



# **NORTH WEST BICESTER EXEMPLAR LOCAL CENTRE: MARKETING STRATEGY REPORT MAY 2019**

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

As the UK's first eco town, North West Bicester (NW Bicester) is a pioneering mixed-use development of national significance. Building a vibrant, sustainable and healthy community is at the heart of the development and the provision of local facilities on site will play an important role in not only promoting environmental sustainability but also fostering this strong sense of community spirit.

A2Dominion Developments Limited wish to complete the Exemplar phase (Elmsbrook) and provide the Local Centre to meet the needs of the community. The Exemplar Local Centre is therefore part of the initial phase of development at North West Bicester with a total of 393 homes when fully built out. A2Dominion Developments Limited are no longer in a position to provide certainty on the content and programme for the next phases beyond the Exemplar, and therefore at this time the Local Centre can only be considered in the context of serving the Exemplar.

The Local Centre is in a 'High Street' format, with ground floor units to north and south sides of the spine road (Charlotte Avenue), with servicing and parking to the rear. The community hall and café (Unit 1) are in the block to the north of the road and commercial units (Units 2 and 3) to the south. The position of the local centre within the Exemplar, without main road frontage, excludes the potential for additional 'drop in' passing trade.

The Marketing Strategy Report refers to the commercial units (Units 2 and 3) which are intended to be leased on the open market.

The Local Centre therefore requires the flexibility to serve the community of the Exemplar as it grows and also adapt as and when the next phases come forward. For this reason this application seeks permission for Use Classes A1/A2/B1/D1 on Unit 2 and Use Classes A1/B1/D1 on Unit 3, as well as the capability for amalgamation or sub-division.

## 2.0 OVERVIEW

Given that this Local Centre would be built at a very early stage of North West Bicester, and for the reasons stated in the Business Case, our marketing strategy would therefore be to appeal to a wide range of users by offering a range of unit sizes and uses, rather than pre-judge demand by dictating these.

The Marketing Strategy proposes that the scheme is marketed whilst the planning application is being considered, therefore subject to consent being granted. This allows the scheme to be market tested alongside the planning application.

The challenge for the Local Centre will be that 393 houses will generate insufficient custom for most retailers. Whilst it has not been market tested, convenience store operators typically require a threshold of around 1,000 houses but do consider opening with smaller house numbers on a stepped rising rental formula, but usually where there is defined build out programme. Whilst independent retailers can often accept lower threshold numbers, subject to appropriately subsidised terms, 393 houses is still very low.

The objective of this Marketing Strategy is to secure occupiers for the commercial units at the outset of the development, ideally through pre-leasing contracts. The units will therefore need to be sub-divided according to occupier demand, and appropriate commercial terms negotiated. The quoting terms will be

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determined subject to the use, scale and timing of the letting, but it is accepted that they will need to be at a subsidised level compared to the usual local centre terms, to reflect the population numbers.

As stated in the Business Case, we will aim to engage with occupiers that share the values of North West Bicester, selling fresh produce as well as everyday essentials, and perhaps also servicing home deliveries.

We do expect there to be demand from a day nursery operator in due course, but the Exemplar on its own may prove to be inadequate. Unit 2 would, for example, be adequate for 80-90 places.

The major challenge will be to secure these initial lettings in order to provide services to the community. We fully expect the configuration of the commercial units to change over time, responding to rising population and therefore the trading opportunity. The building is capable of changing the internal layout and having these uses washed across Units 2 and 3 enables this flexibility.

Whilst described as two units, Units 2 and 3 will be left as one large open 'shell' area for internal sub-division into separate units of occupation as dictated by market demand and tenant fit out. The total floor area is sufficient to cater for separate individual units offering a mixture of Day Nursery, retail and offices as the demand arises.

Moreover, A2Dominion Developments Limited will not only commit to building the local centre in a timely manner, but also to offering the units initially on favourable commercial terms to attract occupiers.

This enables the units to be marketed based on complete flexibility to give the greatest chance of securing early lettings.

The unit sizes are as follows:

PROPOSED FLOOR AREA (SQ M) GIA	
<b>Unit 1: Community Hall &amp; Café</b>	552
<b>Unit 2: A1/A2/D1/B1</b>	487
<b>Unit 3: A1/D1/B1</b>	268
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1307</b>

### 3.0 MARKETING STRATEGY

We set out below the expected targets, resources and activities within the marketing strategy.

#### 3.1 MARKETING STRATEGIES BY USE

##### Children’s Day Nursery (Use Class D1)

The marketing strategy will be a targeted approach using our contacts with local, regional and national operators. In addition to our targeted approaches, enquiries will also reach us via web advertising, events, social media, and press coverage.

Unit 2, for example, is expected to be able to cater for 80-90 toddler and pre-school children. It would allow access from Charlotte Avenue and also the rear car park, plus there is provision for an external play area.

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Once an operator is selected, then commercial terms will need to reflect the population numbers and resulting catchment audience.

### **Retail Units (Use Class A1/A2)**

The retail units would have shop frontages to the spine road and loading from the rear car park. The units will be left to 'shell' for tenant fit out.

By taking a flexible approach, the unit configuration can adapt to changing occupier demand by altering internal division walls. Standard local centre retail unit sizes can be offered or combined to provide larger unit sizes such as for a 'general' store. We anticipate the standard unit size of circa 75 sq m will be required initially to attract independent retailers.

The marketing strategy will therefore be a combination of direct targeting independent retailers which could fit this category alongside open marketing using the Resources below.

The objective is to secure the right mix of tenants that will provide services to meet the needs of the residents, on financial lease terms tailored to reflect the operator reflecting the population numbers and resulting catchment audience. As part of this, subsidised terms (including reduced rent) will be considered for required trading up periods.

### **Business Units (Use Class B1)**

Whilst commercial/office units are not expected to be in demand and therefore not the focus of the marketing campaign, this would potentially allow for any overflow from the Eco Business Centre.

## **3.2 MARKETING RESOURCES**

As referred above, the resources available are as follows:-

- 1. Marketing Literature: A PDF brochure will be produced, available for uploading on various websites and direct mail.
  - 2. Bidwells' Website: The PDF brochure will be listed on the Bidwells' website as marketing agents.
  - 3. Commercial Property Listing Websites: The PDF brochure will be uploaded to the various commercial listing websites available to use such as Zoopla and EG Property.
  - 4. Social Media and Press Releases: There will be a series of releases issued on social media platforms and to the local press at the launch of the scheme and subsequently at notable stages in the development process.
  - 5. Advertising: Advertising is not effective and limited local press (Oxford Times and Bicester Advertiser) will be considered.
  - 6. Direct Approaches: As explained above in many instances the direct approach to target occupiers would be the primary strategy.
  - 7. General Awareness: via business network groups such as Cherwell District Council's economic development team, Bicester Vision and Bicester Chamber of Commerce
  - 8. Events: The Local Centre will be mentioned and promoted at NW Bicester events and seminars, business breakfasts whenever appropriate.
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### 3.3 ACTIVITIES

The marketing activities will occur in the following order:

1. Closed confidential discussions with the target occupiers will take place following submission of the planning application.
2. The Marketing campaign will run during the planning application process, starting with the production, posting and circulation of the brochure. It will obviously be promoted conditional on planning permission being secured.
3. Launch the scheme openly on the market via websites, social media and local press and advertising, events etc.
4. Throughout the marketing campaign to run on going events, advertising and press coverage.

## 4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The marketing strategy, combined with the approach to tailored financial lease terms, is intended to give the optimum potential for leasing activity. A2Dominion Developments Limited's primary objective is to secure long-standing operators for the local centre to service the residential community and accept that the level of rent and terms of letting will be determined by the market demand.

### ABOUT BIDWELLS

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Bidwells is a multi-disciplinary Chartered Surveying and Property Consultancy, operating across Commercial, Rural and Residential markets. Bidwells are heavily involved in the 'Golden Triangle' of Oxford, Cambridge and London, working on major science and technology campuses, residential and mixed-use development projects. The team at Bidwells have extensive experience in the local centre market, locally having been involved with Great Western Park (Didcot), North East Carterton and part of Buckingham Park (Aylesbury).

James Lankfer heads the Bidwells Retail & Leisure department and David Williams MRICS, Partner and Head of the Commercial Business Space team in Oxford. David has been engaged by A2Dominion Developments Limited since 2014 consulting on the commercial provisions within NW Bicester.

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BIDWELLS