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5.3 Proposed Layout



-  BOUNDARY
-  LAND TO BE RETAINED FOR PHASE II ROAD WIDENING
-  Land Retained For the Future Phase II Road Widening - 1.84Acres

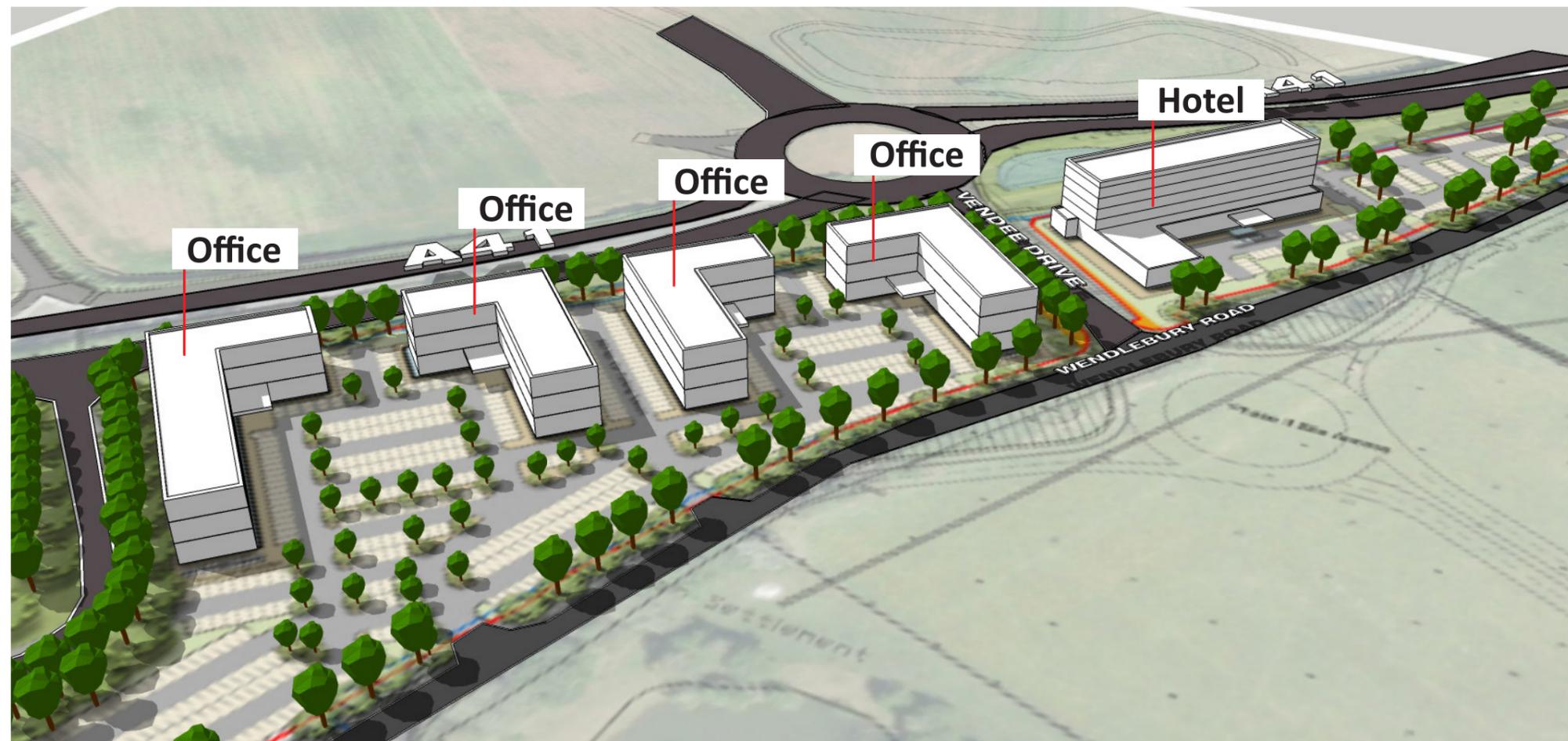
Illustrative Masterplan Phase 1

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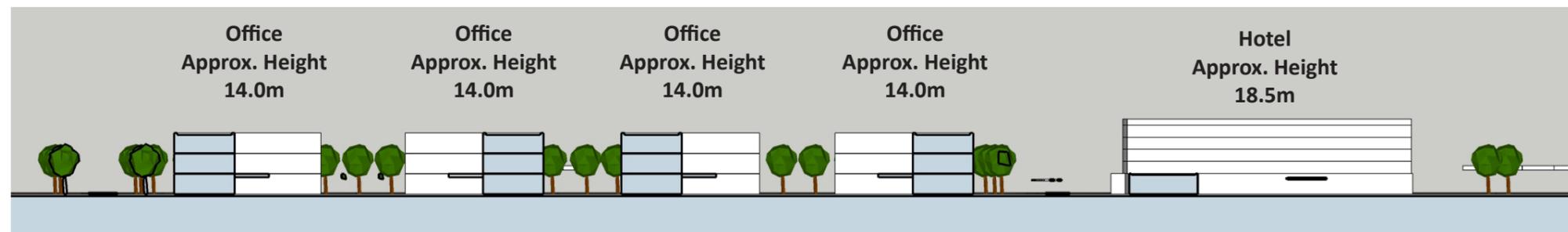
5.4 Proposed Scale & Massing

Given the surrounding building types and usages, it is envisaged that the proposed scheme will be in keeping with the general local vernacular; all units will be subject to the finalisation of the detailed scheme and associated reserved matters application, which this outline planning submission pre-empts.

The height of the buildings in the Bicester Gateway development reflect the "Gateway" nature of this site. The massing of the buildings creates prominence to the A41 frontage without being dominant against the existing landscaped setting.



Proposed Building Massing



Illustrative Site Section

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5.5 Predicted Visual & Landscape Effects

Experience is the key to both aspects of Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA): the visual appreciation of the landscape via visual responses (VRs), and also its other perceptual qualities via landscape responses (LRs). It is important to remember that in both cases the receptors are people, and as a result consideration must be given to the quality of experience that is sought. For example, people passing by a site in a car will obtain a different response from the site than people who walk alongside it on a public footpath. In the latter case, the experience will last longer in terms of duration and will be more searching or in depth, in terms of the variety of different and changing views and experiences acquired. It is also more likely that walking respondents have sought out the experience as a leisure activity rather than just obtaining a brief glimpse from a passing vehicle. To this extent, and in this case, public views and landscape experiences from pavements and PRowWs are potentially more significant than the views from busy multi-lane roads. Even though the amount of respondents on the public highway are many times more numerous, their experience is mostly brief and coincidental to the purpose of their travel. Furthermore, their attention (if driving) is concentrated elsewhere and their perception of visual and landscape effects is tertiary to their main activity. On the other hand (for the most part), the experience of walkers and cyclists is of a greater duration and may be a substantial part of their purpose or even their sole objective.

Susceptibility is also a major factor in the assessment of visual and landscape effects. The impact of comparatively small changes can have a strident effect upon a pristine and sensitive landscape setting (such as a Conservation Area), whilst much bolder and more imposing proposals for change would appear to have a lesser effect in a landscape already characterised by development, or in transition, or one that is less sensitive in nature owing to the presence of landscape elements that already detract from naturalness, tranquillity or cohesion or, in the alternative, naturally provide a strong screening function.

A full LVIA has been carried out for the proposed development as a separate report.

A summary of the predicted effects is as follows:

Cordle Design has assessed the visual effects in accordance with the GLVIA3 guidance. A map of the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) has been prepared that ascertains the full “visual envelope” of locations in the surrounding landscape from which the potential development can be seen. It is the result of a very detailed manual survey of all publicly accessible locations throughout the surrounding landscape. Because of limits to public access (in this case particularly on military land), the survey has been completed using projections supplemented from topographical map data.

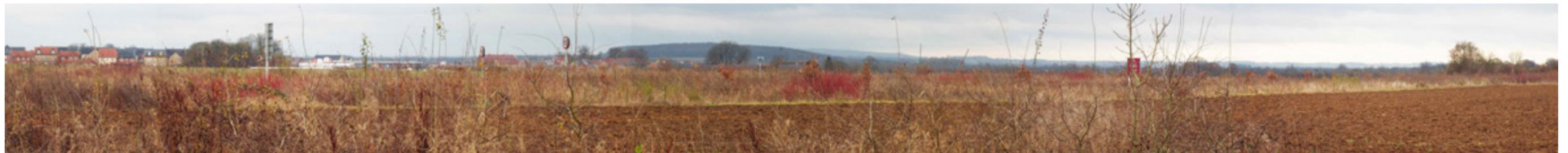
The ZVI map demonstrates that the low lying topography of the land, together with the structure of the existing landscape character, have a strong tendency to limit long distant public views towards the development site. There are comparatively few Public Rights of Way (PRowWs) and, moreover, the flat and well-enclosed agricultural landscape, with many mature trees and hedgerows, limits distant views at ground level.

The proposed development is not visible from within the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Alchester Roman Town. The separate Heritage Report by Cotswold Archaeology concurs.

Positive as well as negative visual effects are associated with the development proposal:

- Additional landscaping in keeping with the native vegetation and character of the locale
- Removal or visual occlusion of unsightly infrastructure
- Occlusion of views of industrial farming and sewerage treatment, retail and power infrastructure
- Noise and visual benefits that mitigate the impact of the A41
- A landscape and built form proposal that is entirely appropriate to this high profile gateway location

Overall, the proposed development is assessed as having a Slight Adverse Overall Impact upon the landscape in the locale, which is comprised from a Slight Adverse Visual Impact and a Slight Adverse Landscape Impact.



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5.6 Potential Positive Effects

The proposed development site presents various multi-faceted opportunities for a combined system of water-management with the promotion and / or re-introduction of landscape elements appropriate to the locale which will also serve to ameliorate negative visual effects. These features will have ecological and recreation / access / health benefits also.

Opportunities for public art and interpretation will help to enhance the significance and understanding of the Roman archaeology close to the site.

- Conservation and enhancement of the setting of Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument and the setting out of opportunities to better reveal its significance.

In addition, Bicester Policy 10 provides a number of points relating to the preferred design outcome for the site that pertain particularly to landscape and visual considerations:

- Proposals should comply with Policy ESD16.
- Open Space – structured open spaces and planting that provide a strong landscape setting, support SUDs and improvements to the microclimate.
- A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, architecture, materials and colourings and careful consideration given to building heights to reduce overall visual impact.
- Structural planting and landscape proposals within the site to include retention of existing trees and hedgerows, the enhancement, restoration or creation of wildlife corridors, and to limit visual impact of new buildings and car parking on the existing character of the site and its surroundings.



Landscape Design Concept Plan

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5.7 Proposed Landscape Design and Boundary Treatment.

The scheme proposes a two-part approach to landscape design of the site, albeit that the final strategy and details will be subject to pre-commencement conditions:

(1) High quality “amenity landscaping” within the car park areas and along Vendee Drive:

- Within the car park, this aspect of the landscaping will comprise raised beds and / or planters with small standard trees, under-planted with evergreen shrubs.
- The trees and shrubs in the car park will be arranged in small groups or as isolated specimens within containers or soil ‘islands’. These places afford the least opportunity for site native ecology. As such, they are the best locations for attractive non-native planting specimens, that can be selected for their suitability to smaller spaces, confined roots and a harsher environment.
- Along Vendee Drive an entrance boulevard will create a gateway feature to the development. An avenue of attractive, clear stemmed amenity trees such as *Betula u. var. Jacquemontii* or *Liquidambar styraciflua*, will line the boulevard. Behind them, a background foil of dense evergreen hedging will set off their striking appearance, whilst also serving to provide security and visual amelioration to the site boundaries that adjoin Vendee Drive.

(2) Ecologically connected / “naturalistic landscaping” around the perimeter:

- The external landscaping uses predominantly site-native plant species to reinforce and restock the existing hedgerows. This sensitive selection of plants will have better connectivity (including soil) and continuity with the wider landscape via ecological networks.
- These external plantings will include the addition of new standard trees within the hedgerows, which will provide greater stature and improved amelioration (where necessary) of both short and long range views.
- The naturalistic landscaping approach will reinforce the traditional landscape character of the site and surroundings by restoring the appearance and integrity of the hedgerows themselves, whilst providing enhanced and denser visual screening of the development, The sightlines from those vantage points where views in are not desired are few and the extent of these views from publicly accessible points are either limited or, in fact, in a location where some prominence to this gateway site is merited (and/or necessary so far as the profile of commercial buildings is concerned).
- The southern, eastern (along Wendlebury Road), and northern site boundaries will be primarily treated in this way.

The western boundary of the development site, along the A41 transport corridor, will be treated as a hybrid between the two landscape approaches. The Development Parameters Masterplan [p.19] shows that the principal “Office Elevation” presents towards the A41. Therefore, the principal views that need to be framed are predominantly from the A41. Designed “windows” in the perimeter hedgerow landscaping will frame the views in towards the office buildings and hotel. The buildings are designed to ‘advertise’ in this direction and the design of the foreground landscaping will complement the appearance of the buildings in terms of form, scale, colour and lighting.

The framed views will present a striking contrast against the naturalistic landscape treatment of the foreground hedgerow, and the colourful artifice of the internal landscaping will be seen through the “windows” created in the external landscaping. However, these views will be short-ranged, designed to be seen primarily from the A41 and the adjacent pedestrian and cycle routes. The visual impact of the colourful and exciting internal landscaping will be very minimal in the wider landscape because of the large, site-native hedging and new standard trees that will be used to frame the views. In order to admit these views, some stretches of the existing hedgerow boundary will be traditionally laid in order to reduce their height, whilst maintaining and improving their aesthetic appearance and ecological function.

Landscape Lighting

Carefully laid out and directed LED lighting will illuminate specimen trees and pedestrian routes on Vendee Drive. Solar panels will be considered as a means to power the lighting system and demonstrate sustainability. Power consumption is much less with LED than with halogen or mercury bulb external lighting. Stray light pollution will be avoided through the use of careful design in terms of lighting direction and natural screening.

Vendee Drive

Both sides of the new entrance boulevard will have a row of amenity trees alongside the road. Dense evergreen hedging or pleached evergreen trees will divide the boulevard from the adjacent hotel and office sites. Additionally, these will complement the main avenue trees by providing a low-key uniform background foil to enhance their striking visual effect. Also, there will be room beneath the hedges for under planting with bulbs and informal ground cover.

The use of topiary in this location, as part of the hedging or beneath the pleached rows, could be visually very effective, and in combination with appropriate lighting could form part of the signage or branding for the entrance way leading into the hotel site.

The avenue focuses towards the existing large roundabout on the A41 at the western end, which is planted with multi-stemmed birch trees. Therefore, a similar but more columnar form of birch specimens would create an attractive lead in towards the site in terms of visual unity. Equally, a second roundabout of similar size is potentially proposed for Phase 2 of the development, and this would form the focal point to the eastern end of the tree avenue.



Birch and Liquidambar are each good contenders for the main avenue trees. Birch will complement the existing planting on the roundabout, but equally Liquidambar will complement the Red Oak avenue on the near side of the Kingsmere site.

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5.7 Proposed Landscape Design and Boundary Treatment.

As Vendee Drive is the main access into the site, consideration needs to be given to the potential future need to widen this route. As such, tree stocks need to be chosen and arranged with this in mind, in order to minimise the impact of future changes to the vehicle carriageway. The new planting will be sufficiently set back from the entrance boulevard to ensure that any future alterations to the carriageway will have no impact on the trees or hedges. Root protection will be utilised during planting to ensure that future impacts on drainage / compaction of the surrounding soils are minimised.

Trees within the internal landscaping of the car park will be a mixture of red-leaved and golden-leaved specimens, together with changing-leaved foliage plants (deciduous and evergreen) that provide good colour variation throughout the year. A number of specimens have been selected that are successful landscape trees in Chinese cities, but which also grow well for the same purposes in the UK. This proposal is a deliberate nod to the town's profile in China, currently as a result of Bicester Village, but perhaps with Chinese businesses to follow.

The internal landscaping scheme will be strongly red and gold in colour, but varied enough to appear striking and not monotonous.

Red leaved from : Acer 'Bloodgood' and Acer 'Garnet' ; Cotinus coggygria varieties ; Malus x 'Red Silver' ; Juglans regia 'Purpurea'

Yellow leaved from : Ginkgo biloba 'Autumn Gold' ; Acer Cappodocicum 'Aureum' ; Acer Platanoides 'Princeton Gold' ; Acer saccharum varieties ; Acer shirasawanum cultivars

Changing leaved from: Liquidambar styraciflua varieties ; Parrotia persica ; Metasequoia glyptostroboides ; Larix Kaempferi ; Cercis siliquastrum ; Liriodendron tulipifera

The background 'foil' to the richly coloured scheme of specimen trees and shrubs will be predominantly of dark green:

Hollies (Ilex spp.) ; Lonicera nitida ; Viburnum tinus ; Viburnum davidii ; Viburnum rhytidophyllum ; Quercus acutissima

The **internal** landscaping of the car parks will utilise colour, encircled and shrouded by a ring of locally indigenous planting that will wrap around the perimeter of the car parks and create visual screening of the parked cars. This robust "hedge with standards" offers landscape harmony and continuity with the wider landscape, as well as ecological connectivity, whilst providing visual containment of the internal landscaping.



Red, yellow and green landscapes with vibrant colour are found widely around the world from the Lake District and the Scottish Lowlands to the steep mountainous landscapes of Japan and China. This change in palette is proposed to provide a marked change in landscape at this gateway location, with striking changes in colour as the seasons progress.

Specimen trees within the internal car parking landscape will be planted into in slightly raised beds or planters. Kerbs and edge vegetation will be soft to prevent damage to manoeuvring vehicles, but dense enough to give protection to the specimen trees. The volume and height of the shrub and sub- shrub vegetation will help to visually demarcate the beds to car users, as the scale of the planters is designed to ensure that they are easily visible from the driver position of vehicles, particularly those reversing or manoeuvring.

The landscape strategy will identify and accentuate desire lines for pedestrian (and cyclist) movement through the site and to the adjoining existing routes.

Hotel Garden

A designed area has been retained on the south-eastern corner of the hotel site for the creation of a 'sitting-out space' (or 'garden room') that is also contiguous as an outdoor expansion space for the conferencing facilities in good weather. This space will be protected from the noise and movement of the surrounding roads by a screen of evergreens (including the proposed dense hedge along Vendee Drive). The internal landscape will be comprised of a few cherry trees or other fruit trees for their blossom and open, small stature, with a simple and flexible layout of low tables and deck chairs.



Pleached trees and hedges will form a dense perimeter to the garden, softened with the use of low growing perennial foliage plants.

Fencing

The peripheral boundaries to the sites will need to be secured with fencing, as the hedgerows are too gapped and vulnerable. Also, the need to carry out restorative work on the hedgerows will mean that for the first few seasons they will be slow to establish.

In order to address the need for a secure site, the hedgerow site boundaries will be reinforced with security fencing that is set back from the hedge line inside the site. This fencing will be concealed using a mixture of site-native hedgerow species and landscape specimens as appropriate in each location, so that it provides the fuller security of a fence, with the appearance of a tall hedge. There will, of course, be permeability to link with the adjoining cycle paths and footways.



6.0 Summary

This document demonstrates that the development of Bicester Gateway will result in a well designed, high quality scheme that is a further asset to the area, and will provide a desirable development. It is anticipated that the scheme will act as a catalyst for further regeneration to create jobs and inject welcome investment into the local community.

The development represents a substantial investment to the area and will help to promote and support employment growth and stimulate economic regeneration to the area, cohesive with regional and local aspirations.

The design will provide a 'gateway' to the southern entrance to Bicester in conjunction with the arrivals generated by the A41 from Oxford, M40 Birmingham/London, or A34 and the Park and Ride, whilst minimising the impact on its surroundings; providing an opportunity for the development of attractive, contemporary and cohesive buildings that are fit for purpose and safe for all to use.

This site is allocated for employment use in the local plan and outline planning proposal has been developed with due regard to the existing site, its context and surroundings. The future detailed development (all subject to the finalisation of the detailed scheme and associated reserved matters application/s, which this outline planning submission pre-empts) will create a carefully sited development, with appropriately sized and designed buildings which follow the planning guidelines established in the Cherwell Local Plan.

The aim is to accommodate the needs of potential 'best in class' employers seeking a high quality, high amenity environment in a high profile, highly accessible location. The Phase 1 proposals are emphatically not for large format storage, warehousing or industrial uses.

The Hotel will attract business and corporate occupiers and will be a key component to the success of this business park.



Bicester Gateway



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