

Annex 1 – Oxfordshire County Council’s response to Cherwell District Council’s consultation on Phase One North West Bicester Eco-town (application: 10/01780/HYBRID): Detailed comments

1. Economic Strategy

Headline concerns:

- The document seems to be more a resume of the economic situation in Bicester in the round as opposed to setting out a cogent case as to what the development itself will do to support economic growth;
- Where the document touches on issues that are relevant to the development there is no clarity on what the development will do to address the issue (and more importantly no sense of how it will be funded);
- The strategy needs to demonstrate the link between employment and increasing containment within the town and reducing out-commuting.

More specific comments are:

- There is mention (para 4.27) about the impact that a restrictive planning regime has on economic development and (despite saying that the issue is commented on in a later chapter) there is no suggestion of what needs to be addressed
- There is reference about the importance of broadband (para 6.8) and yet no clarity about how the development will ensure fibre is built in from day one;
- Reference is made to energy (para 5.18) - local energy sources need to include the potential to take supply from Ardley in due course;
- There is a conundrum highlighted in the document - Bicester has a low level of self containment and yet everyone complains about transport problems. Traditional transport thinking highlights the obvious that transport connections are a 2-way street. So if one unblocks the strategic bottlenecks, a town that already has low self containment runs a high risk of becoming even more of a commuter location. This serves to emphasise the importance of focusing on the job creation issue which probably leads us, collectively, to a debate about other infrastructure constraints and/or stronger support from Government departments to promote Bicester as a location for investment.

2. Social and Community Infrastructure

The following table comments on the Hunt, Dobson & Stringer report on Social Infrastructure provision:

Document /page/para	Issue	Action Required (by whom?)
Social Infrastructure Provision – Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment based on 450 dwellings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to update document to reflect details in submitted application
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks at current provision in wider area surrounding site and even outside Cherwell rather than immediately in Bicester No analysis of a) ability of existing facilities to absorb additional demands once planned housing/population growth is taken into account or b) ability to expand facilities on their current sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to delete inappropriate references to remote provision County to provide information on current and projected pupil places. BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to include full analysis of capacity in report
Current provision - health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to healthcare facilities in remote settlements – Ambrosden, Kirtlington and Kidlington – not relevant Hospital – no reference to need for new provision and options for doing so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to delete inappropriate references to remote provision BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to update report
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery: Refers to remote nursery provision in Shewell, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to delete inappropriate

Document /page/para	Issue	Action Required (by whom?)
	<p>Fringford and Chesterton – not relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary: Use of Annual Schools Census 2009 information as a measure of spare capacity: this is inappropriate. It is a strategic document used for government funding purposes and does not give true picture of future capacity in schools. Secondary: Claims it is appropriate to look at spare capacity of schools across Oxon. – not appropriate as schools are not ‘strategic’ Use of Annual Schools Census data as a measure of spare capacity – see above Refers to spare capacity in NOxon Academy, Banbury and European 	<p>references to remote provision from document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County to provide information on current and projected pupil place numbers in local schools BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to respond to technical note on the Oxfordshire Population Calculator sent previously. Methodology and population profile for 393 units to be agreed with OCC/CDC BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to delete inappropriate references to remote schools See above under primary BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to delete inappropriate references to remote schools BWilmore/Hunt,

Document /page/para	Issue	Action Required (by whom?)
	<p>School, Culham – irrelevant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No acknowledgement of County policy to maintain spare capacity for operational reasons – see Oxfordshire Primary Strategy for Change 	<p>Dobson, Stringer to include reference to this in report</p>
Leisure/Recreation/Open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No acknowledgement of overall shortfall of provision in Bicester, even when SW Bicester delivered – see LDF evidence base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to include reference to study in report
General community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only considers community centres and libraries. No mention of other essential community services - youth, day centres, adult learning, registration etc Refers to remote library provision in Deddington and Kidlington – irrelevant No assessment of whether facilities have spare capacity/are capable of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to widen range of community services assessed BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to delete inappropriate references to remote provision BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to include an assessment

Document /page/para	Issue	Action Required (by whom?)
	expansion	
Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No assessment of whether existing services/facilities can absorb additional demands after already planned housing is taken into account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to include assessment
Population projections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology. Census info is 10 years old. County methodology is based on recent surveys of new housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to respond to technical note on the Oxfordshire Population Calculator (OPC) Methodology and population profile for 393 units to be agreed with OCC/CDC
Unit schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 450 – does not match submitted application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to update
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of primary and secondary aged children – see County pop forecasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population profile for 393 units to be agreed with OCC/CDC
Oxon child yield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A technical note has been supplied to BWilmore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to respond to note
Summary	-	-
Future service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Categorisation of facilities. Level above 'local' should be 'town/service centre'. This would include secondary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to revise report to reflect this

Document /page/para	Issue	Action Required (by whom?)
	<p>schools, libraries, sports and recreation, community hospitals, further education. 'Strategic' would serve a county and include general hospital, universities,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report ignores eco-town PPS standards and aspirations for on-site school from day 1 to ensure sustainable trips to school. • Local primary school (Bure Park) is full and cannot take children. • Proposed crèche would be a commercial; timing of provision is uncertain. Nursery provision will also need to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to revise report to take this into account • County to provide information on current and projected pupil place numbers in local schools • BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to reassess need for future provision in light of capacity information plus (to be agreed) pupil numbers for 393 units and to revise report • BWilmore/Hunt, Dobson, Stringer to revise report to take this into account

Document /page/para	Issue	Action Required (by whom?)
	provided as part of on-site school	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report concludes that only on-site provision needed is a commercial crèche and community hub/centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report conclusions to be revised with a detailed justification in light of further assessment work on school capacities/ agreed pupil numbers and comments above

Proposed School Site

The application indicates the general location of the proposed site for primary school. However, the site boundary for phases 1 and 2 need to be agreed. The Phase 1 boundary will also need to be fixed through the s106. In this context we need to clarify a number of points raised by drawing BIMP2_PA_03_007 REV B. For Phase 2 we expect that land for expansion will be to the south of the phase one site and will meet the County Council requirements.

The area denoted as 'grass field' is not of an adequate area for the team game playing field. The required statutory area of team game playing field for a1FE primary school is a 2500m². This area must be clear of all obstructions, level and the ideal proportions would be 40m² by 62.5m². The school has been twisted away from the line of the incoming road which appears to have resulted in the reduction in the proposed team game playing field. The proposed vehicular access points have not been noted on the drawing and are important for the future flexibility of the school site.

To ensure that the proposal is in line with the County Councils requirement the applicant should supply a 'to scale' drawing with the following information:

- Site boundary for Phase1
- Site boundary for Phase 2
- Team game playing field for Phase 1 to be positioned to the north of the school building (2500m²)
- Team game playing field for Phase 2 (5000m²)
- 3 No Vehicular access positions – these will need to be 6m wide. These are needed for access to parking, services/maintenance and for construction for phase 2.
- Site levels and contours including adjacent areas; such as roads.
- Site areas (Phase 1 and Phase 2)
- Status and position of all existing trees and hedgerows

3. Transport

The traffic impact of the proposed development has been assessed by using a number of recent traffic surveys and the TRICS data base (as agreed at pre-app by OCC). From this data the submitted TA states there will be an impact on the local network and for the highway network to be able to accommodate the proposed development the following junctions will require capacity improvements:

- *A4095 Lords Lane (Howes Lane)/Bucknell Road junction (Junction 2b in TA);*
- *A4095 Lords Lane/B4100 Banbury Road Roundabout (Junction 3 in TA);*

The improvements proposed are shown on indicative plan 7157.UA001881.01. Such works can only be carried out by the developer via a S278 Agreement – which will need to be part of the S106 Agreement for this planning application (if approved).

The Lords Lane/Howes Lane/Bucknell Road junction has already been identified within the Transport Strategy for Bicester as a known traffic problem in terms of capacity. The proposed mini roundabout will provide an “interim” improvement to accommodate Phase 1 of the NW Bicester eco development. Any further development proposed outside planning application 10/01780/HYBRID will require this junction to be significantly improved, which will include a robust assessment of the whole highway network for Bicester by the developer.

As the Lords Lane/Howes Lane/Bucknell Road junction has been identified for improvement works within the current transport strategy for Bicester it is considered reasonable by OCC that any such works on this junction will be treated as a “payment in kind” towards the Bicester Transport Strategy S106 financial contribution (OCC estimation of works cost is £280,700 @January 2011 prices). The Developer will have to confirm agreement to the cost of these works in writing or a costing of their own to be assessed.

A review of the accident data for the area has been carried out and has highlighted incidents that have occurred within the last 5 years. Looking through the information provided it appears the incidents that were reported were down to driver error rather than the characteristics of the local highway network. In light of this data it is considered that the proposed development is unlikely to increase the number of recorded accidents in this area.

In addition to improvements being required at these junctions prior to the Phase One commencing, the following key junction (as well as others) will need to be improved as further phases of the masterplan come forward:

- *A4095 Skimmingdish Lane/A4095 Southwold Lane (Junction 4 in TA)*

Parking Strategy

The parking strategy within the TA for this application (Phase 1) states that residents are expected to own at least one car and the development requires a careful balance between meeting the needs of the residents and the businesses without unduly encouraging car use. The parking levels being proposed for the residential element of Phase 1 are in accordance with the maximum parking standards of CDC and OCC. However, a number of “garages” are proposed on-plot and off-plot that do not meet the criteria stated by OCC and CDC at pre-app i.e. garages of 6m x 3m to accommodate a car + storage/cycle. Due to the dimensions proposed (i.e. 2.4m x 4.9m, 3.1m x 5.8m and 5.5m x 5.4m double garage) and the fact that it is stated they will be used for storage space to discourage cars using them, it is the opinion of the Local Highway Authority that the on-plot storage spaces should not be served by garage doors. Access should only be large enough for pedestrian & DDA access. In the case of “double garages” one should be a proper storage space or work area and only a single garage door fitted. This would reduce the potential risk of increasing the parking levels. OCC object to the planning application in terms of the parking proposals subject to the garages being increased in size and a parking space removed or the garage doors being removed from the undersized storage/workspace provision.

With regard to the parking levels proposed for the commercial/business, these are lower than the current parking standards, as expected of this eco development. However, the need to deter on-street parking around the Local Centre will require robust enforcement by the Developer which will need to be part of the Travel Plan for the site and will need to be agreed by CDC and OCC prior to commencement of work on site for this element of the development.

Cycle parking - Table 5.4 - the proposed non-residential cycle parking still falls short of what is expected, particularly for the primary school where 15 spaces is not considered adequate. It is recommended that the standards quoted by OCC in October 2010 (email dated 22/10/10) to CDC are to be used.

Detailed plans showing the cycle parking location, type etc is required (could be agreed at a later date by OCC/CDC via planning condition);

Public Transport

If the NW Bicester eco development is to be considered sustainable in terms of transport by promoting alternative travel modes for the development rather than that of the private car, it is deemed reasonable and essential that the proposed development provides a more frequent bus service than the 30-minute service currently proposed within the TA. The intention to seek ways to increase this is not enough. Innovative ways need to be explored to have a higher frequency from the start, such as community buses or peak time buses that meet the train times, etc. A 15 minute frequency is required.

The proposed hours of operation in the TA for the Phase 1 development is:

- Monday to Friday 0700 to 1900 inclusive; and
- Saturday 0800 to 1800 inclusive.

Early weekday mornings will need to be achieved at the earliest opportunity to encourage commuters to London, and other external destinations to use the bus to travel to the train station. It is agreed that the route will be to from the site to the rail station(s) and the town centre.

It is proposed that the bus service will be provided by a hybrid vehicle – which is acceptable and should be included as a requirement within the S106 Agreement.

Duration of services: the bus services need to be established and maintained into the eco development post the Exemplar phases – they should be procured to evolve into commercially run services (with security in default of service delivery). The proposed bus service (and future one(s) for the rest of the NW Bicester Eco development) is to be provided by the Developer in perpetuity.

Comprehensive service delivery review and expansion (including any necessary supporting infrastructure measures) would be undertaken as the eco development progresses beyond the Exemplar phase.

Bus-only link – the link between the northern and southern parcels of the site must only be used by the bus services from the start so that this development meets the aspirations of PPS1 and the eco town status of Bicester. Emergency and refuse vehicles would have access too. Appropriate enforcement infrastructure would be required from the Developer such as camera enforcement, funding for a TRO, staff etc. This element of the residential development is seen as essential by the Local Highway Authority to promote sustainable travel. To give comfort to the Co-op there could be a clause to turn this into an all-vehicle link if the development does not expand as expected.

Public transport infrastructure i.e. bus stops/shelters are to be Real Time Information (RTI) and will be provided within 400m of all parts of the development. RTI in houses & other development uses within the site is to be provided – this piece of RTI equipment should cover rail timetables as well as buses for Bicester.

No cycle parking is mentioned at these locations – which is required.

Within the TA the Developer has agreed to pay £73,284 (@ November 2007 price base) towards improving the Oxford to Bicester rail service and link towards establishing an hourly service. Contribution must be secured via S106 Agreement.

General points

135 pupils are quoted for the proposed school – it is our understanding that the primary school is to be built for a capacity of 210 pupils; therefore the school has to be assessed for 210 pupils not the 135 quoted and parking arrangements for that number must be provided/secured. The level expected is to be for operational use only i.e. staff spaces, some visitor spaces and space for deliveries and cycle parking.

Coach/bus drop to the school to be on-street where appropriate parking/traffic restrictions are expected to be imposed.

20mph speed limit to be imposed within Exemplar - this will require a contribution of £4,000 for Oxfordshire County Council to go through the TRO procedures to impose it. A weight restriction will also be added to this TRO.

5.9 - access strategy - the proposed locations of the northern and southern access points into the Exemplar site are acceptable; subject to being designed to DMRB standards, safety audits, TRO amendments, land dedication plans for vision splays (+ footway/cycle links) and land required for future traffic signals when other parcels within the NW site come on board.

Travel Plan

Many of the comments that OCC officers made against the pre-submission draft Travel Plan have now been picked up on and in particular the cycling sections are much stronger than they were before. The remaining areas of concern are the link between the northern and southern fields, the bus frequency and the parking strategy (for cars and cycles) which do little to support the other sustainable measures. If these elements are improved and the other elements implemented, then the Travel Plan seems to offer a package of measures that could achieve the PPS1 mode target of 50% - see below with regards the timing of this target.

One query that needs addressing is the baseline data. It is unclear if non-vehicle modes as quoted includes buses, motorcycles, taxis etc which are vehicles; expect to see walking and cycling only as non vehicle modes. This highlights a major question over terminology. PPS1 talks about “non-car” means rather than vehicles; the Travel Plan concentrates on “vehicles”. Clear definitions need to be set for the monitoring agreement and reflected throughout the Travel Plan.

Para 3.2. of the Travel Plan there is a proposal that the road to link the two parts of the site will be for general traffic, with an intention to make it bus-only as the development progresses. This is not acceptable as previously stated. The bus-only link is essential from the start to promote sustainable travel within the site itself.

Para 4.1 objectives quoted are acceptable, but they need to be “SMART” objectives.

Para 4.2.1 T1 - sets a target of 50% for all trips originating from the development to be by non car modes by 2026. Although the explanatory text refers to the PPS1 60%, this also needs to be reflected in the target itself. 60% is the real aim for 2026 which can only be realised if the rest of the site has progressed to a point that enables higher containment and higher levels of bus and cycle/walk provision. If progress on the remainder of the site is slow or not enabled then the 50% would be the target.

The Travel Plan Co-ordinator is to be employed by the developer. Oxfordshire County Council can support and offer guidance where requested; however this will be subject to funding. The amount of OCC officer time required for this site is currently unknown. Therefore an hourly charge will have to be set within the S106 Agreement. When the rest of the NW Bicester site develops this arrangement will be reviewed.

Promoting Cycling - details of cycle parking storage is not clear or locations;

5.5.2 - Sheffield stands to be used for cycle parking and to be sheltered and secure (overlooked etc). Cycle storage at the residential units should also be Sheffield stands so have 1 stand for 1 bed, 2 stands for 2 beds, etc.

Location of Toucan Crossings acceptable and much needed for aspirations of this development and to link up with the rest of Bicester.

The Travel Co-ordinator must be part of the site's sales team and appointed prior to first occupation of the site.

Monitoring Mode Targets

There is a lot of concern that a weak bus offer and too lenient parking strategy will mean the mode targets are not met as essential travel behaviour will not be set at the start. For this reason, it is considered necessary to improve these elements and therefore meet the 50% target earlier than the Travel Plan suggests.

Monitoring is essential for this development and must be carried out by:

1. *Travel Diary survey to be carried out every 2 years during term time, counts completed annually;*
2. *Monitoring of the site is to commence from the 50th occupation until 10 years from the final occupation or completion of the development. Monitoring results and analysis to be sent to OCC within 21 days of completion of survey. Thresholds/targets to be set by OCC (then agreed by CDC and developer); -*

Year 1 collect the baseline data, Year 2 – 4 (2013-15 if commences on time) set the indicators so that the developer and OCC can see whether it looks likely that the Year 5 (2016) target of 50% (revised target based on improved bus and parking elements) by non-car

means is going to be met. If mode share is falling short of what was expected then it will be up to the developer to put more resources into the softer, promotional measures (with advice from the OCC Travel Choices Team). If in Year 5 the target has not been met then additional contributions will be sought towards sustainable transport measures (this may be increased bus frequency, or cycle measures depending on what the travel information suggests needs to be done).

This methodology will be applied on alternate years until 10 years after the final house completion, i.e. Years 6, 8, 10 etc check flows against indicators and Years 7, 9, 11 etc have targets with a financial incentive for meeting those targets.

Year on year incentives and targets:

Year 1 (2012 if starts on time) - baseline

Year 2 (2013) 53:47- indicator

Year 3 (2014) 52:48 - indicator

Year 4 (2015) 51:49 - indicator

Year 5 (2016) 50:50 - target

Year 6 (2017) 49:51 - indicator

Year 7 (2018) 48:52 - target

Year 8 (2019) 47:53 - indicator

Year 9 (2020) 46:54 - target

Year 10 (2021) 45:55 - indicator

Year 11 (2022) 44:56- target

Year 12 (2023) 43:57 - indicator

Year 13 (2024) 42:58 - target

Year 14 (2025) 41:59 - indicator

Year 15 (2026) 40:60 - target – to an agreed end point

The financial incentive is usually worked out using peak time flows and a contribution towards the BicITLUS pot. However, as these targets are set for daily movements that will not be possible. It is therefore suggested that this be based on the cost of an additional bus or provision of further cycle measures. The Travel Plan proposes provision of a minibus for certain destinations such as Kidlington. This needs to be discussed and agreed as part of the S106 negotiations. .

Carbon monitoring – how will this be incorporated?

7.3 – Residential Travel Diary Surveys – the Travel Plan Co-ordinator should be active in promoting this – suggest they should be on-hand to answer questions/be present at the hub to talk to people about it.

In the questionnaire, ask people whether they work from home at all and ask what there is about the development that already encourages them to use alternative modes to the car.

Monitor car parking and cycle parking turn over

Monitor bus patronage

Employee Travel Questionnaires – same as above re Travel Co-ordinator + do they ever work from home and ask what is in place that encourages them to use alternative modes to the car.

Summary

The cycle promotion proposals and level of engagement of a Travel Co-ordinator have the potential to be exemplary. However, the residential parking, the low bus frequency and the lack of a bus-only link diminishes the eco offer of the travel plan. There seem to be good opportunities for sustainable travel created on-site but without certainty over what the non-residential elements will deliver, in particular in terms of jobs, and with the loss of the bus-only link from the start these opportunities are weakened.

If the above elements are addressed the 50% development generated traffic by non-car means should be met, indeed it should be delivered earlier than 2026. The need for an interim target of 45% in 2016 should be revisited.

It is essential to note that the standards and targets imposed/agreed for this phase of the NW Eco Bicester development (Phase 1) cannot be assumed acceptable or useable for the overall site in the future.

Recommendation – OBJECTION (see overall County Council response).

Drainage Strategy/Flood Risk Assessment

- There is no mention of 30% i.e. 100 years is quoted but not additional 30%;
- The soak-away rates quoted are acceptable;
- There are no easement areas shown for OCC maintenance or mention of them in the documents;
- Pipe work for surface water from 2+ houses etc is to be adopted by OCC – Not foul sewer – not as in document submitted (3.2.2);
- 3.5 hectares of the site have not been included within the drainage strategy etc this is not acceptable whole of site has to be considered;
- Para 3.2.3 - verges are to be swales (with infiltration trench under swales) not flat as shown. Plans required. Future maintenance by OCC once adopted via S38 Agreement;
- Para 3.2.4 - Property – Proposed commercial areas must also accord with SUDS i.e. permeable material and water recycling (all development is to be accord with SUDS);
- Para 3.2.5 - Pipe work for surface water from 2+ houses etc is to be adopted by OCC. SUDS schemes within the development also to be adopted;
- Para 3.2.6 – Remove “sand” and replace with “grit”;
- Para 3.2.7 – 100 years doesn’t include 30% as well;
- The overall water/drainage flow for the site must remain as existing with the proposed development – this needs to be confirmed;

- Plan 7160 shows piping which is not required for permeable paving. The area (showing a pond) between the access road to the north of the site and the two parcels should be one large swale;
- A storage flow (storage structure 1) is shown being discharged onto the junction onto the B4100 this is not acceptable and should be discharged/diverted into the site;
- General observation – swales along the site boundary should be larger to help the drainage of the site;
- General observation – within residential parcels (+commercial) Enviro kerbing will be used, outside these areas swales are acceptable (vehicles likely to park on swales within residential areas);
- Across the site pipe work is shown for the drainage of the site;
- Plan 7163 – permeable paving is to be to British standard not as shown – depth of paving needs to be increased. Roadside SUDS feature is not acceptable (trip hazard etc) as submitted. Village street proposal is also not acceptable, paving needs to be increased;
- The proposed overflow system for roof water is considered over engineered;
- Plan 7164 – storage structures 3 & 4 can't be accessed for maintenance;
- Plan 8012 & 8013 – the SUDS features within this areas can't be accessed for maintenance they are also considered a safety issue for pedestrians and cyclists without appropriate fencing;
- Decking proposed will required anti slip;
- Proposed planting along bunds obstructs surveillance from proposed adjacent properties;
- Vehicle entrances into commercial area does not show any details – currently assumed vehicles drive over swales which is not acceptable;

Trees/Planting Comments

Plan 8003 shows a hedge in the middle of a SUDS area along access road in the northern section of the site; planting needs to be more specific;

The submitted plans show tree locations and a list of trees proposed, but no actual information on where specific trees will be planted. A plan is required showing this information. Same plan should also have SUDS areas + planting on too (location of street lighting should also be considered for this plan);

The proposed tree species have been confirmed acceptable; subject to an amended tree location plan as stated above.

Rights of Way

The proposed walking and cycling plan and the Transport Assessment is generally supported (providing conflicts with biodiversity are minimised or avoided), the main issue needs to be raised with developers is the seeming

lack of consideration of the public right of way that connects to the site at the north of the site running west.

This will be an important two-way link through to Bucknell and likely to receive very high levels of use so warrants improvements to facilitate walking and cycling. This route should be included in Fig 2 (walking and cycling Plan) as well as the whole site's master plan drawing in the Design & Access Statement. There should also be a commitment from the Developer towards providing funds for this particular route as well as details of how this will be connected to the site.

The above drawings should also include as well as the bridleway heading northwest from Bicester towards Ardley and Heyford (although not directly linked to this development stage - but is included in the DAS master plan).

The provision of a crossing facility as marked on fig 5.2 (Transport Proposals Plan) at the junction of A4095 with the Bucknell Road nr Lords Farm is welcomed. It is hoped that this will include walking, cycling and equestrian crossing facility for those users of the bridleway to Heyford.

Bridge Comments

Structural details of bridges appear to be for proposed exemplar traffic and future movements as the NW site develops i.e. initial carriageway width can be increased when necessary with footway/cycleways;

The bridges within the site will be subject to Approved in Principle drawings (AIPS) which will need to be submitted and approved in writing to CDC & OCC prior to commencement of work on site;

Appropriate commuted sums will be secured via S38 Agreement (or S106 Agreement if necessary) for the bridges;

Layout Comments

There are a number of layout amendments and further detailed plans are required before support can be given to the proposed layout:

The proposed access arrangements for the site appear to meet the required design standards for a road in this location; i.e. designed to DMRB standards with right 'Y' distance of 215m is shown on submitted plans – however no 'X' distance is shown. The 'X' distance required is 4.5m and this needs to be added to the submitted plans.

One issue that can be raised now is that the TA states a 20mph speed limit is to be introduced to which is acceptable; however a contribution will be required via the S106 Agreement for the Local Highway Authority to carry out the TRO. In addition this TRO will also include yellow lining around the school and a weight restriction with the bridges in mind (this TRO is in addition to the ones needed for the access arrangement works).

Lighting within the site in accordance with OCC specifications and in line with OCC's carbon footprint lighting (recommend Developer gets OCC Electrical team to design lighting scheme).

The proposed walking and cycling routes are unclear from the submitted plan to assess for the site, particularly around the school site, and into the town centre and the surrounding highway network. A plan of on-site walking/cycling routes is required. When the master-plan for the rest of NW Bicester begins these routes will require robust assessment – it is expected OCC will require new and approved pedestrian & cycle links in addition to new public transport infrastructure from the rest of the development – there is also no key on the submitted site plan.

No detail of materials proposed for highway works;

No plan of areas to be offered to OCC for adoption;

No visitor parking shown within the site;

No tracking plan for refuse vehicles;

No tracking plans for cars for parking spaces;

No details of parking areas;

No adoption plan provided showing areas being offered for adoption to the Local Highway Authority;

No plan/list of parking spaces allocated per plot;

Although site plan is unclear it appears that some of the parking area are away from the residential plots which was requested to encourage other modes of transport. However, these areas do not all appear to be overlooked and are isolated – therefore their use is unlikely which may lead to parking on-street;

No internal vision splays are shown on plans submitted;

No details on how vehicles will access a number of units i.e. eco pub or areas of local centre – currently looks like vehicles will drive over swales;

School car park has no pedestrian connection to the school;

The required bus only link between the north and south parts of the site is for now for general traffic which is unacceptable and was not what OCC agreed;

Bridges have been assessed as structurally acceptable, but will require further AIPs. Approx 10m width is required to provide 2 x footway/cycleways and a carriageway to accommodate future 2 way traffic movements.

No details of type of vehicle or frequency of deliveries for Biomass Energy building;

The hierarchy of the layout does not appear to promote pedestrians, cyclist and public transport over that of the private car enough.

No details of proposed Home Zone areas;

Decking is shown of sketched plan for a Home Zone – not acceptable;

There are number of sketched green areas with decking links around ponds with gates. Couple of gates are opening over what appears to be public highway – which is not acceptable. Decking will not be adopted by highway. Any bridges over ponds will not be adopted unless in line with Health & Safety, British standards and OCC specs. Non-slip surfacing. Will be high commuted sum if OCC to ever adopt.

Proposed bollard lights not been discussed with OCC and will not be adopted;

No detailed plans showing the cycle parking location, type etc which is required (could be agreed at a later date by OCC/CDC via planning condition);

S278 Off-site works

The proposed bus lay-by is to be relocated to the opposite side of the southern entrance with footway link to the site. This is to be moved as in current position considered a road safety issue – new plan required;

The right turn lanes and entrances will require splitter islands with appropriate reflective equipment (island required on B4100 to deter overtaking);

The junction entrances will also require splitter islands;

Both junctions (entrances) will be lit in accordance with OCC specifications and in line with OCC's carbon footprint lighting practices as will footway/cycleway to existing roundabout (recommend Developer gets OCC Electrical team to design lighting scheme).

The proposed footway and cycleway is to be 3m in width, lit and constructed to OCC specs;

The entrance into the lay-by near the northern entrance will require amending to accommodate vehicles turning into it. Current form with proposed right turn lane a safety concern. Such works will require a TRO as well as associated engineering works. A separate TRO will also be required for the change of speed limit from national speed limit to 40mph. The TROs have been costed at £10,000 which is to be secured by S106 Agreement (suggested on signing of agreement). The engineering work will be at the developers expense;

Toucan crossing locations acceptable; although it should be noted alterations to the existing footway along Lords Lane will be required due to gradient issues;

Mini Roundabout scheme considered ok in principle but proposed design will need to be changed and OCC estimation cost needs to be checked by Hyder and agreed for S106 & S278 Agreements currently £280,700 @ Jan 2011 prices for altered layout.

Legal Agreements

From the submitted TA (Table 8.8: Estimated Exemplar Site Traffic Generations - which has been agreed in principle as being at 17.4%) and the previous Technical Notes from Hyder; OCC is now in a position to confirm that the following financial contribution towards the Bicester Transport Strategy is required:

£1,010,592 index linked @ March 2010 price base

Formula = the additional average (2 way) peak time traffic movements on the network (i.e. average between am and pm) x Bicester Transport Strategy rate

Bicester Transport Strategy contribution rate per average peak hour vehicular trip @ March 2010 Baxter Prices is £4,176;

The average total peak times from the TA (Hyder)'s figures is 242 (which is from 269 Total AM peak + 215 Total PM peak /2);

Calculation: $242 \times £4,176 = £1,010,592$

The use of funding from this development will be towards the general Bicester Transport Strategy or/and schemes towards sustainable infrastructure/services.

Traffic Regulation Orders – there are a number of TROs that will be required for this development which must be secured via the S106 Agreement. Payment of them will be required on the signing of the S106 Agreement.

Two Section 278 Agreements will be required for the proposed development. One is to cover the associated access arrangement works and the second is to cover the junction improvements required to accommodate Phase 1 of the NW Eco Development. These works will need to be carried out at the early stages of this development:

S278 Agreement 1 - North and south entrance with right turn lanes, splitters island, lighting with amendments to existing lay-by near the north entrance are to be constructed and completed to OCC specs prior to commencement of development within the site (accepted a compound will be needed initially).

Toucan crossings, footway/cycleway links and new bus lay-by to be constructed to OCC spec prior to first occupation of site.

S278 Agreement 2 – junction improvement works* to be carried out prior to first occupation of site. **these works are only related to Phase 1 of the NW Eco Development they are NOT considered appropriate for the rest of the site.*

The Howes/Lords Lane/Bucknell Road junction improvements is considered a “payment in kind” as junction has been identified in transport strategy for Bicester and has been estimated at £280,700 (@ January 2011 prices) – this cost must be checked/agreed by the developer. On agreement from all parties the ITS contribution currently requested will reflect the payment in kind.

Travel Plan to be part of S106 Agreement with obligations, monitoring etc.

Construction Travel Plan is required and is to be submitted and approved in writing to CDC and OCC prior to commencement of work on site.

Commuted sums will be required of highway works (and future areas offered for adoption).

4. Bio-diversity

Pre-application consultation process

It is disappointing that despite extensive involvement from biodiversity consultees in the form of numerous meetings and written responses, advice does not appear to be taken on board by the applicant.

Natural environment consultees are keen to be involved at an early stage of the masterplanning for any subsequent developments. The consultant landscape architect and ecologist should also be very involved at the earliest possible stage in the masterplanning and any subsequent applications for the rest of the site. The results of ecology surveys, landscape character assessments, drainage works (for SUDS) etc must be used to inform the layout of the masterplan to help ensure the development complies with planning policy.

Masterplanning

Ecological surveys must be carried out first, and then the results used to design the layout of the development. This ensures that the development meets PPS9 in that decisions are based on up to date information, important biodiversity features are protected and means that many potential impacts can be 'designed out'. This did not happen with the exemplar site development, as the results of the ecological surveys were only made available in November 2010, when the layout of the development was already finalised.

Net gain in biodiversity

As an eco-town, this development must result in a net gain in biodiversity to comply with the Ecotowns PPS, which states '*Eco-towns should demonstrate a net gain in local biodiversity*'. The applicant claims this development will result in the enhancement of 2.6 ha of hedgerows & buffers and 1.7 ha of rivers & riparian habitat, which amounts to 20.5% of the exemplar site area and is a net gain in biodiversity. There will be other areas in which biodiversity gains are possible, such as within SUDS features, play areas, homezones, allotments and on buildings (bat & bird boxes). Green roofs have been proposed on some garages. However, there are some issues with this:

- The better management of the hedgerows and watercourses will result in some enhancement, but this is balanced by the increase in disturbance and the change in land-use from farmland to housing so will not be a net gain.
- There is insufficient, unconvincing and inconsistent detail on the habitat enhancement proposals within the site. For example, the landscape plan shows wet grassland with orchard planted on it; orchard trees will not survive on wet grassland and elsewhere in the application it is stated that the grassland may be quite dry.
- Urban wildlife is likely to benefit from the green space areas currently proposed for the development, but more detail is required to demonstrate how some areas of green space (e.g. the river corridors) will attract a wider range of biodiversity.
- The enhanced habitats must be of high biodiversity value and be designed to minimise access in some areas to compensate for the fact that they cover a relatively small area within the development (20.5%) and will experience high levels of disturbance.
- TCPA guidance states '*Eco-town development should result in an increase in the area of open water, marshy areas around water bodies and water courses, and reedbeds and the creation of temporary and seasonally wet areas.*' The river corridor areas should be designed to provide more wetland areas, which will also make the area less permeable to people and encourage low-intensity use.
- Other areas for possible biodiversity gain such as ponds are surrounded by housing and roads so will be of limited value for biodiversity.
- More detail is required on how the green space will be managed. For example, the grassland areas should be managed by grazing or cutting, but the areas are small due to barriers such as the box-culvert bridges, roads and tree planting which will make management difficult. If appropriate management is not possible due to the design of the development, the green spaces will not deliver biodiversity gain.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Wintering birds

The Arup phase 1 habitat survey recommends that a wintering bird survey is undertaken, but none has been undertaken. PPS9 states that '*planning decisions should be based on up to date information about the environmental characteristics of their areas. These characteristics should include the relevant biodiversity and geological resources of the area*' and that '*Planning*

authorities should ensure [protected and notable] species are protected from the adverse effects of development'.

The applicant cannot assume the area is not important for wintering birds and the sheer area involved alone could mean that wintering populations of county importance could be affected. A loss of wintering birds will add to the net loss of biodiversity on the site so the applicant must carry out a wintering bird survey to complete the EIA and so that the mitigation and enhancement measures can be fully evaluated with a complete picture of the current situation.

Conservation Target Areas

The EIS should examine how the development helps to meet the aims of the CTAs (either on or off site). The EIS states that the development will not have a negative impact on the closest Conservation Target Areas but CTAs are areas of opportunity for biodiversity enhancement. The closest CTAs are Tusmore & Shellswell Park (1.2km to NW) and River Ray (2.8km to SE). Some further information has been provided by Hyder on how the development meets some of the aims of the CTAs and this should be included in the EIS. Residual impacts of the development, such as the loss of farmland birds, should be compensated for within the nearby CTAs.

Development design

River corridor

The retained dark corridor along the river corridor in the south is important for bats and other wildlife. This area is also marked as a footpath & cycleway and there is insufficient detail in the lighting strategy to ensure this corridor retains its biodiversity value.

Bridge design

The currently proposed bridge design is a box culvert but clear span bridges would be more appropriate to avoid the fragmentation of the habitat along the river corridor, preventing the movement of wildlife and people. Bridges should also be designed to include features for roosting bats. The bridges designed for Cogges Link road provide a good example of bridge design within the context of an area of high biodiversity and landscape value.

Long term management

The Eco-town Biodiversity Strategy (ETBS) sets out some options for funding the management of the green space in the long-term, but the developer has not committed to any of these options or demonstrated their viability. TCPA guidance states *'Positive conservation management needs to be planned, properly and securely funded for the long term. The ETBS must clearly identify where the funding for management and monitoring is coming from. Without this, even the best laid plans can come to nothing.'*

The developer needs to understand the costs of the management & monitoring required for amenity and biodiversity (especially where specific management is the mechanism for mitigating impacts on biodiversity and delivering biodiversity net gain). Some costs for managing the biodiversity

elements of the green space will be lower (e.g. less frequent grass cutting) but some could be higher (e.g. monitoring programme for badgers). Detail is also required on how people will be encouraged to use the amenity spaces more than the "nature conservation" areas in order to minimise disturbance impacts.

Until the developer demonstrates how this space will be managed, maintained and monitored in the long-term, there is no guarantee that this development will achieve a net gain in biodiversity and it will not meet the requirements of the Ecotowns PPS which states '*Eco-towns should demonstrate a net gain in local biodiversity*'.

These issues will need to be considered and investigated further through both the Green Infrastructure and Community Governance workstreams.

5. Community Engagement

Achievements

Areas of good practice for NW Bicester community involvement include:

- *Open Planning Week*, in terms of ability to have innovative face-to-face contact with stakeholders and residents.
- high quality communication in terms of presentations and press releases.
- thoroughness in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, as outlined at points 30 to 37.

Essential improvement

The current aim of the Statement of Community Involvement is 'to achieve fully-inclusive consultation which reaches all stakeholders and audiences' (Statement of Community Involvement, Nov 10 appendix 1). We advise that the aim should be changed from community 'consultation' to community '**engagement**'. We would expect to see evidence of greater engagement before design and planning decisions have been made so that the local community really does have the power to influence the development NW Bicester.

A good example of how the existing proposal has failed to fully engage the community is the feedback from the pre-application consultation section (page 24, section 115 Question 2b) Participants were asked 'Do you like the proposed designs for the eco houses?' This is evidence of a lack of true consultation or engagement because the participants were not given a choice of eco house design.

Summary

Officers consider the applicant's approach to Community Engagement as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement should be commended. However, it needs to go much further in providing evidence of community engagement in design and planning of the proposal. To avoid a feeling of over-consultation future engagement should focus on key issues to ensure that the development creates something different.