

# NW Bicester

Two outline planning applications along with a strategic infrastructure application

Summary of June 2014 public exhibition and feedback responses

## **June 2014 Public Exhibition Feedback**

Residents and stakeholders were asked to comment on the proposals. The feedback form was broken down into several different sections; **'Outline application 1: North of Lords Lane'**, **'Outline application 2: North of Howes Lane'**, **'Detailed application 3: Strategic realignment of Howes Lane'**, and **Further Comments**.

### **1. Do you support the wider proposals to develop the UK's first eco town at NW Bicester?**

Of the **28** responses received, **15 (54%)** stated that they support the proposals, **4 (14%)** were unsure and **7 (25%)** respondents stated objection to the proposals. Only **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. Some respondents were concerned that the infrastructure would not be able to cope but others said they were *'pleased that such a forward thinking project is in my town.'*

### **2. Do you support the proposals in principle to develop two outline planning applications for up to 3,500 new true zero carbon homes?**

Of the **28** responses received, **17 (61%)** stated that they support the applications, **3 (11%)** were unsure and **6 (21%)** respondents stated objection to the proposals. **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. The majority of respondents did not comment on this question, however, those that did commented that they did not believe Bicester currently has the infrastructure to cope.

### **3. Do you welcome the provision of up to 30% of the new homes being offered as affordable housing?**

Of the **28** responses received, **19 (68%)** welcome the provision of affordable housing, **6 (21%)** were unsure and **1 (4%)** did not welcome it. Only **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. The only comment left for this question stated that it *'depends what affordable means and who is eligible'*.

### **4. To reduce energy demand and deliver zero carbon energy we are proposing homes that are well insulated, with PV on their roofs and a series of energy centres that will meet hot water and heating demands. Do you think that this is a good idea?**

Of the **28** responses received, **24 (85%)** stated that they agree with the energy proposals, **1 (4%)** was unsure and **1 (4%)** respondent stated objection. **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. There were no comments in regard to this question.

**5. What are your views regarding the proposed land uses for outline application 1: north of Lords Lane?**

Of the **28** responses received, **6 (21%)** stated that they were in favour of the plans and **4 (14%)** believed the proposals are a good use of the land. **2 (7%)** of respondents are pleased with the use of green space, however **2 (7%)** feel the proposals are too big and **2 (7%)** are concerned by the potential increase in traffic. A number of individual responses were also provided representing **4%** of the total number of respondents each. These responses included suggestions such as better infrastructure being needed to respondents being happy with the inclusion of a country park. **3 (12%)** of respondents did not provide any comments in this section of the feedback form.

**6. Do you welcome the provision of specialist extra care housing for older people?**

Of the **28** responses received, **23 (82%)** stated that they welcome the provision of specialist housing and **3 (11%)** were unsure. **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. Some respondents mentioned that it would create the perfect environment for the elderly, however others commented that there should be more provision for younger vulnerable people.

**7. The specialist extra care housing will include facilities such as a café, hairdressers and shops. Do you think it's a good idea if the wider community can also access these facilities?**

Of the **28** responses received, **24 (85%)** stated that they agree the wider community should be able to use the facilities, **1 (4%)** said they were unsure and **1 (4%)** did not agree. **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. Some respondents expressed that it is necessary for different age groups to share facilities and others mentioned that no large shops should be built, as it could negatively impact on the town centre.

**8. We are preparing an on-site waste water recycling centre to reduce impact on water resources. Do you think that this is a good idea?**

Of the **28** responses received, **25 (89%)** agreed with a waste water recycling centre and **1 (4%)** respondent was unsure. **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide an answer. Some respondents mentioned that it is good to utilise natural resources, but others were concerned this would require on-going maintenance.

**9. What are your views regarding the proposed land uses for outline application 2: north of Howes Lane?**

Of the **28** responses received, **3 (11%)** believe the proposals are good, however, **2 (7%)** are concerned by the potential increase in traffic and **2 (7%)** feel it is a bad decision to locate the ring road so close to the school. **36%** of respondents left this section blank and a number of individual responses were also provided representing **4%** of the total number of respondents each. Responses ranged from people being satisfied with the proposals to suggestions that healthcare provision should be improved.

**10. Land has been designated for a Health Centre. What facilities would you like to see incorporated in the proposed Health Centre?**

The respondents were asked what facilities they would like to be included as part of the Health Centre and out of the **28** responses the most popular choice was for a GP/surgery, which gathered **7** votes. This was followed equally by a dentist or a physio, both of which gathered **5** votes each. **7** respondents did not provide a response to the question.

**11. We have located the secondary school to best serve the needs of the new and existing community. Do you agree with its proposed location?**

Of the **28** responses received, **12 (43%)** agreed with the proposed location of the secondary school, **9 (32%)** respondents were unsure and **4 (14%)** respondents stated objection to the location. **3 (11%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. The majority of comments expressed concern at the extra traffic the school would create and it's vicinity to Kingsmere School, however, some commented that the access to the school would be in a good location.

**12. Do you support the proposed realignment of Howes Lane designed to provide an improved environment for the existing housing adjacent to Howes Lane, and address future capacity issues at current junctions?**

Of the **28** responses received, **11 (40%)** agreed that the realignment was a good idea, **6 (21%)** were unsure and **7 (25%)** did not agree with the realignment. **4 (14%)** respondents did not answer this question. **19%** of respondents believe that the location of the realignment should be changed and **7%** think the speed limit should be carefully considered.

**13. Do you feel the proposed pedestrian and cycle routes provide good links for existing residents to access new community facilities and would encourage greater walking and cycling?**

Of the **28** responses received, **16 (58%)** agreed with the use of the links, **6 (21%)** respondents were unsure and **4 (14%)** respondents stated that the links are not good enough. **2 (7%)** respondents did not provide a stance to this question. Some residents commented that Bicester has a poor cycle provision and the current links should be extended across Bicester.

**14. The community facilities will be delivered in phases. Which facilities do you feel are most important to a new community and should be delivered first? Please rank your top 5 with number 1 as your highest priority.**

The respondents were asked to rank their top 5 choices out of a number of options. If a respondent simply ticked 5 boxes then these choices were all added to the 'fifth preference' column. The majority of the respondents asked for a health centre / GP to be included as part of the first phase, which gathered a total of 23 choices overall. This choice was closely followed by requests for primary schools to be included with a total of 17 choices overall, and local shops in third place with a total of 16 choices overall.

**Do you have any suggestion as to how NW Bicester can integrate better with the existing community?**

Of the **28** responses received, **5 (19%)** believe that the infrastructure needs to be improved and a further **3 (11%)** want better public transport. **2 (7%)** wish to see more community events and **14 (50%)** did not comment in this section. A number of individual responses were also provided representing **4%** of the total number of respondents each. Responses ranged from people wanting to see links with Bure Park to suggestions that there should be an underpass at Howes Lane.

**Please use this space below to provide any additional comments you may have.**

Of the **28** responses received, **8 (29%)** of respondents have concerns about the increase in traffic. **4 (14%)** do not want Bicester to change or they wish to see the infrastructure improved first. **9 (32%)** of respondents did provide comments for this section. A number of individual responses were also provided representing **4%** of the total number of respondents each. Responses ranged from people wanting an athletics track to suggesting that bungalows should be provided for the elderly.

When analysing recurring themes that appeared in each question, some respondents raised multiple points, therefore the tally in some cases will be higher than the amount of responses.

## **Responses to June 2014 Public Consultation Feedback**

The responses below follow the consideration of all feedback received as a result of the public exhibition held in June 2014, by A2Dominion and its project team. These responses relate to the main questions and themes (questions 2-14 on the exhibition feedback form) whereby people were invited to provide comments and feedback to the team.

### **Principle to develop two outline planning applications for up to 3,500**

**new true zero carbon homes:** A2Dominion is pleased to see that over half of respondents were in support of the principle to develop the outline applications. In response to the small number of respondents that held concerns regarding whether the existing infrastructure is sufficient to support the proposals, A2Dominion is keen to highlight that NW Bicester includes comprehensive amenities to support a vibrant neighbourhood, and is not relying on the existing infrastructure to service the new community once complete. Significant work has been undertaken in consultation with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council calculating anticipated population projections for NW Bicester to inform the provision of appropriate new amenities and community facilities. In accordance with the findings of this work, the outline planning applications include new schools, community centres, nurseries, a health practice, convenience stores, retail units and town square. In addition the proposals will include a community farm, allotments, an orchard and, a country park together with employment provision on site. The impact of NW Bicester and planned development traffic on the whole town is being reviewed for Bicester as a whole and the M40 junctions 9 and 10. Key infrastructure works relating to highways will help connect NW Bicester with existing Bicester and pedestrian, cycle ways and bus-only road links will make public transport more rapid and frequent, enabling people to make sustainable travel choices.

**Provision of up to 30% affordable housing:** A2Dominion notes the positive response from the community in respect of the provision of affordable housing illustrated at the previous consultation event in December 2013 and June 2014 exhibition. The approach adopted towards the provision of affordable housing

will help ensure housing choice including for younger generations to stay local to the town.

**Proposing homes that are well insulated:** A2Dominion is pleased to see that over three quarters of respondents agreed with the proposal that homes will be well insulated, generate electricity through solar PV and be supplied by energy centres. The approach being adopted for NW Bicester for true zero carbon, highly efficient new homes was also recognised by people in response to the previous consultation event held in December 2013, demonstrating the importance of energy efficient homes and demand for reduced energy consumption and costs when moving home.

**Proposed land uses for outline application 1: north of Lords Lane:** A2Dominion is pleased to note that the respondents who favoured the plans were in the majority. This was reflected with particular support for extra care housing and facilities, and the inclusion of a waste water recycling centre within the land uses of outline application 1, demonstrated in the feedback below.

**Provision of specialist extra care housing:** Over three quarters of respondents welcomed the inclusion of specialist extra care housing, with feedback indicating this would create the perfect environment for the elderly. A2Dominion notes this positive response and also acknowledges that some respondents suggested there should be more provision for younger vulnerable people. A wide range of new homes are being provided at NW Bicester, from one bedroom apartments to 5 bedroom houses. In addition, the scheme will comprise 30% affordable housing with shared ownership and rented housing options to help younger people gain access to properties. A2Dominion will work with local service providers to ensure support for any vulnerable young people identified at NW Bicester is provided.

**Use of extra care facilities such as a café, hairdressers and shops by the wider community:** A2Dominion is pleased to see that over three quarters of respondents were supportive of the wider community being able to use the above facilities. Respondents acknowledged the importance that different age groups should be able to access and share the extra care facilities. Sharing facilities will create increased footfall and viability, but also help to build a multi-generational community that is able to live together.

**Inclusion of an on-site waste water recycling centre:** Over three quarters of respondents indicated support for the inclusion of an on-site waste water recycling centre and the idea of this natural resource being utilised. Some respondents questioned the required on-going maintenance of such a facility although A2Dominion can confirm that no final decision has been taken as to whether the on-site waste water treatment works will come forward or whether foul water will be pumped off site. Application 1 therefore includes the on-site option for EIA/ES testing purposes.

**Proposed land uses for outline application 2: north of Howes Lane:**

Although almost half of respondents did not provide a response to this question, A2Dominion noted that under a quarter of respondents believe the proposals are acceptable. We attribute this in part to experience taken from the public consultation where despite being part of an overall Masterplan, some visitors viewed the outline application proposals as stand-alone developments, so commented that there wasn't as much provision in outline application 2 as there was in outline application 1, rather than viewing them as areas that form an integrated development approach that everyone can access. Outline application 2 is also significantly smaller than 1, so there is less space for multiple land uses.

A2Dominion would like to highlight that concerns here also linked to views displayed in the 'Additional Comments' section which shows there is an overarching concern about a potential increase in traffic for the whole NW Bicester site. This was accentuated on outline application 2 due to the location of a secondary school and concerns over increased traffic on this section of the proposed realigned Howes Lane in particular. The exhibition included a dedicated display on the proposed highways, transport and access along with information on traffic impact and mitigation measures.

**Facilities incorporated in the proposed Health Centre:** A2Dominion notes that the most popular choice for facilities to be included in the Health Centre was for a GP's practice or a surgery and the other suggestions for physiotherapy provision or a dentist. A2Dominion will continue to consider



these and other suggestions as part of the emerging proposals and ongoing work relating to the applications and Masterplan.

**Proposed location of the secondary school:** A2Dominion notes that just under half of all respondents agreed with the proposed location of the new secondary school, however a similar number of respondents indicated they were unsure of the proposed location. For those that had concerns these centred on the additional traffic the school would generate (as per question 9).

In preparing the NW Bicester Masterplan, A2Dominion worked closely with Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council in selecting an appropriate location for the secondary school. The proposed secondary school site would be easily accessible to all by means of a range of transport options including modes of sustainable transport. The location of the secondary school adjacent to the link road means that safe and efficient access for school buses can be achieved without impacting on residential streets. Details of access arrangements to ensure traffic impacts are mitigated will be a key consideration of the detailed design of the school site. Moreover, the Travel Plan for the school (in detail following the Framework Travel Plan for the Development) will put in place measures to minimise car use. Furthermore, it is situated in proximity to a range of complementary uses including social and community facilities. A2Dominion therefore considers this to be the optimum location for the secondary school within NW Bicester.

**Proposed realignment of Howes Lane:** A2Dominion were encouraged that just under half of all respondents agreed with the proposed realignment of Howes Lane, while only a quarter disagreed. A2Dominion and the transport consultants took the opportunity to explain the proposed strategic realignment and associated infrastructure works at the exhibition, while listening to the views of those against the realignment. There was lots of positivity for the new crossing under the railway and improvements to the existing Howes Lane/Bucknell Road/Lord's Lane junctions, but some had concerns over what was viewed as the down-grading of a section of the ring-road from 50mph to 30mph and felt there is a need for a fast and direct road around Bicester. A2Dominion is continuing to work with OCC highways on transport modelling and will

continue to provide further information on this key area of interest as the proposals progress.

**Proposed pedestrian and cycle links for existing residents:** A2Dominion were pleased that well over half of all respondents agree with the proposed pedestrian and cycle links for NW Bicester. Some respondents suggested that current links should be extended across Bicester, which is feedback that A2Dominion will share with the local authority.

The ambition of the NW Bicester Masterplan is to encourage people out of their cars, provide opportunity and choice for use of more sustainable means of transport. The walking and cycling strategy for NW Bicester will offer a mix of direct commuter walking and cycling routes, segregated from but adjacent to roads, and leisure routes which will be off-road through green areas. Connections will also be enhanced to and from the development to the existing town.

**Priority and delivery of community facilities:** A2Dominion notes that the community facilities ranked in preference order based on which facilities are most important in terms of delivery was as follows – a health centre or GP practice, primary schools and local shops.

**Integration with the existing community:** A2Dominion notes that the majority of respondents believe that improving Bicester's infrastructure will help to integrate the eco town with the existing community along with providing better public transport. Half of all respondents did not provide further comment on this question. This response once again demonstrates peoples thoughts immediately turning to transport and access infrastructure improvements when thinking about integration, rather than community integration.

**Additional comments:** Further comments provided by respondents related to concerns regarding a potential increase in traffic in Bicester although some respondents did not provide any comment for this question. The June exhibition and previous event held in December 2013 provided the opportunity for A2Dominion and the transport consultants to respond to questions or concerns. In addition, the team will continue to ensure that information relating to highways is made available as part of the applications and emerging Masterplan process.