

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

PLOT SGR1, BICESTER

MARCH 2018

Quod

Ingeni Building | 17 Broadwick Street, London, W1F 0DE

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Site and Setting	4
3	EIA Methodology	6
4	Alternatives	7
5	Description of Development	9
6	Transport	12
7	Cultural Heritage	13
8	Landscape and Visual Impacts	14
9	Cumulative Effects	15
10	Mitigation, Monitoring and Residual Effects	17
	References	18

1 Introduction

1.1 This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) presents a summary of the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that has been undertaken on behalf of SGR (Bicester 1) Limited (the 'Applicant') to accompany an outline planning application for the development of Plot SGR1 at Caversfield ('the Site'). The Site is located in north-west Bicester, within the administrative boundary of Cherwell District Council (CDC). Figure 1.1 shows the location of the Site.

Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan



1.2 The Site is located approximately 2.2 kilometres (km) north of the centre of Bicester. It is approximately square in shape and is centred at National Grid Reference SP579251. The Site covers an area of 5.03 hectares (ha) and is consists of two plots which are separated by a private access road. The Site currently comprises agricultural land used for pasture.

1.3 The proposed development (the 'Development') would provide up to 75 new homes, pedestrian and cycle routes, open space and playspace.

Figure 1.2: Aerial View of the Site and Planning Application Boundary



- 1.4 The full EIA report, known as an ‘Environmental Statement’ (ES) assesses the environmental effects of the proposed Development and accompanies an outline planning application which has been submitted to CDC. The ES has been prepared in line with the UK legal requirements¹ and good practice. The purpose of the ES is to inform decision making by explaining the likely significant effects that the Development may have on the environment and setting out how they can be avoided or reduced.
- 1.5 The EIA has been informed by a series of technical studies which form part of the ES. These studies include surveys, calculations and other forms of modelling that have been undertaken by a professional team of consultants led by Quod. The ES comprises three volumes, in addition to this Non-Technical Summary:
- **Volume 1: Main Document** – provides the full text of the ES along with figures.
 - **Volume 2: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.**
 - **Volume 3: Appendices** – contains technical surveys, reports and supporting documents to Volume 1.
- 1.6 The ES and all supporting material can be viewed at the offices of CDC. Electronic copies of the planning application and ES are available view on the Council’s website at

<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/115/planning>. Copies of the ES can also be purchased from Quod. Please email reception@quod.com for further details or contact 020 3597 1000.

2 Site and Setting

- 2.1 The Site is comprised of two plots of arable land separated by a private access road that extends from Banbury Road to Home Farm adjacent to the south-east. There are no buildings or structures currently present on-site, and access to the Site is currently from the western boundary (Charlotte Avenue) via the Exemplar Site. Records from early mapping shows that the Site has remained undeveloped since 1881.
- 2.2 The Site is bound by Banbury Road (the B4100) to the north-east, Home Farm - a farm with light-industrial and office use tenancies in its outbuildings - and arable land to the south-east, and residential development associated with the Exemplar site or 'Elmsbrook' development currently being constructed to the south-west and north-west.
- 2.3 The Site currently in an agricultural area, with the conurbation of Bicester approximately 550m to the south and Caversfield approximately 540m to the east. Farms and associated agricultural buildings are scattered throughout the wider arable landscape to the north and west.
- 2.4 However, the Site has an emerging suburban context with the Site and majority of the agricultural land surrounding the Site consented for residential-led, mixed-use development as part of the North-west Bicester Eco-Town, as defined by national² and local policy³. The future development of the area includes proposals for up to 6,000 new residential units, new office accommodation, new public amenities such as a nursery, schools, community facilities and a new Strategic Link Road.

Table 2.1: Land Uses in Proximity to the Site

Location	Adjacent/Bordering Site	Within 100m of Site Boundary	Greater than 100m of Site Boundary
North-east	Banbury Road (B4100)	Church of St. Lawrence Caversfield House The Lodge	Caversfield (settlement) Agricultural land
North-west	Agricultural fields (currently being developed under Exemplar scheme)	Agricultural fields (currently being developed under Exemplar scheme ('SGR2'))	Agricultural land
South-east	Home Farm	Banbury Road (B4100) Agricultural land	Agricultural fields (currently being developed under Exemplar scheme) Bicester (settlement)
South-west	Agricultural fields (currently being developed under Exemplar scheme)	Agricultural fields (currently being developed under Exemplar scheme)	Agricultural fields (currently being developed under Exemplar scheme ('SGR2'))

- 2.5 The River Bure runs within the south-eastern Site boundary. The majority of the Site is located in Flood Zone 1 (less than 0.1% annual probability of flooding), although the southern boundary of the Site is located within Flood Zone 3 (1% or greater annual probability of fluvial flooding).
- 2.6 The Site is not of ecological value and the nearest statutory or non-statutory ecologically designated site is Bure Park Local Wildlife Site located approximately 810m south-west of the Site boundary.

- 2.7 The Site does not lie within a Conservation Area, with the closest being RAF Bicester, approximately 480m south-east of the Site boundary. The closest designated built heritage assets are the St Lawrence's Church (Grade II* listed) and Home Farmhouse (Grade II listed), located approximately 30m east and 75m south of the Site boundary respectively.

Figure 2.2: Parish Church of St. Lawrence and View from Site looking east to Church



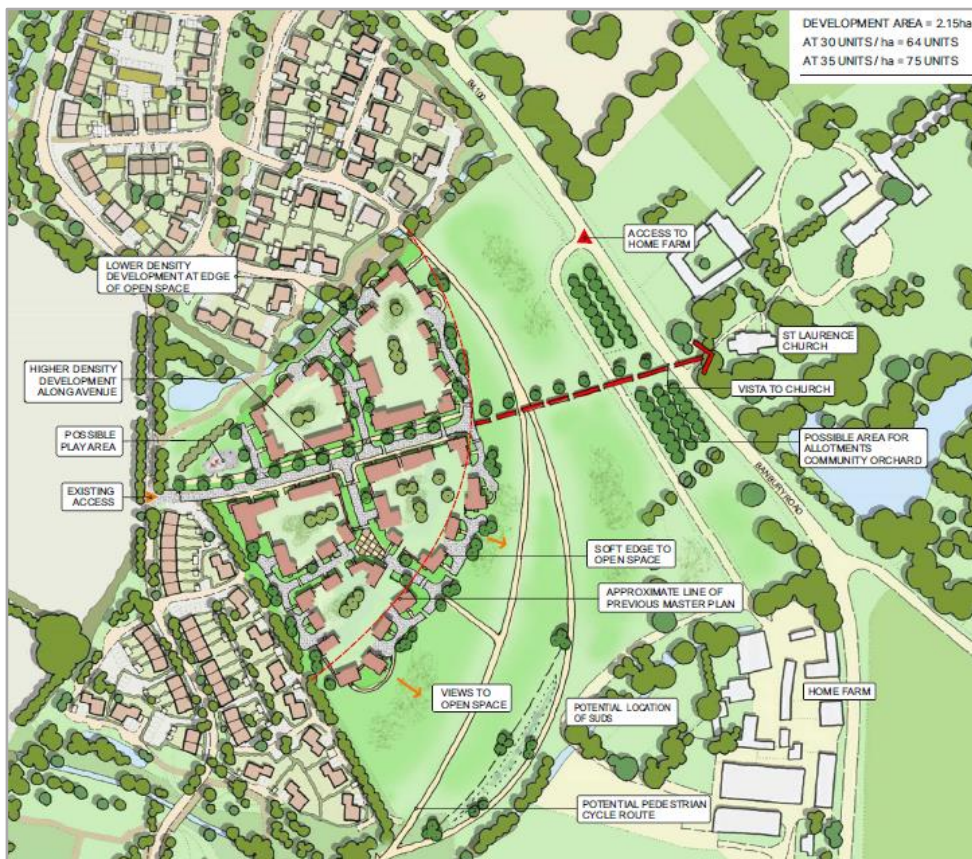
3 EIA Methodology

- 3.1 The purpose of the EIA process is to identify how people and the environment could be affected by the Development and to provide measures (referred to as 'mitigation') that would avoid, minimise or offset negative (adverse) effects.
- 3.2 A request for an EIA Screening Opinion was submitted to CDC on 17th January 2018, who provided a response on 7th February stating that the proposals would be EIA development. The content of this Screening Opinion informed the proposed scope of the ES and an informal Scoping Note was submitted to CDC on 20th February to invite the Council's informal views on the scope of the ES, for which they provided a response on 26th February.
- 3.3 Based on this feedback, alongside a review of policy, guidance, planning applications recently submitted for developments in close proximity to the Site and a review of environmental sensitivities of the area it was determined that the Development is only likely to give rise to significant effects in respect of transport and access, cultural heritage and landscape and visual impacts. As such, all other issues were 'scoped out' and not considered further within the ES.
- 3.4 The ES considers the likely effect of the Development on its neighbours, local environment, local and regional economy, as well as the wider area. The environmental effects of the Development are predicted in relation to sensitive receptors, including human beings, built resources and natural resources. The sensitive receptors considered in the ES include local residents and businesses, heritage assets and designations, road users, construction workers and future occupiers of the Site. Each topic assessment attaches a level of significance to the identified effects, i.e. either major, moderate, minor or negligible. Short and long-term (temporary and permanent), direct and indirect effects have been assessed. The following terminology has been used to express the nature of the effect: adverse (negative), negligible or beneficial (positive). The significance of effects has been determined using best practice and published standards.
- 3.5 Where adverse effects are identified, mitigation measures are identified to reduce the significance of the effect. 'Residual effects' are the effects that remain after mitigation measures have been implemented. The significance of these has been identified using best practice and published standards. Where no suitable guidance exists, professional judgment has been applied by the technical specialists.
- 3.6 The EIA Regulations require that 'cumulative' effects are considered in the ES. Cumulative effects can arise from individual effects of the Development interacting (e.g. traffic, noise and air quality). These interactions are considered in Section 9 of this NTS. Cumulative effects which may result from the Development in combination with other development schemes in the vicinity of the Site are considered in each technical section of the NTS (sections 6 - 8) and section 9.

4 Alternatives

- 4.1 The ES is required to present a description of the main alternatives considered by the Applicant and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects. No alternative sites were considered by the Applicant.
- 4.2 Given the Site's allocation within the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Part 1², redevelopment of the Site would contribute to CDC's strategic aim of delivering new housing within the North-West Bicester area.
- 4.3 If the Site were not developed and it were to remain as it currently is, there would be a loss of the opportunity to provide up to 75 new homes, in accordance with local planning policy. This would avoid the temporary disruption associated with construction of the Development and the effects identified from the completed Development (including visual impacts). However, given the Site has been identified for development by CDC Local Plan, it can reasonably be expected that it is unlikely to remain undeveloped in the longer term.
- 4.4 The North-West Bicester Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)⁴ sets out guiding principles for development on the Site, which have informed the design of the Development. The SPD identifies the Site as being suitable for residential use and allocates the eastern third for a residential zone with the remainder reserved for green infrastructure.
- 4.5 At the outset, the project team had a clear brief to comply with the North West Bicester Masterplan SPD and meet CDC's overall regeneration objectives. Hence, the design has developed broadly in accordance with these guidelines to assist with the accelerated delivery of the NW Bicester Eco-Town area. The project architects also considered how the Development would relate to and provide future connectivity to schemes within the wider Eco-Town area. Figure 4.1 illustrates how the concept scheme was developed.

Figure 4.1: Concept Scheme



4.6 The footprint of the residential development zone within the planning submission scheme (see Figure 5.1) has not altered significantly from the concept scheme presented in Figure 4.1.

4.7 Following consultation, the only significant alterations are:

- Inclusion and subsequent relocation of the car parking for use by church parishioners and visitors to the allotments to the northern corner of the Site, thereby minimising the indirect effects of vehicle movements (e.g. noise and air quality) on nearby listed buildings and residential receptors;
- Relocation of play area from the western corner to a new location south of the allotments/car park in the northern corner of the Site; and
- Fully allocating the 'Eastern plot' for community orchard planting compared to the concept scheme and previous iterations of the parameter plans which shared the plot between orchard planting and allotments. This would increase the visual screening along the eastern Site boundary.

5 Description of Development

- 5.1 Outline planning permission with all matters reserved (excluding access) is sought for:
- Up to 75 residential units;
 - Pedestrian and cycle routes;
 - Creation of new access point from Charlotte Avenue;
 - Provision of open space;
 - Play space;
 - Orchard and allotments; and
 - Parking; and
 - Associated works.
- 5.2 The outline planning application is defined by a series of Parameter Plans and a Development Specification document. These identify areas for built development, access and proposed routes of movement, and define maximum building heights.
- 5.3 The residential development zone is located in the western third of the Site. It forms an arced border that extends from approximately midway between the northern and western Site boundaries, with open space reserved for the majority of the remainder of Site, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. A no-build area is incorporated along the centre of the residential zone in the form of a new avenue to preserve the local vista of the Church of St. Lawrence, in-line with local policy.
- 5.4 Existing hedgerows are to be retained where possible, with one section proposed for removal on the northern Site boundary to facilitate a pedestrian/cycleway connection to the emerging residential development to the north and west associated with the adjacent Exemplar site (see Figure 5.2).
- 5.5 The new dwellings will range in height from two to three storeys (ranging from 8.5m up to 13m ridge height above existing ground levels), with the taller buildings located along the proposed residential avenue to frame the vista to the church.
- 5.6 Car and cycle parking will be provided in line with local authority standards and will be dependent on the size of the homes provided.
- 5.7 The Development incorporates a drainage strategy that includes Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) features such as a basin and permeable paving to store rainwater runoff from the Development so not to increase the risk of flood elsewhere. This storage capacity includes an allowance for increases in rainfall due to climate change. This storage capacity will restrict the discharge rate into the River Bure to a best practice minimum controlled rate of 5 litres per second.

Figure 5.1: Land Use (top) and Access and Movement (bottom) Parameter Plans



- 5.8 Figure 5.2 presents an illustrative layout which shows one way in which the homes could be delivered. Details of the type of homes, their layout and appearance will be agreed with Cherwell District Council at the next stage of planning approval, i.e. by reserved matters applications.

Figure 5.2: Illustrative Layout of the Development



Construction

- 5.9 The Development would come forward over an 18-30 month construction period, with construction expected to commence in Quarter 4 (Q4) 2018 and completing in Q2 2021.
- 5.10 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction works on-site and adhered to during all works. This will provide management procedures and protocols to outline how the project will avoid, minimise or mitigate effects on the environment and surrounding area during the construction phase. A Construction Transport Management Plan (CTMP) will be prepared to minimise traffic related issues associated with the construction works and agreed with CDC and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). Local residents and businesses will be kept informed of the works.
- 5.11 Likely significant environmental issues associated with the construction works, and measures identified to mitigate these effects are discussed within each technical section (sections 6 and 7).
- 5.12 The Development will seek to reuse materials and minimise waste production, including that of energy and water, where possible.

6 Transport

- 6.1 The local highway network in the vicinity of the Site include the adjacent B4100 (to the north-east), the A4095 (to the south) and Charlotte Avenue (to the west) associated with the emerging Exemplar scheme which is still partly under construction.
- 6.2 Charlotte Avenue will provide future access to the Site, alongside a secondary access to the proposed allotments and car park for a nearby church via the existing Home Farm access onto the B4100. The Site will also benefit from high quality pedestrian, cycling and bus facilities and frequent bus services within a short walking distance on Charlotte Avenue.
- 6.3 The potential effects of both the construction and operations phase of the Development have been considered in respect of the predicted changes in traffic flows for aspects of severance, driver delay, pedestrian delay, pedestrian amenity, fear and intimidation and accidents and safety.
- 6.4 Construction effects have been assessed and are expected to be negligible and temporary and will be mitigated through the implementation of a CTMP. This will give due consideration to the potential for in-combination effects with other local construction activities that may be occurring at the same time.
- 6.5 The effects of the completed Development have been assessed and are expected to be negligible and permanent but will be mitigated by the access proposals, travel planning and appropriately scaled financial contribution toward the delivery of off-site highway infrastructure improvements including a pedestrian crossing facility across the B4100 and toward proposed local bus service improvements consistent with other local development sites, subject to ongoing discussions with OCC and S106 negotiations.
- 6.6 The cumulative effect of local development sites has been inherently built into the completed Development assessment, through use of the County Bicester Transport Model which includes an extensive range of schemes across the locality predicted to occur in the period up to 2026.

7 Cultural Heritage

- 7.1 Effects on Cultural Heritage, which includes both built heritage and archaeology, have been assessed for the Development. The assessment has been informed by a Built Heritage Statement and Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) which can be found within Volume 3: Appendix 7.1 and Appendix 7.2 of the ES.
- 7.2 With regards to built heritage, there are two listed buildings which have the potential to be impacted by the Development: Home Farmhouse (Grade II listed) and the Church of St Laurence (Grade II* listed). Home Farmhouse currently derives some degree of importance from the Site due to it being agricultural land which was historically associated with the farm. This linkage is no longer clearly present, with the farmhouse visually separated by dense screening and intervening buildings. In addition, the functional connection has been heavily altered by neighbouring development which has already taken place around the Site. The Church of St Laurence also derives a degree of rural character from the Site, and there are some views available to the tower of the Church from the Site, however this makes very limited contribution to the importance of the Church. From within the churchyard there is a very limited view and relationship to the Site, with Banbury Road providing a clear separation and the church being surrounded by dense vegetation.
- 7.3 The significance of effects on the listed buildings is considered to be minor adverse, resulting from the loss of rural character and some views, which is not significant in terms of the EIA Regulations. This has been mitigated through scheme design by maintaining and enhancing the existing site line to the Church within the Site, retaining existing vegetation buffers and a large expanse of open land between the proposed new zone of residential development and the off-site heritage assets, and increasing tree planting in proximity to the eastern and south-eastern Site boundaries to strengthen visual screening.
- 7.4 In addition to the listed buildings, the complex of buildings at Caversfield House are considered worthy of non-designated heritage asset status. There are some views of these buildings from within the Site, and it currently provides a degree of rural character to these buildings. The contribution that the Site makes to the assets is very limited, and due to the very low local importance of the assets this is further reduced, therefore the effect of the Development upon Caversfield House is considered negligible. No further mitigation is considered necessary for these assets.
- 7.5 With regard to archaeology, an archaeological DBA has established that there are no designated or undesignated archaeological assets within the Site itself and that there will be no impacts on the settings of archaeological assets as a result of the construction or operation of the Development. The potential for the Site to contain unknown archaeological remains of any period is considered to be negligible. On the basis of this, the sensitivity of potential archaeological remains within the Site to development is considered to be negligible. As such, no mitigation is proposed.
- 7.6 In view of the absence of any anticipated impacts beyond the extent of the Site itself, no cumulative impacts are considered likely.

8 Landscape and Visual Impacts

- 8.1 The landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) examines the likely effects of the Development upon different landscape areas, and on views of the Development and its setting from a variety of locations where the Development would potentially be visible to the public.
- 8.2 The Site does not form part of a designated landscape and has a relatively simple character with no elements of notable value except for hedgerows and trees. The surrounding landscape comprises some remaining open countryside which is being enclosed by adjacent residential development on three sides and undergoing a transition from rural to suburban. The Bicester Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study⁵ assesses the landscape value of the land as being low with a high capacity for residential development. The most sensitive elements are the adjacent listed buildings, particularly the Church of St Laurence.
- 8.3 The principal effects on the landscape would be through removal of the existing grassland and the significant permanent change of use from agricultural to residential with a slight loss of tranquillity and openness. It is proposed that all trees be retained, with one minor section of hedgerow to be removed to facilitate access along the northern Site boundary. After completion, the large area of open space will have additional planting to enhance the Site's landscape setting, resulting in a slight beneficial effect.
- 8.4 In terms of visual setting, the Site has an enclosed character with the adjacent Exemplar development and dense mature trees around Caversfield House restricting inter-visibility with the wider landscape. Significant visual effects are restricted to users of Banbury Road, adjacent to the north-eastern Site boundary, between the junction with Aunt Ems Lane in the south and The Lodge to the north. In addition, partial views would be visible from the Lodge, the grounds of Caversfield House to the east and Home Farm to the south. There would also be a small slot view through the gate from inside the churchyard to the east from which the Development would be visible. However, the majority of these views would be filtered by existing barriers and/or retained and proposed tree cover between the road and Site. In addition, there is potential for filtered upper storey views from some of the completed residential properties of the Exemplar development adjacent to the north-western Site boundary.
- 8.5 In all views, the Site would be seen against the backdrop of residential houses of the larger Exemplar development once complete. Effectively, the Development represents infill of a Site already surrounded by emerging housing which would slightly extend the residential edge to the south-east. The retention of a large area of open space and proposed orchard planting within the proposals would help mitigate visual effect and has the potential to create an attractive 'parkland' setting to the Development and enhance the setting of the surrounding Exemplar development given a sensitive landscape treatment.
- 8.6 Given its small-scale and position in relation to the surrounding development, the overall effect of the addition of the Site to the Exemplar scheme would not result in additional significant cumulative landscape or visual effects. It occupies an enclosed parcel of land that would not extend built form into the wider countryside or create additional new visual effects.

9 Cumulative Effects

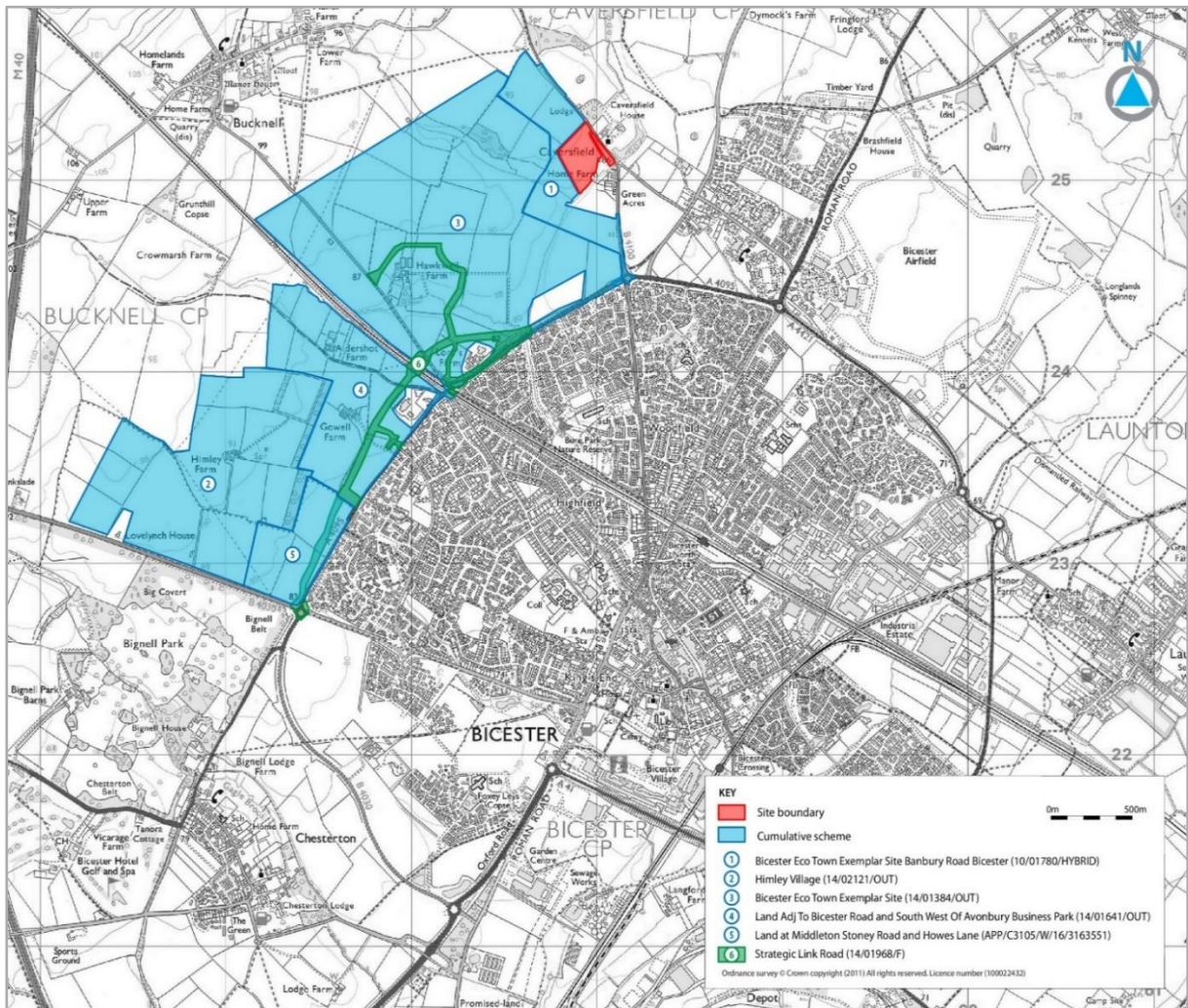
9.1 The EIA Regulations require consideration of cumulative effects which include:

- Potential effects from interactions of individual effects ('in-combination' effects) during the construction and operations phase of the Development; and
- Effects which could arise from other schemes planned in the local area.

9.2 Following assessment, it is not considered that there is the potential for in-combination effects on the identified receptors during the construction phase or once the Development is complete and occupied.

9.3 The assessment has also examined the potential for effects to arise from overlapping construction periods with other schemes in the area. The relationship of these to the Site is illustrated in Figure 9.1. Along with the Development, all considered cumulative schemes have committed to implement CEMPs or similar type measures which will manage and minimise construction effects where possible. It is therefore assumed that both the Site and the cumulative schemes would adhere to good practice site management and standard mitigation measures would be in place to reduce effects during construction works. The cumulative assessment concluded that no significant cumulative effects would arise during the construction period of the Development in combination with other schemes.

Figure 9.1: Cumulative Schemes



- 9.4 Overall, the cumulative schemes along with the Development would deliver new housing that meets local and regional government targets set for the area. Together, these would have a combined permanent beneficial effect at a local and district level, however due to the relative scale of the Development it is not considered to contribute a proportion that would result in significant cumulative effects.
- 9.5 The cumulative assessment did not identify any significant adverse effects which would rise from the development in-combination with other cumulative schemes. This is largely due to the relatively small-scale of the Development compared to that of the wider development of the area.

10 Mitigation, Monitoring and Residual Effects

- 10.1 The ES includes a summary of the proposed mitigation measures and significant residual effects for all the topics considered. A thorough assessment has been undertaken of the likely significant environmental effects of the Development.
- 10.2 Following implementation of site mitigation during construction works as outlined previously, minor adverse effects are expected on the listed assets of Home Farm and the Church of St Laurence. It is not considered that these would constitute significant effects and would be transient in nature, not lasting for a period of greater than 30 months.
- 10.3 Once the Development is completed and following the implementation of proposed design measures, beneficial effects are expected on landscape fabric through retention and enhancement of green open space on the Site and due to creation of new public open space and new cycle and pedestrian links. Following these design measures, minor adverse effects are predicted on visual impacts at certain local receptors. However, it is considered that the Development would result an acceptable extension of the existing and consented residential area of North West Bicester.
- 10.4 Outside standard good practice site monitoring requirements during construction works to be included within the CEMP, the EIA has not identified any further monitoring requirements during the construction or operation phases of the Development.

References

¹ Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO), 2017. *The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017*. The Stationary Office

² Department of Communities and Local Government, 2009, *Planning Policy Statement, Eco-towns: planning policy statement 1 (supplement) (updated 2015)*, July 2009

³ Cherwell District Council, 2015. *Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1*. July 2015.

⁴ Cherwell District Council and Oxford County Council, 2016. *North West Bicester Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document*, February 2016.

⁵ Cherwell District Council, 2013. *Bicester Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*, September 2013