

2 November 2023

**Representations on behalf of Bucknell Parish Council in connection with policies and proposals covering the NW Bicester eco town area in Reg 18 of the Cherwell District Local Plan 2024.**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 These representations are submitted on behalf of the above organisation and seek to challenge the need to extend the NW Bicester town expansion area beyond that area designated in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2015.

1.2 Document 1 shows the strategy plan contained in Reg 18 indicative proposals maps. It indicates the area of further extension beyond the area shown in Document 2 which is the Supplementary Planning Document for the NW Bicester development area.

1.3 The SPD for the NW Bicester growth area emerged from the work carried out by Terry Farrell (architects) when the eco town was first designated.

1.4 The SPD provides for the housing numbers contained in the Cherwell Local Plan up to 2031 adopted 2015; approximately 6000 homes. The Council seeks through this Reg 18 plan to increase the NW Bicester SPD housing area by a further 1000 homes by pushing the boundary further towards Bucknell Village. What was to be a straight edge boundary to the north and western extremes of the SPD development boundary is now proposed to be a jagged edge moving much closer to Bucknell Village.

1.5 We challenge the need to consider this extended area at all in this plan. The justification for extending this area in this plan is not evident, nor given any more weight other than being a contingency in the event other sites do not perform. At best is only needed to be delivered after 2040 beyond the plan period. By trailing this proposal in the plan, it will encourage housebuilders to speculate that it could be delivered before 2040 which would be unnecessarily harmful to the rural village of Bucknell.

**2.0 Objections to Chapter 5 of Reg 18 - Bicester Area Strategy; the Bicester Area Strategy Map; core policy 70; core policy 71; core policy 73; and LPR33 the indicative site map and the indicative green and blue infrastructure.**

2.1 In order to understand the Bucknell Parish Council's objections to the proposals to extend NW Bicester growth area further outwards towards Bucknell Village reference must be made to the SPD (doc2). The whole basis of defining the outer boundary of the eco town in relation to Bucknell Village in the Farrell Masterplan, SPD and Framework Plan, was to protect a minimum green gap between Bucknell Village and the eco town. If it had been intended to go beyond the boundary of the eco town shown in the SPD when considering the masterplan then the SPD would have included Bucknell Village within the boundary of the growth area.

2.2 The Council will argue (see document 1) that the extension of the area towards Bucknell Village comprises mainly green buffer land. But in fact, the whole development area has been extended and an additional green space area has been added. It can only be defined as development creep rather than appropriate masterplanning.

2.2 The importance of the SPD in determining the extent and type of boundaries to the NW Bicester eco town should not be underestimated. Fig1 shows the boundaries of the eco town; the location of

Bucknell Village and the Bucknell Road which divides the eco town and is an exit from the development area into the centre of Bucknell Village. Bucknell is 1.5 km from the centre of Bicester. Para 2.10 SPD notes that Bucknell Village is only 300m from the site search boundary. Any protection for the gap between Bucknell and the search boundary would have envisaged providing that part of the gap that could be controlled within the search area. There is no control over the gap outside the search area. Para 2.19 states "... the northern edge requires sensitive treatment in order to lessen the impact on the surrounding countryside". Para 2.24 "Views out of the site include those to existing dwellings and other buildings in Bucknell to the north ...." Para 2.25 recognises the nature of the flat open countryside between Bucknell and the search boundary. Fig 8 shows the clear boundary kept between the eco town and Bucknell. The boundary of the search area was defined with the purpose of designing the green space gap within the search area and the masterplan itself shows how the green gap is to be designated. Para 2.28 makes it clear in the Bicester Landscape Assessment that consideration should be given to the visual separation between the eco town and Bucknell. Para 4.175 makes clear "The interface with Bignell Park for example, needs to be handled with sensitivity as does the relationship to the settlements of Bucknell ...." The development principles section specifically deals with the treatment of the edges bordering the countryside, softening the edges as it reaches open countryside.

2.3 What is clear from a reading of all the documents leading up to the publication of the SPD and proposals contained in the 2015 Local Plan, is that the eco town area of search and boundaries were not intended to be extended in the future. The design of the landscaping at the edges of the eco town was deliberately established to maintain a soft edge as it reached open countryside. This was to be the limit of development and define the green gap between the eco town and Bucknell Village.

### **3.0 Changes required to the local plan to remove the extension to NW Bicester**

3.1 We seek the deletion of the proposals for an extra 1000 homes added onto NW Bicester eco town. Section 2.0 above refers to the sections of the plan where the proposed extension of 1000 homes is mentioned, and we request that every reference to it be deleted. If necessary, we would be happy to cross reference the particular parts of the plan that should be amended.

### **4.0 Highway Improvements**

4.1 There are substantial strategic and local highway improvements and new infrastructure provided with bringing forward the eco town. No improvements have been carried out to the roads running through Bucknell Village to make them safe to use.

4.2 The Parish Council has been making the case to include the closure of Bainton Road from the existing eco town direction and to limit traffic from Bicester using Bucknell as a short cut to the M40 J10. We would also want to see reasonable traffic calming on the Bucknell Road.

### **5.0 Impact on listed buildings**

Attached to these reps are Cherwell DC's Conservation Officer's report on application 21/04275/OUT - Part OS Parcel 8149 Adj Lords Lane And SE Of Hawkwell Farm, Lords Lane, Bicester. As you will see the conclusion states "*A robust separation between Bucknell and 'Hawkwell Village' is essential, to avoid the coalescence of the settlements. I have concerns with the encroachment beyond the SPD boundary, in particular the very narrow separation between the development and the walled garden of the manor.*"

The report also says, *“Setting is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as “The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.” (ref. 1).* We believe that the development of the eco town beyond the SPD boundary will have a significant detrimental effect on the way in which local people experience the heritage assets of Bucknell village. Whilst the Conservation Officer referenced a number of listed buildings in her report, there are a number of additional listed building in the Parish where impact of further development has not been considered. In addition to the visual impact of potential development in NW Bicester, we argue that further assessment is required on the experiential impact further development would have on all listed and other heritage assets in the Parish.

## **6.0 Community benefits**

Bucknell Parish Council has consistently stated that it is not coming from a “NIMBY” position and recognises the need for more housing - in particular, affordable housing. It is arguing for the full allocation of affordable housing to be honoured in any development.

It welcomes the 40% green space in any proposed development to help form a buffer from the development area and the village.

It wants to see more sensitive use of allocated green space – not a cemetery and sports pitches as proposed – but instead woodland, agriculture, parkland, etc.

It wants to see inclusion of community hubs and facilities in the development – something to support placemaking.

The Parish Council would like to see reference to the longer-term stewardship of community land and assets – ideally in community ownership - and avoid transfer of assets into a traditional management company.

It would also argue for investing in the community infrastructure and green space in phase one before first homes are built.

The Parish Council would welcome a discussion with the District Council to consider a proportionate amount of new development in appropriate places within the parish boundary.