

2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.2.1 The site comprises uncultivated agricultural land and measures approximately 5.0 hectares (12.4 acres) in area. Currently access to the site is gained off the B4100 to the north-eastern part of the site, via a six-bar gate.
- 2.2.2 The site slopes from north to south falling from 95m AOD to 80m AOD.
- 2.2.3 The Site is bounded by the B4100 Banbury Road, the Home Farm access road and a mature hedgeline to the north. To the east is Home Farm. New residential dwellings as part of the exemplar scheme are currently under construction to the north-western and south-western boundary. The mature treeline continues along the western/north-western edge of the site.



2.3 SOCIO ECONOMIC CONTEXT

2.3.1 Within Bicester and the wider environment of the site there are a number of local facilities including shops, schools, nurseries, food outlets, restaurants, post office and a Parish Hall.

2.3.2 The North West Bicester eco-town is itself envisaged to provide the following facilities:

- Secondary School and Primary Schools
- Health facilities – GPs surgery
- Community Halls
- Places of worship
- Sports centre



- Retail Uses

Employment

2.3.3 Located approximately 1.6 miles away is the town of Bicester, providing opportunities for employment within the community, in addition to those to be provided within North West Bicester itself.

2.3.4 Within easy walking and cycling distance there are also employment opportunities in and around the site, including local shops, schools and existing businesses. Other opportunities for employment are located further afield in Buckingham, Oxford, and Bicester, all of which can be accessed with the local transport facilities by bus.



2.4 COMMUNITY LINKS

Strategic and Local Highway Network

- 2.4.1 North West Bicester is situated to the north of the A41 which links Aylesbury, Bicester to Aylesbury. The A41 also gives direct access to further afield; entry to the M40 is gained from A41 at junction 9.
- 2.4.2 To the north of the site is the B4100 Banbury Road which gives access to the smaller settlements of Baynards Green and Caversfield.
- 2.4.3 An assessment of the local highway network and of the potential impact of traffic has been undertaken, looking at the B4100 Banbury Road and Charlotte Avenue in particular.
- 2.4.4 Charlotte Avenue is a primary road through the North West Bicester eco-town, providing connectivity to distributor roads which provide access to residential dwellings.
- 2.4.5 Beyond the site, the assessment work to date indicates that the additional traffic generated by development will not have a significant impact on the existing junctions in the area.

Public Transport

- 2.4.6 Bus service provision within the area offers a number of services providing access to the surrounding area. As part of the Exemplar development, bus stops are provided along Charlotte Avenue which is within walking distance to the site. The design and function of Charlotte Avenue incorporates bus priority by way of a bus-gate immediately north of the access to the application site, at this point the carriageway narrows to 4m limiting 2-way flow to buses only
- 2.4.7 Below are the routes of these services.

SERVICE	ROUTE
8	Middle Barton <> Bicester
X5	Cambridge <> Oxford
S5	Arcott <> Oxford
26	Kingsmere Centre <> Bicester
25A	Oxford <> Bicester
21	Chesterton <> Highfield
E1	Elmsbrook <> Bicester
18	Buckingham <> Bicester



2.5 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

- 2.5.1 The application site comprises uncultivated agricultural land. It has a hedgerow with trees on the northern/north-western boundary of the site, and the topography of the site slopes from north to south down to a small brook.
- 2.5.2 An appraisal of the trees and hedgerows accompanies the application (within the Tree Survey). The proposed residential development would retain existing trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of the site, where possible, with new green space, street trees and planting to provide an attractive setting to the built form. New development would be seen within a largely residential context and a lower density of development at the edge of the residential area would provide a soft transition to the open space.
- 2.5.3 Development would not cause any significant adverse landscape or visual impact and the site is capable of accommodating residential development. A high quality development would provide a positive design contribution to the landscape.

2.6 ECOLOGY

- 2.6.1 PBA carried out an Ecological Appraisal to assess the context for the design presented by the existing site ecology and put forward recommendations to protect and enhance it.
- 2.6.2 An extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in 2010 during which some suitable habitats for foraging and commuting bats, badgers, nesting birds, reptiles and invertebrates were identified. However, the site is considered to be of low intrinsic ecological value.
- 2.6.3 The aims of the studies were to:
- Characterise all of the habitats present within the study area.
 - Compile species lists for all natural and semi-natural habitats in and around the area of the proposed development.
 - Assess species distribution and diversity.
 - Identify relevant habitats in terms of local, regional and national context.
 - Identify areas, if any, of ecological interest and make recommendations to minimise the potential impacts of site operations and where feasible, to consider opportunities for additional habitat creation.
- 2.6.4 The main findings of the appraisal can be summarised as follows:
- There would be no significant loss of habitat.
 - The biodiversity of the site can be enhanced by providing for new tree and hedge planting.
 - Habitats known to support important bird assemblages or species were absent within the site.
 - A significant opportunity for habitat enhancement can be achieved through the inclusion of wetland features (SuDS) within the proposals.

2.6.5 New tree and hedgerow planting as part of the development proposals will realise a net increase in habitats on site post development. New wetland features will realise significant enhancements and will be planted with a range of native aquatic species. On-site public open space provision will include species-rich grassland mix to improve the ecological value of the retained areas of grassland.

2.6.6 A copy of the Ecological Assessment has been submitted as part of the application.

2.7 TREE SURVEY

2.7.1 The application proposals have also been informed by a comprehensive tree survey carried out in accordance with BS5837 standards. The principle of the design has been to retain the trees of value wherever practical. Trees have been categorised as trees or tree groups of High Quality (A), Moderate Quality (B) or Low Quality (C). There is one Category A tree and a number of Category B trees along the boundaries of the site which will be retained and integrated as part of the proposed development. The landscape proposals for the site will include significant new planting.

3.0 DESIGN PARAMETERS

3.1 CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

3.1.1 The site constraints and opportunities have been identified as follows:-

- Adjacent housing development under construction
- Existing Listed buildings neighbouring the site
- Identified need for allotments/community orchard
- Existing hedges and trees along boundaries of the site
- New vehicle and pedestrian access from Charlotte Avenue
- South-eastern edge of the site within Flood Zone 3
- Adjacent Home Farm business complex
- New storm water drainage system to include infiltration
- New public open space
- Need for affordable housing

3.1.2 The site and development constraints have been used in creating the site proposals which show a positive relationship with the existing built environment and landscape by:

- Maintaining and/or supplementing hedges and trees along boundaries to integrate development and landscape.
- Providing streets and connections that support movement by foot and cycle.
- Configuring the layout to respect the setting of local heritage assets.
- Providing generously for provision of open space incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage and enhanced ecological value.
- Creating a high quality landscaped setting for the development.
- Providing affordable housing within the proposal.
- Providing for allotments/community orchard.
- Adopting a design approach that will sit sympathetically and harmoniously within the North West Bicester eco-town, adopting the development requirements set out in the North West Bicester SPD where possible.
- Creating a safe and secure layout.