

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

**District:** Cherwell

**Application no:** 15/01012/OUT

**Proposal:** OUTLINE - Development of up to 48,308sqm of employment floorspace (Class B1c, B2, B8 and ancillary B1a uses), the siting of buildings to the south of the site, servicing and circulation areas, vehicular and pedestrian access from Skimmingdish Lane and landscaping.

**Location:** Land North East Of Skimmingdish Lane Launton Oxfordshire

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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 member 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 is for the strategic employment site allocation Bicester 11 within the emerging Cherwell Local Plan and is anticipated to create around 1,000 jobs.

The provision of B1 and B2 uses is supported and the delivery of this employment site is consistent with the ambitions for Bicester as articulated in the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic plan.

Subject to conditions and the mitigation requirements set out in the Transport Development Control response, there is no transport objection to the application.

Detailed officer advice is set out in Appendix 1.

**Officer's Name:** Lisa Michelson

**Officer's Title:** Locality Manager (Cherwell and West)

**Date:** 29 June 2015

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## Transport

### Recommendation:

No objection subject to conditions

### Key issues:

- Impact on local junctions
- Modal split
- Position of proposed new bus stops

### Legal agreement required to secure:

S106 agreement:

- £907,000 towards implementing increased capacity on the A4421 between the Buckingham Road and Gavray Drive
- Travel plan monitoring fees of £1,240
- the developer to provide or procure a bus service from Bicester's residential areas to the development site, to operate at least two times per hour at defined and agreed journey-to-work times, for a period of at least five years
- £8945 towards the procurement, installation and ongoing maintenance of a new bus shelter at Boston Road (for travel towards Bicester and Oxford). The developer to liaise with Bicester Town Council regarding the provision of the bus shelter, in respect of ongoing maintenance and ownership.

Access arrangements (via S278, secured through S106 agreement)

- Priority junction with ghosted right turn, footway/cycleways, signalised crossing, as shown on drawings 15230/07 and /08 in the transport assessment.
- Works required on Skimmingdish Lane to ensure a safe and convenient pedestrian route from the site to the nearest bus stops on Boston Road

### Conditions:

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, full details of the means of access between the land and the highway and associated pedestrian and cycle access improvements including; position, layout, construction, drainage and vision splays shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the means of access shall be constructed and retained in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason** - *In the interests of highway safety and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.*

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, full specification details (including construction, layout, surfacing and drainage) of the parking and manoeuvring areas including a bus turn around facility shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, and prior to the first occupation of the development, the parking and manoeuvring areas including the bus turn around facility shall be provided on the site in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained unobstructed except for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles at all times thereafter.

**Reason** - *In the interests of highway safety and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.*

Development shall not begin until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro-geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed. The scheme shall also include:

- Discharge Rates
- Discharge Volumes
- Maintenance and management of SUDS features (this may be secured by a Section 106 Agreement)
- Sizing of features – attenuation volume
- Infiltration tests to be undertaken in accordance with BRE365
- Detailed drainage layout with pipe numbers
- SUDS (list the suds features mentioned within the FRA to ensure they are carried forward into the detailed drainage strategy)
- Network drainage calculations
- Phasing plans
- Flood Risk Assessment

**Reason** - *To ensure satisfactory drainage of the site in the interests of public health, to avoid flooding of adjacent land and property and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.*

Prior to first occupation a framework travel plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the travel plan shall be implemented.

**Reason** - *In the interests of sustainability and to ensure a satisfactory form of development, in accordance with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.*

### **Informatives:**

Please note the Advance Payments Code (APC), Sections 219 -225 of the Highways Act, is in force in the county to ensure financial security from the developer to off-set the frontage owners' liability for private street works, typically in the form of a cash deposit or bond. Should a developer wish for a street or estate to remain private then to secure exemption from the APC procedure a 'Private Road Agreement' must be entered into with the County Council to protect the interests of prospective frontage owners. For guidance and information on road adoptions etc. please contact the County's Road Agreements Team on 01865 815700 or email [roadagreements@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:roadagreements@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **Detailed comments:**

### **Strategy and impact on the highway network**

The emerging Cherwell Local Plan details the requirements for development of the Employment Land at North East Bicester allocation under 'Policy Bicester 11 - Employment Land at North East Bicester'. In terms of transport infrastructure, Key site specific design and place shaping principles need to be demonstrated including:

- Proposals should comply with Policy ESD16
- Layout of development that enables a high degree of integration and connectivity between new and existing development, including adjoining employment areas, nearby residential areas and the town centre
- Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for including providing bus stops for the site.
- Provision of new footpaths and cycleways to connect with the existing footpath/cycleway links around the site including along Skimmingdish Lane, to Launton Road and to services and facilities in Bicester's wider urban area.
- Retention and enhancement of existing Public Rights of Way, and the provision of links from the development and Bicester's urban area to the wider Public Rights of Way network
- A green buffer with planting immediately adjacent to the Care Home and beyond this, B1a development to surround the Care home in order to protect residential amenity.
- A detailed Transport Assessment to be undertaken and Travel Plan to be provided focusing on maximising access by means other than the private car including demonstration of the provision of adequate cycle parking. Consultation with the Local Highways Authority regarding potential future improvements to Skimmingdish Lane and any design implications for the development frontage.

The site allocation of Bicester 11 is identified as relevant to contribute towards strategies set out in the Infrastructure Development Plan. Of particular note, is that it is connected with number 15 'Highway capacity improvements to peripheral routes'.

The Transport Assessment demonstrates that the proposed development will have an impact of over 1100 vehicles per day over a 12 hour period, over 100 vehicles in the AM peak and nearly 100 vehicles in the PM peak. All 3 assessed junctions had arms over capacity in both the without and with development scenarios in the forecast year. In addition, a significant queue increase when the development was considered was demonstrated in the PM peak on the A4421 South arm of the Launton Road/Skimmingdish Lane junction. This is taking into account a capped link threshold of 1,350 PCUs being applied on a single link for the purposes of the assessment. It should also be noted that trip generation was not calculated for the proposed B1c use, which is likely to be higher than the applied B2 trip rates.

The development as proposed will have an impact on the highway network and so a contribution must be negotiated through S106 agreement to mitigate this highway impact. The emerging Local Transport Plan 4 Bicester Area Strategy includes proposals for improvements to the Eastern peripheral corridor to which Bicester 11 connects. The scheme of particular relevance towards mitigating proposals at Bicester 11 is as follows:

"Implementing increased link capacity on the A4421 between the Buckingham Road and Gavray Drive to complement the transport solution at the railway level crossing at Charbridge Lane and facilitate development in the area. This scheme will improve the operation of this section of the eastern perimeter road, and enhance the integration of the North East Bicester Business Park site with the rest of the town."

As a result S106 contributions must be sought towards the implementation of this scheme.

The planning application seeks consent for flexible content, but with a maximum provision of 30% B1(c)/B2 floorspace. A B1c/B2:B8 split of 30% to 70% corresponds to maximum floor area of 14,492 sqm B1(c)/B2 which would in turn leave 33,816 sqm B8 floorspace.

The Cherwell Planning Obligations SPD contains a formula which calculates the required transport contribution rate at £824 per 22.3m<sup>2</sup> of B1 or per 75 m<sup>2</sup> B8 land use. Based on the proportions and floor areas stated above, the required transport contribution can be calculated at **£907,000**.

This is in addition to the site access proposals, which include additional footway/cycleway, crossings and bus stops (see below).

I also note that the peak hour only has been considered. A justification should be provided for not considering a longer peak time window.

Finally, the TA assumes that no HGV traffic turns right out of the site. This is an unrealistic assumption given the route to the M40 Jct 10 (for northbound traffic) and to the A43 and M1 via the B4100, and the route to Milton Keynes via Buckingham Road.

### **Sustainable travel and the travel plan**

Given the high number of car trips in the Bicester area, and the edge of town location, it will be challenging to discourage employees from driving to work. It is noted that no mode split assumptions have been provided in the TA (the focus is solely on vehicular trips generated). Mode split assumptions (incl public transport, cycle, car share) should be included in the TA as these are the targets that must follow through into the Travel Plan - and need to be achieved on opening. Junction impacts stated in the TA will be based on these assumptions so the Travel Plan needs to commit to achieving this trip generation – as a max no. of vehicle trips.

The Travel Plan states at para 5.2.2 that *“Due to the application being at outline stage and hence the likely multi-occupancy nature of the site, it will not be possible to provide specific site wide targets”*. This is not correct as the TP should include the mode split figures used in the TA, with mode shift taking place from that TA baseline (or from the baseline survey 6-months after opening, if lower than the TA targets). Nos. of vehicle trips should also be included and monitored, again using trip generation figures stated in the TA.

The framework travel plan submitted in support of this application is not currently of the standard required and will need further development. It should be prepared in line with county council guidance. It will form the basis for all travel plans that will be developed for the site and as such must be of comprehensive and robust as possible. Individual site occupiers will be asked to develop their own travel plans if the units that they are occupying are over the travel plan thresholds.

A wider delivery and servicing plan should be included in the Travel Plan along with the commitments regarding routing. The TA notes that a weight restriction order is in place to protect Launton village centre from the impacts of HGVs.

### **Access arrangements**

The form of junction is considered suitable, but the x distance of the visibility splay is only shown as 2.4m: 4.5m would be more appropriate for the junction which may experience high

volumes of traffic exiting the site at peak times. It should be possible to provide 4.5m and there needs to be an explanation of why 2.4m is provided.

The signalised crossing and new cycleway/footway proposed is extremely important to provide good cycle and pedestrian access. The crossing is considered to be in a suitable position. It should be of the Toucan type, to allow people to cycle across it. (There are two drawings, one showing what would be provided in the case that the site comes forward before the residential development opposite, and one showing what would be provided in the case that it comes forward after that site).

However, a link should be provided from the site to footway/cycleway at the south eastern corner of the site. This will be a desire line and will help shorten walking distance for some users. If not provided, people will break through the boundary in any case and there will be pressure to provide a path.

Lighting will need to be provided along Skimmingdish Lane. Note that in the TA it says that streetlighting is currently provided along the whole length of Skimmingdish Lane – I do not believe it is, and it will be required for safety reasons. Additionally at 2.5.7 in the TA it describes a ‘footway with grass verges’ southbound, which I don’t think is there currently.

### **Public transport**

The provision of a credible level of bus journeys for travel to work is a major consideration for this development. Bicester encounters traffic congestion at peak times and the Council’s strategy is to encourage the use of other modes of transport as a means of mitigating the impact of new development.

The walking distance to the proposed new bus stops in Boston Road is sufficient to discourage public transport use – it is a minimum of 500 metres to the site entrance and up to 1km to the probable site of the furthest unit. There are currently no footways along Skimmingdish Lane, so the developer will be required to carry works along the road to ensure there is a safe and convenient walking route to/from the nearest bus stops in Boston Road. This will be delivered by S278 as works needed to adequately access the development site.

Bus service s5 currently operates twice per hour in each direction on a commercial basis between Launton or Langford and Oxford City Centre via Bicester Town Centre. As this service is tidal (taking commuters into Oxford in the morning, and back again in the late afternoon), there are significant gaps in service in the opposite direction at peak times.

Bus service 24 currently operates from Bicester Town Centre and Launton Road twice per hour. This service is financially supported by Oxfordshire County Council and operates within the layover period of the previous timetable for the 22/23 Caversfield-Langford local bus route. The Council has indicated its intention of reducing the amount of finance available to support local bus services from 2016 (perhaps withdrawing it completely). It is highly probable that service 24 would not operate beyond May 2016.

Rural bus service 18 operates five times per day from Steeple Claydon to Bicester. This service is also vulnerable to withdrawal or reduction in frequency, and does not represent a credible means of travel to work on this development site.

Whilst bus service s5 will provide the means for some people to travel to work on this development site, the long walk, the relatively infrequent service and the specific lack of buses at peak times means that this service needs to be supplemented by a direct ‘works’ bus from residential areas directly to this site.

It is likely that there will be a number of employers on site, so the works bus should arrive no less frequently than every 30 minutes, arriving just before shift start times and departing just after work finish times, as far as is possible. The default situation is the first bus should arrive just before 0700 with the last arrival just before 1000. In the afternoon, the first bus should arrive just after 1600 with the last departure just after 1900, on Mondays to Fridays.

The bus service should serve residential parts of Bicester, provide a direct service to the development site, should use standard buses of no fewer than 28 seats.

The bus service could be procured as a stand-alone route, or could be delivered by an extension to an existing route, for example routes from Kingsmere or Caversfield.

The Council will consider any proposal for bus service provision put forward by the developer, and will take into account actual working patterns on the site.

### **Drainage**

See the section on drainage in the conditions above.

**Officer's Name:** Joy White

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

**Date:** 25 June 2015

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## **Archaeology**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection subject to conditions

### **Key issues:**

The site is located in an area of archaeological potential with a number of Bronze Age Barrows recorded to the north and south of the site. A programme of archaeological investigation will be required ahead of any development of the site. This can be secured through an appropriately worded condition on any resultant planning permission.

### **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).

## **Informatives:**

None

## **Detailed comments:**

The site is located in an area of archaeological potential with a number of Bronze Age Barrows recorded to the north and south of the site. Archaeological evaluations immediately south of the site however only recorded a small number of archaeological features, probably associated with field systems and therefore the potential for the site to contain archaeological features of high significance which would cause a constraint to the scheme is considered low. A programme of archaeological investigation will be required ahead of any development of the site but this can be undertaken as a condition on any planning permission as suggested above.

The proposed site is also adjacent to a scheduled monument associated with RAF Bicester. The applicant would therefore also contact English Heritage for their advice regarding the impact of any development on this designated site.

**Officer's Name: Richard Oram**

**Officer's Title:** Planning Archaeologist

**Date:** 25 June 2015

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## **Economy and Skills**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection subject to conditions

### **Key issues:**

- 1,075 new jobs created (excluding construction jobs)
- The provision of B1 and B2 uses is supported
- An Employment & Skills Plan is required

### **Conditions:**

The developers will be required to prepare and implement, with local agencies and providers, an Employment & Skills Plan (ESP) that will ensure, as far as possible, that local people have access to training (including apprenticeships) and employment opportunities available at the construction and end user phases of this proposed development.

### **Detailed Comments:**

On completion it is estimated the development will create 1,075 new jobs of varying types and skill sets. A significant number of construction jobs will also be created over the 2 to 3 year construction period.

The provision of B1 and B2 uses is supported and would make a valuable contribution to the generation of a comprehensive range of quality, high tech employment opportunities in Bicester. Bicester is part of the Knowledge Spine stretching from the town through Oxford city and into Science Vale Oxford. Delivery of this employment site is consistent with the ambitions for Bicester as articulated in the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic plan. B8 uses however, would result in a relatively low number of skilled jobs would be better suited to sites such as Graven Hill.

### **Skills and the requirement for an Employment & Skills Plan**

The County Council will require the developers to prepare and implement, with local agencies and providers, an Employment & Skills Plan (ESP) that will ensure, as far as possible, that local people have access to training (including apprenticeships) and employment opportunities available at the construction and end user phases of this proposed development.

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 recently launched **Oxfordshire Skills Strategy** has five strategic priorities:

- SP1: To meet the needs of local employers through a more integrated and responsive approach to education and training: developed in partnership with our provider network, to encourage more training provision in priority sectors - both current and projected - to meet the needs of employers or to train future entrepreneurs, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- SP2: Creating the 'skills continuum' to support young people through their learning journey: the ambition is to develop integrated, seamless services that support young people through school and on into training, further education, employment or business, where they understand the full breadth of career options, including local demand, and the training path to succeed in that career.
- SP3: Up-skilling and improving the chances of young people and adults marginalised or disadvantaged from work, based on moving them closer to the labour market.
- SP4: To increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities, particularly those offered by small to medium sized businesses.
- SP5: 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**

A better, appropriately skilled local workforce can provide a pool of talent to both developers and end occupiers. This will reduce the need to import skills, and in doing so reduce congestion and unsustainable travel to work modes, reduce carbon emissions and the pressure on the local housing infrastructure.

Seeking skills and training planning obligations or conditions to maximise the potential of the existing population to compete for the jobs being created, whether during the construction phase or end user phase, through improving their skills levels, is necessary to ensure that future development is economically and socially sustainable, and that barriers to employment for those marginalised from the workforce are removed.

Developers often identify projected training and employment outcomes as part of the justification for development. It is important therefore that the impacts of economic development are mitigated and the economic benefits of new development in terms of improved local skills and employment outcomes are realised.

Not only is it clear that skills levels are a key determinant of a sustainable local economy, but they also have an impact on employment opportunities and thus an individual's economic prosperity. Up-skilling the area's labour force will be key to maintaining economic competitiveness. Securing obligations for skills development and employment of local people will be necessary to enhance social inclusion by reducing the potential for economic and social disparity, another key policy driver at the local level.

**Officer's Name:** Dawn Pettis  
**Officer's Title:** Economic Development Strategy Officer  
**Date:** 25 June 2015

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## **Ecology**

### **Recommendation:**

Comment

### **Key issues:**

The application site adjoins a Local Wildlife Site and includes a Proposed Extension to the Local Wildlife Site and the District Council should be seeking the advice of their in-house ecologist who can advise them on this application.

In addition, the following guidance document on Biodiversity & Planning in Oxfordshire combines planning policy with information about wildlife sites, habitats and species to help identify where biodiversity should be protected. The guidance also gives advice on opportunities for enhancing biodiversity:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/planning-and-biodiversity>

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

N/A - For the District Council to comment

### **Conditions:**

N/A - For the District Council to comment

### **Informatives:**

N/A - For the District Council to comment

**Officer's Name:** Tamsin Atley

**Officer's Title:** Ecologist Planner

**Date:** 25 June 2015

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