

Site ref	Settlement	Gross site area (ha)			
BI227	Bicester	131.0			
Site address		Current/previous landuse	Type of site		
South East Bicester		Agriculture	Greenfield		
Planning status	Part allocation in the Submission Local Plan January 2014				
Description of site					
Amended boundary. Supersedes previous SHLAA site BI002. This is a large area of agricultural land adjacent to the south east built up area of Bicester and the A4421 Wretchwick Way. The site includes two farms Little Wretchwick and Middle Wretchwick Farm. The north east boundary, beyond the A4421, is an urban residential area. To the south east beyond the A41 is a mix of Greenfield and Graven Hill part of the MoD Bicester estate. Further agricultural fields are to the south east and north east of the site. The north east boundary is a high bank with a railway line, which provides screening.					
Planning history					
Part of the site (40 hectares) is a proposed allocation in the Submission Local Plan (January 2014) for mixed use residential/employment development.					
Policy context					
The site is outside the built up area of Bicester and therefore contrary to existing planning policy. Bicester is one of the two most sustainable settlements in the district. There is potential for good accessibility to services and facilities.					
Physical constraints					
The existing A4421 perimeter road affects the ease of integration with the existing built up area. The north eastern corner lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Most is within Flood Zone 1. Any proposal should refer to the SFRA. The majority of the site is Grade 3b agricultural land. Adequate buffers for the areas of ecological and archaeological importance should be maintained and planting mitigation should take the form of broad hedgerows rather than areas of woodland. Protection for areas where ridge and furrow persists should be considered. Part of the site includes possible improved grassland (a BAP priority habitat). There are records of Protected and Notable Species in the north eastern part of the site such as the Yellow Hammer and Common Bullfinch. Public Rights of Way stretch along the north west boundary; through the centre from north to south and another footpath in the south. There are also two Scheduled Ancient Monuments adjacent to the A4421 which will need to be conserved. The 2010 Halcrow Landscape Sensitivity Study indicated that those parts of the site not constrained by known archaeological and ecological interest have high capacity to accept built development, with the remainder of the site having low capacity. Part of the site which was proposed for allocation in the Submission Local Plan (Jan 14) was included in the Final Bicester Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (2013) which was prepared by WYG. The Study concluded that the overall landscape sensitivity is medium and the general visibility of the site is medium to low sensitivity. The site is considered to have a medium to high potential for residential development outside of the area designated as a Scheduled Monument. The assessment indicates that there is opportunity for residential development elsewhere. The 2014 final draft Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment Addendum has included the whole site and reached the same conclusions.					
Potential impacts					
The existing A4421 perimeter road affects the east of integration with the existing built up area. The north eastern corner lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Most is within Flood Zone 1. Any proposal should refer to the SFRA. The majority of the site is Grade 3b agricultural land. Adequate buffers for the areas of ecological and archaeological importance should be maintained and planting mitigation should take the form of broad hedgerows rather than areas of woodland. Protection for areas where ridge and furrow persists should be considered. A part of the site includes possible improved grassland (a BAP priority habitat). There are records of Protected and Notable Species in the north eastern part of the site such as the Yellow Hammer and Common Bullfinch. Public Rights of Way stretch along the north west boundary; through the centre from north to south and another footpath in the south. There are also two Scheduled Ancient Monuments adjacent to the A4421 therefore any proposal will need to be designed to minimise the impact stated above. The northern extent of the site also falls within the Ray Conservation Target Area. The 2010 Halcrow Landscape Sensitivity Study indicated that those parts of the site not constrained by known archaeological and ecological interest have high capacity to accept built development, with the remainder of the site having low capacity. Part of the site which was allocated in the Local Plan was included in the Bicester Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (2013) which was prepared by WYG. The Study concluded that the overall landscape sensitivity is medium and the general visibility of the site is medium to low sensitivity. The site is considered to have a medium to high potential for residential development within areas out with the area designated as a Scheduled Monument. The designation should be retained in its present form and any development considered should seek to preserve and enhance the designated site. The assessment concluded that opportunity for residential development exists to the north and south of this. The 2014 final draft Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment Addendum has included the whole site which resulted in the same outcome.					
Suitability summary					
Outside but adjoining the settlement boundary. Currently development on this site would contravene policy and therefore the site would not be considered to be suitable. However, from the information available, areas of the site could be suitable for development as they are relatively unconstrained, located close to potential areas of employment, and because the site is large enough to create a sustainable mixed community. Access to public transport and additional employment opportunities could be provided on site Areas relating to ecology and archaeological designations are not suitable for development and any proposals should be designed to minimise the impact on these constraints. The northern part of the site is within flood zones 2 or 3 or areas susceptible to surface water flooding. Proposals would need to include sustainable urban drainage systems, to reduce the risk of flooding to the development and surrounding areas. Access to public footpaths running through the site would need to be retained as part of any development. Ecology and historic character impacts would need to be considered within any proposal, for example the Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the west of the site and the Ray Conservation Area to the north. Therefore any developments in these areas would create significant harm to the overall setting of the site. Being situated adjacent to the A41, the site would be suitable for the co-location of employment generating development.					
Market appraisal					
Since the SHLAA was completed for Cherwell in 2013, the housing market update provides evidence of strengthening conditions. Local market evidence underlines this view, together with favourable macroeconomic indicators, and increased housebuilder activity. While of course the housing market will be almost undoubtedly be subject to future cyclical fluctuations, at the very least, the short to medium term prospects are good.					
In the 2013 SHLAA a series of nominal sites were tested for their indicative viability. The updated housing market evidence suggests that the positive viability demonstrated for these sites at this time is still present – and indeed scheme viability is likely to have improved. The positive attributes Cherwell possesses in terms of its location and existing and planned infrastructure further serve to make the District an attractive housing area.					
Availability summary					
The site is being promoted through the 2014 Call for Sites on behalf of the owner, for residential development up to 1,550 homes.					
Achievability summary					
The site is adjacent to the urban area and is in a location that developers find attractive to bring forward housing sites for development. There is no economic reason why the site should not be financially viable given that the alternative land use is agricultural, taking account of any community gain package, including affordable housing and other S.106 obligations, as well as abnormal development costs. The market should have substantially recovered from the economic downturn of 2008 by the time this site has been assessed through the Local Plan and application process, so achievability should not be in any doubt in the medium term.					
Yield by year:					
2014 - 2019	2019 - 2024	2024 - 2029	2029 - 2031	Final density	Final suggested yield
350	750	400	0	40 (39 ha net)	1500
Yield summary					
The starting density multiplier for an urban extension of more than 50 ha is 15 dph (allowing for strategic infrastructure including a potential secondary school). This result in a theoretical yield of 1,965 dwellings. Having regard to the constraints of the site, information from the site promoter suggests the potential for 39 ha of net residential and 21 ha for employment (a slight increase on the 18 ha identified in the Submission Local Plan (Jan 14). The promoter considers that using an average density of 40 dph within the residential perimeter blocks, the scheme would deliver approximately 1550 dwellings subject to further testing.					
Conclusion					
A potential suitable location for a large urban extension if additional greenfield land is required. A number of strategic constraints including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, a Conservation Target Area and areas of land within flood zones would need to be avoided. However, the site could potentially accommodate approximately 1500 homes in addition to employment land.					

