

## **Bicester Delivery Team Comments: 19/01036/F Bicester Eco Town Exemplar Site Phase 2 Charlotte Avenue Bicester (17/06/19)**

The following sets out the comments on this planning application from the Bicester Delivery Team.

### **1. Residential over Community Hall**

We are concerned about the principle of residential development being proposed above a community hall. There is a significant risk of these uses being in conflict in the future relating to noise nuisance. This could restrict the hall opening hours, type of function held at the hall and the organisations who could use the hall. If windows can't be opened due to noise, this will make for an uncomfortable experience for users of the hall especially in summer. Using fans to cool the space down instead will add to running costs for the community. This combination of uses could also lead to increased work for CDC's Environmental Health Team in dealing with noise related complaints.

The Planning Statement and DAS refer to the community centre at Clay Farm, Cambridgeshire and state that this combination of uses was allowed on the basis of a "clear acoustic strategy". However, the Clay Farm example is not a direct comparator as it "hosts a community centre, library and café on the first two floors, and a medical centre will soon open on the third floor. The top two floors are residential accommodation"<sup>1</sup>.

Two points arise from this; firstly, CDC is being asked to accept residential directly over the community hall without any acoustic information / strategy having been carried out and / or supplied. If we are to consider this combination of uses, we need to see an acoustic strategy which has informed the design of the proposals. We will then be able to assess whether the proposed design will satisfactorily mitigate against the risk of noise nuisance to residents.

Secondly, it would be helpful if the applicant could provide other directly relevant examples of this approach for CDC to consider.

### **2. Cluster of Affordable Units**

Another concern relates to the clustering of 38 affordable units proposed by the application. This is contrary to CDC's housing policy of allowing no more than 15 affordable units of mixed tenure in one place and will not support best planning practice of trying to achieve mixed and balanced communities.

### **3. Size of Hall**

The suggestion contained in the DAS is that there will be a community space / café of 552 sq m, whereas the original approved floorspace for the hall was 350 sq m. Larger halls are more difficult / costly for local groups to manage. At the very least CDC should be seeking an additional commuted sum for management and maintenance of the hall if this larger size is acceptable in principle. On the plus side, it is welcomed that the hall is at ground floor level rather than at first floor as previously.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge City Council website.

#### **4. Jobs Created**

The application documentation notes that there are about 70 jobs lost as a result of this latest amendment to the original land use budget. It looks that this amount would have been even greater were it not for the fact that the EBC and Primary School have created more jobs than SQW originally forecast. The argument that over the whole site, a greater number of jobs could be created than envisaged which would compensate for the loss here is noted.

However, a) 70 is a significant number of jobs to lose from the calculation and b) at present CDC has no way of knowing for sure if more jobs than forecast will be created, as the majority of the site is now no longer in A2D's control. A development that proposed offices B1 and /or D1 over the hall with residential on the floor above (like the Clay Farm example which the applicant cites) would solve the job loss problem and the noise nuisance problem. Could the applicant investigate a mix of residential / B1 / D1 instead, with residential on the top floor above the B1 / D1 use?

#### **5. True Zero- Carbon**

There is concern that the proposed development will not be true zero carbon. The apparent rationale for this is that this will mean it is more financially viable. This is contrary to the PPS1 Eco Town Supplement, CLP Policy Bicester 1 and the NW Bicester Masterplan. If approved, the BDT would be concerned at the undesirable precedent this could set for the rest of the site, not just in terms of a reduction of the zero-carbon standard but also through the general principle of approving a proposal that is non policy compliant.

#### **6. Biodiversity Net Gain**

It is unclear from the application documentation how this application affects the existing calculation. A new calculation needs to be provided, in addition to setting out the various mitigations that will be put in place.

#### **7. Framework Travel Plan Comments**

Appendix A of the submitted Framework Travel for the Local Centre, provides the report prepared by Hyder on behalf of A2Dominion with respect to the 2015 application for the Local Centre on the Exemplar site. This states that "The Travel Plan remains an agreed and live document for the development including the Local Centre" and that "it is therefore considered that the Exemplar Travel Plan provides for travel planning for the proposed Local Centre development as well as the residential development."

The agreed 2011 Travel Plan document is an umbrella document for the whole site and extends identified measures across use classes. It does however set out how each of the non-residential uses will develop a Travel Plan setting out the anticipated measures. The latest document prepared by Mode updates this with respect to recent developments on site (e.g. the development of the App and use of the shimmy). It should however be acknowledged that none of the proposed uses are of sufficient size to warrant an individual Travel Plan if the thresholds identified within Oxfordshire County Council's Guidance on Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are being followed. Another factor is that the 2011 Framework Travel Plan identifies the broader role of the Travel Plan Coordinator across use types (Section 6). Given

the scale of the individual elements of the proposed local centre, it is unlikely that further Travel Plan Documents would add new measures and appropriate expertise. As such it is recommended that a more pragmatic approach is taken which reiterates the commitment outlined in the 2011 document for the site wide Travel Plan Coordinator to work with individual non-residential uses in the local centre to maximise take up of already well-developed initiatives whilst requiring individual uses to fully support and cooperate in their implementation. If the application is approved, this moderation would need to be reflected in the S106 agreement.

## **8. S106**

This will need a full HoTs which is compatible with the HoTs for the rest of NWB, as it is additional proposed development, not envisaged by the masterplan. Headings should include construction apprenticeships, CMO contributions (including additional community hall management and maintenance contributions), health contributions etc.