of this swale system is intentionally contrasted with the looser organic form of the northern fields' swale system.

A procession of three storey corner buildings forms the progression to the high street centre, a sequence that is punctuated by a series of raised landscaped tables that connect the homezone areas north to south across the carriageway. The layout of the residential areas are inspired by the hedgerow pattern and face

onto this ecological resource, ensuring the scheme is outward looking whilst enabling the creation of new and adjacent habitat. Their response to the north and the south is different, as is to be expected. To the south the terraced housing sits parallel and perpendicular to the hedgerow but pre-empts the next phase of development forming a linear edge. To the north, detached properties are deployed in a softening of the arrangement, with subtle angle changes to create a less rigid frontage onto the farm fields and the settlement of Home farm beyond.



FIG.55 The green entrance space

The key junction between the road linking the southern field with Lord's Lane and the High Street is marked by the formation of a space framed by trees and defined by three storey corner buildings. The space also marks the start of the community centre and the non-residential amenities that form the core of the village (figure 57).

The village centre is organised along the principal route but embraces the north/south watercourse as a major green feature, like a green or village pond may occur in a historic settlement. The High Street captures this landscape feature by extending beyond it, by means of a linear bridge, before finishing with a landscaped space defined by a pair of buildings on the far bank and a termination of the vista with the school beyond. The parade of shops, offices and first floor entrances are given cohesion by protruding corner blocks that help to define the space. The parade buildings sit back from the pavement edge to create generous footpaths that will allow for people to stop and meet and others to pass and continue with their daily business. The streetscape is further layered with the potential inclusion of a continuous arcade that provides the setting with a greater level of architectural cohesion.



FIG.56 Arcades are often employed along high street frontages



FIG.57 High Street axonometric view (illustrative)

A single landscape treatment is applied across the road with lowered kerb edges and parking deterrents to create a generous and quality public realm. Similarly car parking and servicing is placed at the rear of the parade to minimise the impact of cars and delivery vehicles on the space. The western boundary of the non residential uses is softened by allowing the watercourse landscape to blur the edges. In contrast a bus stop has been placed at the heart of the High Street along with bike stands to promote these modes over private car use. The parade forms a strong edge to the High Street whilst the buildings that sit perpendicular to it and form it have an inconsistent unaligned rear footprint, which mirrors the traditional form of single street settlements.

The uses along the parade have been carefully considered. A village store provided by the Co-op Group anchors the centre of the High Street, with two retail units and a pub leading to the watercourse. With the pub enjoying views of the landscape feature. Above the retail units is office space. The service yard’s efficiency is maximised by sharing its use with the village store and the biomass deliveries to the energy centre. The latter is placed adjacent to the hedgerow boundary to allow

for future expansion to support the next phase to the south. The Eco Business centre is located to the north of the street and this facility shares its parking/drop off provision with the nursery located overlooking the watercourse. The nursery provides community space at first floor level and is located to the western end to minimise journey times to the primary school.

The bridge sits formally on axis with the High Street as the height of the land falls towards the watercourse. This allows for a dramatic opening of views (upon stepping beyond the closed end of the parade) of the watercourse and along the valley in both directions. There are footpaths either side of the carriageway leading to the school. The bridge design has a duality fitting of its context. Its surface is a continuation of the High Street with a hard landscape palette whilst its light balustrading allows for views up and down the watercourse.

The arrival space to the end of the bridge is framed by residential accommodation acknowledging the transition over the green space.

An informal village green concludes the High Street sequence in this phase, with the school sat on axis terminating the view and presenting its main entrance and coach bay area to the green space in front. The village green marks the transition point northwards and in the later phase southwards forging a connection with Hawkwell Village (as set out in the masterplan framework).

The non-residential facilities provided within the first phase form the outline element for the application.

A palette of materials has been established to ensure consistency and quality is achieved along the High Street. The selection has been based on the Oxfordshire vernacular, deriving from its geological positioning and traditions. No assumptions are made as to the stylistic application of the materials but the selection responds to the high standards required by the Client and the setting of the exemplar scheme (figures 58,59 and 60).



FIG.58 Brick



FIG.59 Reconstituted Stone



FIG.60 Slate

To achieve consistency and a statement of quality along the high street experience it is proposed to front the arcade, first floor accommodation, watercourse frontages and high street frontage of the school with a warm coloured reconstituted stone. This responds to the limestone walls of St Laurence's Church and Home Farm, buildings of significance in the locality. Alec Clifton-Taylor states in Pevsner's guide to Oxfordshire, "Whereas the sandstones play no part in the Oxfordshire picture, the limestone is paramount. The whole of the western and northern part of the county fall within the Jurassic belt."

In contrast the facades to the sides or rear of the thoroughfare will deploy brick or render, signifying the importance of the high street frontages and the hierarchical ordering of the side or back lanes. Brick is typical of the Bicester area as it is clay country, Pevsner's guide states, "In the C18 and C19 bricks were made in the Vale at, among other places, Bicester, Wheatley and Great Milton..."

The roofing material when pitched is proposed to be slate. Historically welsh slate was used extensively in the region as local stonesfield slate production subsided and improved infrastructure allowed for its import from the west.

4.3 Illustrative High Street Elevations

The following drawings in this chapter document the extents and key features that set the principles for the High Street sequence but allow for creativity and flexibility to further enhance the design during a detailed design process.

The following images identify how the High Street could be designed if the framework and principles set out in the preceeding section are followed.

It is possible to identify the arcade form of development with three storey book-ends with steps in the ridge height to ref ect the change in levels.



FIG.61 Street Elevation Options



NORTHERN BLOCK SW ELEVATION



SOUTHERN BLOCK NE ELEVATION

FIG.62 Village High Street Elevations 1:250

4.4 Study Perspectives of High Street

The preceding images have identified how the High Street elevations could be viewed and the two study perspectives shown here illustrate the views of the High Street in a 3D perspective. It is clear that these show an attractive and welcoming environment that will compliment the eco development whilst providing facilities for local residents.



FIG.63 Study perspectives looking west along the High Street

4.5 School

To satisfy the needs of the development and its future residents a primary school is to be provided within the application site. At this stage the school will exist on a 1.34 hectare site (figure 64) but that has the capability to expand to a full 2.22 hectare facility (figure 65) by extending to the west.

The school design has been provided by Oxfordshire County Council and it is envisaged that the south-eastern frontage facing the green and the watercourse beyond would be of reconstituted stone to provide a conclusion to the high street sequence. In turn and in keeping with the high street approach the remaining elevations would be in red brick. It is proposed that the building will accommodate a brown roof.



FIG.64 Primary School Plan, Phase 1- 1.34 hectares



FIG.65 Primary School Plan, Phase 2- 2.22 hectares

4.6 The Watercourses

The central hamlet exhibits three settings that inform its distinct character.

The first is its transitional nature organised along the Lane and its location between the High Street procession and the relaxed northern fields.

The second is its response to the watercourses. The contour change and landscape features generate a varied frontage to these valleys, allowing the greenery to constrict and expand to create a softer heart to the settlement. Subsequently a variety of housing typologies are deployed, with bungalows, terraces and detached properties running northwards along the watercourse to one edge whilst terraces are brought forward and detached properties recessed to another. Significantly both the flood risk zone and ecological buffer have influenced the layout, manipulating the edges. The expansion of the greenery at this point

pre-empts the next phase and the connection with the woodland copses to the west. Leisurely paths edge the watercourse and connect with a simple foot and cycle bridge linking the two residential groupings.

The final feature of the watercourse zone is the invented diagonal boundary that fronts the retained Home Farm pastures. The lack of hedgerows in this location is acknowledged with a tree planted edge fronting a post rail and stock fence, which draws from the vernacular of the working farm.



FIG.66 The central watercourse zone