

## **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

**District:** Cherwell

**Application no:** 16/02586/OUT

**Proposal:** Phase 1 of the proposed new business park ("Bicester Gateway") comprising up to 14,972 sq m (Gross External Area) of B1 employment based buildings, plus a hotel (up to 149 bedrooms), with associated infrastructure, car parking and marketing boards.

**Location:** OS Parcel 2200 Adjoining Oxford Road North Of Promised Land Farm Oxford Road. Bicester

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### **Purpose of document**

This report sets out Oxfordshire County Council's view on the proposal.

This report contains officer advice in the form of a strategic localities response and technical team response(s). Where local members have responded these have been attached by OCCs Major Planning Applications Team ([planningconsultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:planningconsultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk)).

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## **Strategic Comments**

This application forms part of the strategic employment site allocation 'Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway' in the Cherwell Local Plan. Oxfordshire County Council support the principle of progressing this allocated site. There are however technical issues that are raised in the officer responses below; Transport Development Control have raised an objection on the basis that:

- the application does not demonstrate that suitable mitigation would be made for severe traffic impacts of this development or the wider Bicester 10 development
- the application does not demonstrate safe and suitable access for all users
- drainage information is insufficient

**Officer's Name:** David Flavin

**Officer's Title:** Senior Planning Officer

**Date:** 16 February 2017

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## **Transport**

### **Recommendation:**

Objection

Objection is made on the basis that

- the application does not demonstrate that suitable mitigation would be made for severe traffic impacts of this development or the wider Bicester 10 development; and
- the application does not demonstrate safe and suitable access for all users – by private car, walking or public transport.
- drainage information is insufficient and there are particular areas of concern (see detailed comments)

### **Key issues:**

- Traffic impact has been assessed in isolation without considering the wider impact of Bicester 10, with the risk that adequate mitigation for the wider site will not be provided.
- There are some queries with the methodology of the TA
- Mitigation even for the impact of the development in isolation is not adequate and it is possible one mitigation scheme may not be feasible
- Insufficient information to establish whether sufficient visibility can be provided at the vehicular accesses
- Inadequate pedestrian/cycle infrastructure.

### **Legal agreement required to secure:**

If the LPA is minded to grant approval, the following would need to be secured.

- Pedestrian, public transport and cycle access improvements to be agreed and carried out under S278, including contributions to cover any necessary TROs, and commuted sums for maintenance. We would expect these to be in place from first occupation.
- Highway mitigation schemes to be agreed with appropriate triggers and carried out under S278 including contributions to cover any necessary TROs, and commuted sums for maintenance
- Contribution to strategy to relieve congestion on the A41 – further work is required to establish the amount in the context of the wider Bicester 10 development
- Contribution towards the South East Link Road

- Contribution towards pedestrian/cycle connectivity strategy for Bicester

Travel plan monitoring fees of £2,040 for the framework travel plan and £1,240 for the hotel travel plan. Additional travel plan fees will be incurred by any site occupiers who are above Oxfordshire County Council travel plan thresholds.

### **Conditions:**

Conditions would be required covering:

- Further detail of access arrangements
- Site layout and parking with turning arrangements
- Travel plan
- Car park management plan
- Delivery and servicing plan
- Construction traffic management plan

### **Detailed comments:**

#### **Relationship of this proposal to the wider policy Bicester 10 allocated employment site**

The transport impacts of the proposals in this application have been assessed in isolation. An assessment of the impact of the wider Bicester 10 Policy site has not been done. The whole site when built out will have a far greater impact on the local transport network as it is planned to deliver 3500 jobs in comparison with the 550 that would be generated by this application. The transport impact of the full development will therefore be some 6 times greater than the current proposals. The full mitigation package required for the full development was always expected to be very substantial, which is why Policy Bicester 10 and the Bicester Area Transport Strategy from LTP4 supported it with the following requirements:

In the Cherwell Local Plan under Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway it states:

“Infrastructure Needs...

Access and Movement – M40, Phase 2 improvements to Junction 9. Contributions to improvements to the surrounding local and strategic road networks, including safeguarding land for future highway improvements to peripheral routes on this side of the town.”

Under Key site specific design and place shaping principles it states:

- “Layout that enables a high degree of integration and connectivity between new and existing development particularly the mixed use urban extension at South West Bicester to the west, the garden centre to the north, and, further to the north, Bicester Village retail outlet and Bicester town centre.
- Provision and encouragement for sustainable travel options as the preferred modes of transport rather than the private car, and provision of a Travel Plan. Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for.
- Provision for safe pedestrian and cyclist access from the A41 including facilitating the provision and upgrading of footpaths and cycleways that link with existing networks to improve connectivity generally, to maximise walking and cycling links between this site and nearby development sites and the town centre.

- Accommodation of bus stops to link the development to the wider town.
- Maximisation of walking and cycling links to the adjoining mixed use development at South West Bicester as well as the garden centre to the north.
- Contribution to the creation of a footpath network around Bicester.
- A layout that maximises the potential for walkable neighbourhoods and enables a high degree of integration and connectivity between new and existing communities.”

In Oxfordshire County Council’s Local Transport Plan 4, Policy BIC1 in the Bicester Area Strategy states:

“BIC1 – Improve access and connections between key employment and residential sites and the strategic transport system by:

- Continuing to work with Highways England to improve connectivity to the strategic highway. We will continue to work in partnership on the A34 and A43 strategies, as well as Junctions 9 and 10 of the M40 to relieve congestion
- Delivering effective peripheral routes around the town.

Southern peripheral corridor: provide a South East Perimeter Road to support the significant housing and employment growth in Bicester. In the longer term, link capacity issues along Boundary Way are assessed as being a major transport issue for the town. Land is safeguarded at Graven Hill for the section of road to the south of this site, joining the A41 at the Pioneer Road junction – this prevents development on the land that would be required, but does not remove the need for full assessment, justification and planning processes to be undertaken. This will need extending westwards to join the A41 north of M40 Junction 9. The preferred alignment for this extension has been approved as a connection from the Little Chesterton junction across to Graven Hill. The solution will also include a new link through the South East Bicester development site from the A41 Pioneer Road junction up to Wretchwick Way, providing connectivity through the site, in particular for buses.”

In terms of provision for Public Transport, Policy BIC 2 states:

“BIC2 – We will work to reduce the proportion of journeys made by private car through implementing the Sustainable Transport Strategy by: Improving Bicester’s bus services along key routes and providing improved public transport infrastructure considering requirements for and integrating strategic development sites.

Bus connectivity improvements may be required at anticipated pinch points within the town as future developments come forward. This will include connections between North West Bicester and the town centre and consider the need for bus lanes along the A41 to connect with the Park and Ride scheme.”

At the pre-application scoping stage for the Transport Assessment for the Bicester Gateway proposal, it was agreed with the transport consultants that:

“The planning application will be for Phase 1, accompanied by a master plan and comprehensive studies, illustrating the relationship with the wider Bicester Gateway site”.

The mitigation requirements for the full allocation at Bicester 10 are likely to be greater than the overall mitigation achieved if the phases of development are assessed independently without full consideration for one another. Highway mitigations agreed to mitigate phases in isolation are likely to take the form of successive small improvements making slight adjustments with almost imperceptible results, and causing ongoing roadworks disruption to

the travelling public. Instead, a costed package of mitigation for Bicester 10 should to be agreed, and then a plan put in place for each phase to contribute towards it or deliver appropriate elements of it.

In this application a 'nil detriment' scheme has been proposed for the Vendee Drive roundabout, whereas a comprehensive assessment of Bicester 10 as a whole would probably demonstrate a need for signalisation of the roundabout. Also, the applicant has noted that the junctions to the north on the A41 are expected to be significantly over capacity by 2024 and that the county council should have a strategy to which this site would contribute proportionately. To secure an adequate contribution the impact of the whole of Bicester 10 needs to be assessed, and then appropriate contributions made from each portion of the site as it comes forward.

Contributions towards Bicester South East Perimeter Road are expected to be part of the required mitigation package and would be expected from this development. Other future developments in the area would also be expected to contribute.

The proposed mitigation for walking and cycling does not extend far enough – contributions would be expected towards wider walking and cycling strategy as per Policy Bicester 10. There are also some inadequacies with the proposed scheme (see below).

A very sketchy masterplan has been provided, showing no indicative layout of the rest of the allocated site. It shows realignment of Wendlebury Road and the creation of a roundabout outside the red line area of this application. It is not known whether this could be delivered as it involves land outside the control of the applicant. Also the proposal leaves the construction of this roundabout and road realignment to be funded by the remainder of Bicester 10, when it should really be a part of the key infrastructure required for the site, to be funded by all development on the site.

### Transport assessment

The impact of the development on junctions on the A41 corridor has been assessed for weekday peak hours. Weekend peaks have not been assessed because the applicant considers that trip generation from the proposed uses would be limited at these times. This is probably acceptable for office uses but I would have liked to see this backed up with some information about trip generation from the hotel at weekends.

In terms of trip generation, the TA states that average trip generation from TRICS has been used due to the sustainability of the site. The trip generation for the B1 use is the same as recently agreed on a technology park in Kidlington, which I think is reasonable. However, the trip generation for the hotel looks low.

Trip distribution has been based on census 2011 travel to work data for output area Cherwell 015 which includes part of the town centre, Bicester village and residential areas to the southeast of Bicester. I have concerns that this may not be representative of the type of employee at the office development, who may be commuting further distances to work. The assumptions regarding trip assignment don't appear to be backed up with a table showing the numbers travelling from each origin and the assumption of the route they would take. There is also a likelihood that the distribution will change over the period due to significant development around the edge of Bicester.

it is stated that the “development forms an integral part of the future growth at Bicester and employment provided at the site will be for local residents, as intended by the Cherwell Local Plan.”, but this cannot be guaranteed and is difficult to promote. Impact weighting may therefore be unrealistically high between the site and the town centre and underestimated for junction 9. This assumption has, however, informed the distribution assumptions.

The applicant has, as advised, used the Bicester Transport Model to obtain 2024 base+ committed development traffic flows against which to assess the development’s impact. They have removed their estimation of Bicester 10’s trips from the base (because they were already included in the model). This is not consistent with their approach of assessing only the currently proposed traffic impact, rather than the whole of Bicester 10. If truly following that approach, they would add a portion of the rest of Bicester 10 (likely to come forward by 2024) back in to the base case. However, our opinion is that they should be providing an assessment of the whole of Bicester 10. Their methodology is also puzzling as they say they have only removed the dominant flows – this needs further explanation.

Junctions have been modelled using appropriate industry standard software, though for the above reasons we consider the flows and turning movements modelled to be insufficient:

- The TA considers that the impact at M40 junction 9 is minimal so no mitigation has been proposed.
- The impact at the Vendee Drive roundabout is proposed to be mitigated by a modest widening of the Vendee Drive approaches which the applicant claims to provide a ‘nil detriment’ solution. However:
  - The RFC rises from 0.83 without development to 0.99 with development and then reducing to 0.85 with mitigation for 2024 on Vendee Drive and 0.87 to 0.89 and then reducing to 0.88 with mitigation for 2024 on A41 (Bicester) arm. The Vendee Drive link arm also goes to 1.03 from 0.41 in 2024 and then reducing to 0.83 with mitigation. RFCs of above 0.85 are considered to be over capacity, so the mitigation is not even providing nil detriment.
  - This does not take account of a mitigation scheme for the whole allocation, which would be more effective and appropriate and would avoid reconfiguring the scheme proposed at a later date and at great cost.
- The junctions to the north on the A41 are severely congested in the base + committed development 2024 scenario. This development would be adding to an already severe situation, and the application does not propose any direct mitigation, but says a contribution will be made to a future strategy to address this, in proportion to the development’s impact on the junction.
- The junction of Wendlebury Road and the Vendee Drive Link Road would become over capacity by 2024, with the risk of queues extending back to the Vendee Drive roundabout, which would be a safety issue. The modelling shows it would not be over capacity in the 2018 with development scenario. A mitigation scheme is proposed in the form of a mini roundabout but it is suggested that the traffic flows on Wendlebury Road would be less than modelled and that the scheme may never be necessary because by 2024, the remainder of Bicester 10 would probably have commenced, with the accompanying road infrastructure and larger roundabout. A traffic monitoring scheme is suggested to determine a trigger by which the mini roundabout would need to be installed.

The mini roundabout is potentially problematic in that it would require the speed limit to be reduced to 30mph, something that cannot be guaranteed as it would require consultation. Additionally, visibility is very tight to the south and there appears to be a small parcel of land on the corner that is neither highway nor in the applicant's control. It would of course be subject to a S278 agreement requiring technical approval including safety audit, and there is a chance that it could not be implemented. In my opinion the office element of the masterplan (phase 1B) should not commence before this S278 is agreed, or the larger roundabout for the rest of Bicester 10, in case it turns out that the scheme cannot be delivered.

### Site access arrangements

Drawing 35172/5502/006/A within the TA shows the site access arrangements. Although I note that access is to be a reserved matter, I thought it pertinent to raise these issues now, because in my view it should be demonstrated that they can be resolved before planning permission is granted.

3 no. vehicular accesses are proposed along Wendlebury Road – one north of the Vendee Drive link road for the hotel and two to the south for the offices. The drawing shows visibility splays of 4.5 x 90m (appropriate for speeds of 30mph) for the offices but a little over 2m x 120m for the hotel (appropriate for speeds of 40mph), which is inconsistent with the drawing notes. The drawing is also inconsistent in the labelling of the proposed speed limit, but the transport consultant has confirmed that it is intended to extend a 40mph speed limit throughout Wendlebury Road and the Vendee Drive Link Road through the site.

The information is not adequate to determine whether adequate visibility can be provided. This is important particularly to the south of the link road, as there is thick vegetation/small trees close to the road but within the highway boundary, that would need to be cleared. Visibility needs to be provided in accordance with measured 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds and no speed survey has been carried out.

Additionally swept path analysis has not been provided to demonstrate that large vehicles can turn in and out of the site without the need for localised road widening.

There is an existing shared use footway/cycleway along Wendlebury Road from the junction with the Vendee Drive Link road to a point opposite the sewage works entrance next to Bicester Avenue Garden Centre. No additional footway along Wendlebury Road is proposed. It is proposed that pedestrian/cycle access would be taken from a new 3m wide shared use track alongside the A41. However, the drawing shows no actual access points into the site (neither does the masterplan) – this needs to be confirmed and secured.

In my opinion a footway along Wendlebury Road should be provided too as this will be a preferable route for many, away from the noise and traffic of the A41. It is also necessary to cater for movements between the hotel and employment and the shops/café at Bicester Avenue – pedestrians would not take the detour to walk via the A41 and would likely walk in the carriageway of Wendlebury Road, which would not be considered safe. As the link road will become more busy, an improved crossing point needs to be provided, for both routes. This footway will also provide infrastructure that will definitely be required for the wider Bicester 10 development.

The road network in this area is not lit and we would expect it to be lit particularly for the safety and personal security of staff and visitors travelling on foot or by bike, and to encourage walking/cycling at all times of day.



## Public transport

There is already a relatively good bus service along the A41 past the site. The proposals include a footway link to a new bus stop with shelter in the existing layby on the southbound side of the A41. This would require a bus stop clearway to prevent parking in the bus stop. As the layby is currently well used for lorry parking, and there is a shortage of lorry parking in the area, we would expect the application to propose lengthening the layby.

There is an existing bus stop with shelter on the northbound side, but it does not have real time information display – the developer should provide this. In addition to the hard standing and shelter, the new stop should include an electronic real-time information unit and a contribution should be provided to install a flagpole and information case unit.

No proposals are made to improve the crossing of the A41 to reach the northbound bus stop. Crossing at the Vendee Drive Roundabout splitter island will be extremely daunting for many pedestrians, particularly the northbound arm, where traffic exiting the roundabout can be hard to predict. We would expect to see a proposal for a crossing of the A41.

## Parking

The number of parking spaces is not specified, but we would expect the amount of parking proposed to be suitably justified so as to prevent the likelihood of overspill parking either onto Wendlebury Road (there TROs may be necessary) or into the Park and Ride site or Bicester Avenue's car park.

The Framework Travel Plan suggests:

"It is proposed to control the use of the car parking provision within the office development by use of a permit scheme, whereby employees will need to apply for a permit to park on site. This management technique will allow the Framework Travel Plan Coordinator some control over parking on site and give the opportunity to manage permits in a way that encourages car sharing and the use of electric cars."

Consideration of the interaction of car parking with Bicester Park and Ride does not appear to have been considered. How will overspill parking from the proposed Bicester Gateway Development, which would be exacerbated by a permit parking scheme for the site, be prevented from using the P&R site? A robust car parking management plan should be included in the Travel Plan.

## Public right of way

Chesterton Footpath 8 (161/8) runs across the southern corner of phase 1B. A Public Right of Way Statement has been provided. Within this the constraints plan shows the public footpath but it should be noted that it has not been shown accurately. The Definitive Map (the legal record showing the location of public rights of way) can be viewed online via the following link; [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/definitivemaponline](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/definitivemaponline)

There are a number of points that are made within the Public Right of Way Statement which include opportunities to improve the maintenance of the footpath, and that it is likely that the re-alignment of the footpath will provide enjoyment, legibility and safety enhancements. The applicant has advised that they would be happy to engage directly with a local footpath group to come up with the best solution. It is important that this engagement includes the local Parish Council. There must also be liaison with the legal team at Cherwell District Council who would have to process a footpath diversion in order to confirm that they would be able to

take an application forward. The OCC field officer would be pleased to comment further on any ideas they have in relation to providing a more enjoyable alternative route or how they would accommodate and improve it on its existing alignment.

#### Rat-running through Wendlebury Village

A camera monitoring system is proposed to prevent staff at the offices from using the route through Wendlebury. Further details are required of how this would operate and be enforced.

#### Safety Considerations

There have been a number of accidents at the A41/Vendee Drive roundabout in the last 5 years, mainly minor and near misses. Northbound vehicles appear to occasionally fail to give way to vehicles on the roundabout circulatory. Bicester Gateway is likely to generate over 3,500 jobs, putting further pressure on this junction.

Improvements could be investigated to include Vehicle Activated Signs being provided on the Northbound approach to the Vendee Drive / A41 roundabout, along with extra warning signs in the general area. The single headed chevrons on the central reserve on the northbound approach could be looked at in terms of increasing their size and a review of lane markings and their provision on the circulatory area could also be investigated. Installation of cat's eyes and refreshing the white lining along Vendee Drive may also be considered beneficial.

#### Travel Plan

A framework travel plan has been submitted with the application; this is of a high standard and only requires a small amount of further development. This travel plan has been assessed against our guidance and our comments on the submitted plan are included below.

The 149 bedroom hotel that has been proposed as part of this development is of the size that means it will require its own travel plan.

- Para 1.4.1 We would clarify this and add that 'the overall aim of this travel plan is to reduce the number of single occupancy trips (SOV) to and from the site' This is because one method of sustainable travel that is likely to be appropriate for the site will be car sharing, which will still involve car journeys just in a more practical manner.
- Para 5.3.4 Please promote Oxfordshire Liftshare as the car sharing provider of choice <https://oxfordshire.liftshare.com/>
- Para 5.3.19 same as the comment above
- Para 7.2.1, para 7.4 and para 9.2 With this site and indeed all sites the developers responsibility in travel plan terms will be for at least 5 years from full occupation of the site. As this is a substantial site not to have this on-going travel plan investment in the site could have a detrimental effect.
- Staff welcome packs should be offered in an appropriate form and this could be either electronically or in a printed format.
- Some measures like the Dr Bike sessions have not made it into the action table in 9.2. It would be good to see all planned actions included in the table. It would also be good to see them grouped under appropriate headings such as measures to reduce SOV journeys, measures to increase walking, measures to increase cycling etc.

#### Drainage

The initial soakage testing has been carried out at the site suggests that there is some potential for infiltration techniques to be used at the site.

OCC drainage were not able to agree the proposed storage volumes at the site as it appeared that these were based on a long term storage calculation alone, considering the 6 hour 100 year storm, without consideration of attenuation storage. Further clarification of the methodology is sought from the developer's consultant. (Reason for objection) The proposed allowable discharge rate for Phase 1 of 4.6 l/s appeared reasonable, with 5 l/s considered to be the minimum practicable, due to maintenance considerations. Potentially, the WRAP allocation of soil type 4 in the calculation could be somewhat high as the site investigation indicates the presence of gravels and sandy type clays.

OCC (drainage) did not consider that the FRA reflected the range of SUDS techniques that could potentially be used at the site. The proposed permeable paving will offer a degree of treatment to improve water quality, but does not in itself constitute a treatment train approach to the improvement of water quality. This could be achieved by the incorporation of swales into the SUDS proposals. (Reason for objection).

It was not possible to read the topographical survey information contained within Appendix 2 of the FRA. A concern was raised how cut and fill across the site would affect natural flow paths.

**Officer's Name: Joy White**

**Officer's Title: Principal Transport Planner**

**Date: 10 February 2017**

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## **Archaeology**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection subject to conditions

### **Key issues:**

The site is located in an area of considerable archaeological interest immediately north of the scheduled Roman Town of Alchester (SM 18). An archaeological evaluation has identified a number of Roman deposits within the area of proposed car parking. These deposits are to be preserved in situ in line with a preservation strategy submitted with the planning application.

A programme of archaeological investigation and mitigation will still be required for the rest of the site but following the removal of the area of dense Roman deposits we are satisfied that this can be secured through an appropriately worded condition.

### **Legal agreement required to secure:**

None

### **Conditions:**

1. Prior to any demolition and the commencement of the development a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the Local Planning Authority shall prepare an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, relating to the application site area, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with the NPPF (2012).

2. Following the approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition 1, and prior to any demolition on the site and the commencement of the development (other than in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation), a staged programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason – To safeguard the identification, recording, analysis and archiving of heritage assets before they are lost and to advance understanding of the heritage assets in their wider context through publication and dissemination of the evidence in accordance with the NPPF (2012).

### **Detailed comments:**

The site is located in an area of archaeological considerable archaeological interest immediately north of the scheduled Roman Town of Alchester (SM 18). The Roman Road north from the Town to Towcester forms the eastern boundary of the proposed development area. Another Roman Road, Akeman Street, forms the southern boundary of the site.

An archaeological excavation during the A41 widening recorded a significant amount of extra mural settlement on the southern edge of the proposed development area consisting of stone building foundations, roadways, pits and ditches. A cemetery was found immediately to the north of this site, on the northern side of the A41. Evidence of Iron Age settlement was also recorded along with archaeological features dating to the post Roman period.

An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken on this proposed site which has recorded a number of archaeological deposits dating to the Roman period, spanning the 1st to 4th centuries AD with activity concentrated in the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. These included probable floor surfaces and a possible oven or kiln along with a number of ditches and pits. The remains were located within a discrete area of the site, proposed for car parking, and the applicant has submitted a method statement setting out how these features will be preserved in situ. This is an appropriate scheme for preservation.

A programme of archaeological investigation and mitigation will still be required for the rest of the site but following the removal of the area of dense Roman deposits we are satisfied that this can be secured through an appropriately worded condition as suggested above.

**Officer's Name: Richard Oram**

**Officer's Title:** Planning Archaeologist

**Date:** 31 January 2017

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## **Economy**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection subject to conditions

### **Key issues:**

- The construction of the proposed development will create new jobs, although the number to be created is not specified
- Further c.550 new jobs will be created at end user stage.
- The level of employment generated on this strategic development site will require the developers to prepare and implement a Community Employment Plan

### **Conditions:**

- The developers will be required to prepare and implement, with local authorities and skills providers, a Community Employment Plan (CEP) that will seek to mitigate the impacts of development through ensuring that local people can better access the training (including apprenticeships) and job opportunities arising from the development. CEP's should relate to outcomes from both the construction and the end user phase.

### **Detailed comments:**

The documents submitted in support of the planning application notes that:

- Phase 1 of Bicester Gateway comprises approximately 14,972 sq m of B1(a) business and B1(b) high tech space and a hotel of up to 149 bedrooms on 3.80 hectares.
- Prior to the identification of specific occupiers, the mix of uses within B1 cannot be specified, however, assuming 500 B class jobs plus an additional 50 jobs for the hotel generates c.550 jobs for phase 1 (depending on space requirements and final mix of B1 uses)

The [Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (OxLEP) and partners have agreed, through the City Deal and Strategic Economic Plan to deliver significant levels of economic growth

Oxfordshire has made progress through programmes including [Oxfordshire Business Support](#)<sup>1</sup>, the [Oxfordshire Apprenticeship programme](#)<sup>2</sup>, [O2i](#)<sup>3</sup> and [Invest in Oxfordshire](#)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfordshire Business Support is the Growth Hub for Oxfordshire, providing business support, specialist advice and guidance

<sup>2</sup> The Oxfordshire Apprenticeship programme promotes apprenticeships to employers and potential apprentices. It supports employers through the process of taking on an apprentice.

Recent policy initiatives relating to skills development are contained in:

- The Oxfordshire City Deal
- Oxfordshire European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) Strategy
- Strategic Economic Plan – the refresh of which is currently underway

The Oxfordshire Skills Strategy has the following key strategic priorities to 2020:

- To meet the needs of local employers through a more integrated and responsive approach to education and training
- Creating the 'skills continuum' to support young people through their learning journey
- Up-skilling and improving the chances of young people and adults marginalised or disadvantaged from work
- To increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities
- To explore how we can better retain graduates within Oxfordshire to meet the demand for the higher level skills our businesses need

### **Employment and skills planning justification**

Oxfordshire has a 'tight labour market', comprising of one of the lowest national claimant counts for Job Seekers Allowance<sup>5</sup>, alongside 'pockets of deprivation' in which there are relatively high levels of unemployment. Improving local skills and employment outcomes will not only drive forward the local economy, but will have far reaching effects in improving the social and economic outcomes of individuals currently marginalised from the workforce.

The Government advice on planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system'.

Seeking commitments to the development of skills and the provision of job opportunities through Community Employment Plans (CEP's) can help to achieve this vision and to ensure that developments contribute to economic growth.

Through CEP's, Local Planning Authorities can work together with the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Skills Board and partners to ensure the maximum benefits in terms of new jobs. Thereby fully utilising the potential within the planning system to support and drive sustainable local economic growth.

As well as supporting sustainable economic growth, CEP's provide the opportunity to more closely align the new jobs created from a major development, the local labour market and skills providers. Thus ensuring maximum benefits in terms of new jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and local supply chains.

**Officer's Name: Sarah Beal**

**Officer's Title: Economic Development Coordinator**

**Date: 27 January 2017**

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<sup>3</sup> O2i Opportunities to Inspire builds links between employers and education across Oxfordshire in order to inspire the future workforce. It offers an online platform so that volunteers from any sector can discover opportunities to inspire and inform young people

<sup>4</sup> Invest in Oxfordshire provides tailored assistance to place and grow businesses in Oxfordshire

<sup>5</sup> JSA claimant count in February 2016 for Oxfordshire was 2,695 (rate of 0.6)