

Outline Application

NW Bicester Application 1

Overview Statement and Summary

Land at NW Bicester
Cherwell District Council
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Prepared on behalf of A2Dominion Ltd

August 2014

Land at NW Bicester

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Summary

Prepared on behalf of A2Dominion South Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is one of three applications submitted on behalf of A2Dominion, with one being submitted jointly with the PCC. The applications follow the preparation of a Master Plan on behalf of A2Dominion. The Master Plan has been submitted to Cherwell District Council ('the Council') for its consideration. The Council will consult on the Master Plan before bringing forward non statutory planning policy, which it is anticipated will incorporate the key principles of the Master Plan. The Master Plan responds to the requirements of the agreed Master Plan Brief (November 2013) as well as the Supplement to PPS1 (Planning Policy Statement: Eco-Towns A Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 published July 2009) which sets out the Government's policy in respect of Eco Towns and the potential for NW Bicester.
- 1.2 Planning permission has already been granted for the Exemplar, which will comprise 393 new homes, land for a new school as well as local facilities such as shops, a nursery and the eco-business centre. Construction is underway.
- 1.3 These applications represent the next stage in the delivery of the vision for NW Bicester. Three applications will be submitted as follows:

Application 1: This application relates to land to the north of the railway line and A4095 Lord's Lane and west of B4100 Banbury Road, surrounding Lord's Farm and Hawkwell Farm in Bicester. This application covers some 154.82 ha and includes the majority of the land within the Master Plan area to the north of the railway line. The application will provide for some 2,600 new homes, to include up to 250 'Extra Care' units, 68.01 hectares of green infrastructure, land for a new primary school and further land for the extension of the Exemplar scheme primary school and possible extension to its playing fields. A new local centre will be provided to meet the needs of the community. The application provides for site access arrangements which include the partial realignment of Bucknell Road through the site.

Application 2: This application relates to land south of the railway line and north west of A4095 Howes Lane, including Aldershot Farm and Gowell Farm in Bicester. This application covers some 51.27 ha and represents part of the land within the Master Plan area to the south of the railway line. The application will provide for some 900 new homes, 7.8 hectares of open space, land for a new primary school and secondary school and a local centre. The application also provides part of the realigned Howes Lane and site access arrangements.

Application 3: A new A4095 NW Strategic Link Road for Bicester will also be promoted which will address the traffic movement and highways constraints issues which have long been an issue for the town. This planning application is currently being progressed in consultation with the Council.

- 1.4 Full details of the applications are set out in the application parameters document. **Applications 1 and 2** are submitted in outline. Application 3 is still being worked up with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Government's policies in respect of Eco Towns are set out in the PPS1 Supplement. This sets out a range of criteria against which proposals should be assessed. The PPS1 Supplement identifies land to the north west of Bicester as one of four potential locations for an eco-town. It is our position that consistency with the PPS1 Supplement (see paragraph 7) will satisfy the tests for sustainable development as set out at paragraph 7 of the NPPF and accordingly, the presumption is in favour of the grant of permission as per paragraph 14.
- 2.2 The PPS1 Supplement preceded the emerging Cherwell Local Plan. The Local Plan has been submitted for examination and identifies land to the NW of Bicester as a strategic allocation to provide for circa 5,000 new homes. We have made a number of comments in respect of the detail of the policy. The independent examination of the Local Plan is anticipated to re-commence later this year.
- 2.3 In response to the PPS1 Supplement, the Council and A2D have agreed a Master Plan Brief for NW Bicester. This seeks to take forward the guidance set out in the PPS1 Supplement in the context of NW Bicester, as informed by local circumstances and the wider aspirations for Bicester and the District. The Master Plan Brief informed the NW Bicester Master Plan preparation, which was submitted to the Council in Spring 2014.
- 2.4 The Council seeks to adopt the NW Bicester Master Plan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Local Development Scheme (May 2014) sets out a two stage process, with initial consultation on the submitted documents from June 2014, followed by review and drafting of the appropriate policy documents, and then, subject to Committee ratification, a further consultation before adoption. The Council estimates that adoption will occur by February 2015.
- 2.5 The District Council has also instructed White Young Green ('WYG') to prepare a master plan for the wider Bicester area. This will address the policy issues arising from the Local Plan allocations at Bicester. A draft has been published and a further draft is to be published for consultation over the Summer. Once finalised, it is anticipated that the Council will adopt the WYG Master Plan as non statutory policy.

- 2.6 Adoption of both master plans as SPD is dependent upon adoption of the Local Plan. If the adoption of the Local Plan is delayed, it is open to the Council to adopt both documents as non-statutory interim policy. This is a matter for the Council.
- 2.7 The planning applications will be submitted in advance of the adoption of the Local Plan and both master plans.
- 2.8 The Cherwell Local Plan (1996) is out of date and the South East Plan (RSS9) has been revoked. There is therefore no up-to-date development plan.
- 2.9 In the absence of an up to date local plan, the applications fall to be considered against the terms of the PPS1 Supplement, the NPPF and other material considerations. The PPS1 supplement requires the preparation of the Master Plan in any event and both master plans can constitute material considerations if adopted, subject to the relevant considerations. Material considerations also include the emerging Local Plan; however, this can be given limited weight at the current time.

3.0 THE MASTER PLAN

- 3.1 The applications have been prepared in the context of and are consistent with the terms of the Master Plan (2014) as submitted by A2 Dominion.
- 3.2 The submitted Master Plan is accompanied by a range of technical documents and assessments that demonstrate the deliverability and merit of the proposals.
- 3.3 The Vision document draws together the various strategies into a single and coherent vision and includes proposed parameters to guide the form of subsequent planning applications. The Vision document is underpinned by a number of strategies which set out the approach to be taken in response to the PPS1 criteria and the Master Plan. The Master Plan is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Appraisal ('SER') which sets out the baseline technical assessment and assessment of the Master Plan proposals. It is not an EIA but has been undertaken in accordance with best practice and guidance and is intended to assist applicants in undertaking EIAs of individual applications as appropriate and identifying in-combination effects.

4.0 COMPREHENSIVENESS AND COMPATIBILITY

- 4.1 Each application must be comprehensive and consistent with the terms and principles of the Master Plan. Whilst proposals can deviate from the Master Plan, this requires justification and proposals should remain compatible with the wider strategic objectives and contribute to the delivery of the 'vision'.
- 4.2 It is estimated that the build programme for the entire Master Plan site will amount to some 30-40 years, subject to market forces. Each application must be assessed on its merits at that time but it is important to note that the wider vision and technical performance is reliant upon the development as a whole. Not all applications will be able or would be appropriate to meet each and every criteria or performance standard in its entirety. However, each application should be consistent with the various strategies and compatible with the delivery of adjacent land to ensure the Master Plan vision is attained.

5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 As stated, in the absence of an up-to-date local plan, each application falls to be considered on its merits having regard to material considerations. The PPS1 Supplement and NPPF are material, to which significant weight should be attached. Subject to progress at the point of determination, the WYG and NW Bicester Master Plans if adopted as SPD or similar can also be material to the consideration of the merits of the proposals.
- 5.2 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of the grant of permission for sustainable development, which in turn is defined at paragraph 7. This sets out a threefold definition, based on social, economic and environmental considerations. The PPS1 Supplement is dated July 2009. Whilst it predates the NPPF, its objective is to set out a range of challenging minimum standards which aim to ensure that eco-towns are exemplars of good practice and provide a showcase for sustainable living (paragraph 3). Paragraph 7 sets out the Government's policies for sustainable development.
- 5.3 It is our view that the principles and criteria set out are consistent with the principles set out in the NPPF and satisfaction of the principles or adherence thereto will achieve sustainable development.
- 5.4 The Master Plan has been tested against the criteria set out in the PPS1 Supplement. The applications have likewise been assessed.

