

Chesterton Vision and Objectives B

Vision for the Strategic Site

B.1 The Council, with community participation, has prepared a vision for the site. The vision sets out how the development will look and function, and will inform the design principles and Masterplan Framework.

Strategic Site Vision

1. Development of the land south-west of Chesterton and adjacent to the Royal Agricultural University presents an opportunity to create a new and attractive south-western edge to Cirencester. This vision statement describes the ultimate ambition for the place. The development will sit comfortably within the gently undulating landform, successfully incorporating significant trees and hedgerows within green corridors. A range of public open spaces will also help to green the place. In its town planning, the development will reflect the built environment of Cirencester. All buildings will exhibit high architectural quality, making optimum use of modern systems internally. The external appearance will avoid pastiche whilst preserving contact with the best local building traditions, not least in the use of high quality materials. The built environment will strike a successful balance between variety and harmony. As in the best historic townscapes, the scale, massing and detailing of particular buildings will respond to the character and role of the street they address. Within the layout, focal points and landmarks will be highlighted with distinctive buildings and spaces. A carefully planned network of green infrastructure will serve as a foil to the built environment, helping to create and define smaller, recognisable neighbourhoods within the development. As a consequence, the layout will be easy to understand and navigate. Integration with existing streets and paths in the vicinity, which will be enhanced where necessary, will ensure this new part of Cirencester is well connected to Chesterton, the rest of the town, and the countryside beyond.

2. The mix of homes and tenure types will reflect the needs and ambition of the local community. Residents will have convenient access to community facilities such as schools, shops, health care and play areas. Sufficient employment land and buildings will be provided to ensure a wide range of job opportunities, and these will be closely integrated with residential uses where practicable. All properties will have convenient access to public transport and to a finely branched network of safe and direct walking and cycling routes, linking people to schools, work places and services, both within the development and beyond. Ready access to high speed broadband will enable home working and help reduce the number of journeys by private car. Public spaces will be well designed, with suitable management and maintenance arrangements in place to ensure their continued upkeep. All public spaces and routes will be overlooked to ensure they feel safe.

3. This new part of Cirencester will have a range of site-wide features to reduce its environmental impact including low carbon energy generation, SuDS, and convenient access to recycling facilities. Homes will provide ample space for living and storage. Allotments and gardens will provide opportunities for residents to grow their own food. The development will promote innovation in residential, commercial and infrastructure design with a view to achieving more sustainable ways of living and a place that is future-proof. Essential infrastructure and services will be fully integrated in the design of the place from the outset and delivered in phase with the building work.

B Chesterton Vision and Objectives

Development Objectives

B.2 The following development objectives are intended to provide a basis for more detailed urban design and master planning work which will ultimately deliver the vision. They are site-specific and will be used in conjunction with other design policies in the Local Plan to ensure that a well designed place is achieved.

Character, Form and Attractiveness

B.3 The character and form of the development will reflect the best traditions of historic built form in the Cotswolds. Achieving local distinctiveness is a core development objective, and designers will be required to reinterpret local building traditions and use local materials to create a contemporary and sustainable urban extension. Density is a key determinant of the character and form of the built environment. Achieving the average net density will be critical, but this average allows scope for varying densities across the site as a whole. The highest densities will be found close to key locations (e.g. the local centre) and along public transport routes, with lower densities being found along sensitive edges of the development, in order to ease the transition from town to countryside.

B.4 Existing trees and hedgerows will be retained where practicable and the use of green infrastructure will not only enhance the attractiveness of the site and integrate it into the landscape, but will also provide habitats for wildlife.

Continuity and enclosure

B.5 Creating a coherent and permeable built environment, is a core development objective. The proposed development will be a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished. The Master Plan Framework and the subsequent stages of the master planning process will be expected to provide more detail on how this objective will be achieved.

Mixed Uses and Tenures

B.6 A mix of dwelling types and tenures, along with employment and commercial uses, will assist in making the development economically and socially successful. All residents should have easy access to facilities, with the neighbourhood centre meeting the day-to-day needs of people living and working within the site. The new services and facilities will, however, also be readily accessible to people living in the surrounding areas.

B.7 By providing new employment floor space, in addition to the new housing, the development will make a positive contribution to Cirencester's economy and to its self-containment. The practice of allocating open-ended employment sites can sometimes fail to deliver an appropriate range of employment buildings and uses. Whilst investment interest is always welcomed, the market alone may not always provide a sufficient range of accommodation. The Council is concerned to ensure this does not hamper the site and the development's ability to make a significant contribution to the growth of a diverse local economy in Cirencester. The Council wants to see the local economy expand in all sectors including tourism. The Council's objective is to work with the landowner and partners to attract employment uses that will complement the overall vision and add significant value to the development.

Chesterton Vision and Objectives B

B.8 The quality and density of jobs created will also be important considerations. The Council will require that the employment land will meet future employment needs and demands for a mix of types and sizes of business spaces which are suitable, for example, for business start-up and incubation, expansion of existing businesses, technical hubs and company headquarters.

B.9 The Vision requires development that will create an attractive south-western edge to Cirencester. This will require careful consideration of, among other things, the forms of employment development that might be appropriate in different parts of the site. For example, there may well be a land use rationale for further employment development adjacent the existing Cirencester Office Park (Tetbury Road): however, promoting the right form of development will be critical to realising the Vision. High quality class B1 office development and/or a new hotel may be appropriate employment uses for this part of the site. Conversely employment uses that are normally accommodated in very utilitarian building types (e.g. general industry) are unlikely to be considered appropriate in this part of the site, but could be accommodated on the land to the east of Wilkinson Road.

B.10 Whilst the Council will seek to ensure that concentrations of certain types of employment uses/buildings are directed towards the most appropriate parts of the site, the development shall otherwise avoid rigid 'zoning' of certain uses to different parts of the site. Uses that would not prejudice residential amenity (e.g. small-scale light industrial, office, retail and sociable uses) will be encouraged across the residential areas, in order to create places with variety and choice. For example, the ground floor of buildings adjacent to the main transport nodes may be particularly suitable for small-scale retail and community uses. Encouraging a mix of uses across the development, at the various scales described above, is a core development objective.

Lively Streets and Spaces

B.11 The streets, communal areas and public open spaces within this development will be the focus for community activity and social interaction for all ages. Streets and junctions will be designed as public spaces, rather than merely as functional routes for vehicular traffic. They will be enclosed and overlooked by built form to impart a feeling of security for all users.

B.12 Street trees will provide shelter for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as enhancing the appearance of the street scene, and minimising the visual impact of on-street car parking. Conveniently placed benches and places to rest will allow the less able to move in and around the development in addition to providing informal places for social interaction.

B.13 High quality playing fields and supporting infrastructure will also be provided to serve the needs of residents. Informal open space and structured landscaping will provide opportunities to successfully integrate existing landscape assets into the new development. Existing heritage assets shall be carefully integrated, in ways that preserve and enhance their settings. The development shall also include new allotments, or community gardens, to meet needs arising from the development, and these shall be provided on the highest quality agricultural land within the site. The provision of attractive and safe outdoor areas that display the highest standards of design in terms of materials, planting, street furniture, lighting and access is a core development objective.

B Chesterton Vision and Objectives

Functionality, Adaptability and Resilience

B.14 The Vision calls for a development with a range of site-wide features to reduce its environmental impact, including: low carbon energy generation, SuDS and convenient access to allotments and recycling facilities. The Council, working with developers, will seek to use the appropriate assessment methodologies to secure enhanced building and environmental performance above statutory minima where practicable. Any proposed new technologies, including opportunities for decentralised energy production, will be carefully integrated from the outset, particularly those with the potential to have adverse impacts on the external appearance of individual or groups of buildings and/ or where widely visible from public viewpoints.

B.15 The most successful built environments are those that have proved sufficiently robust to adapt to changing circumstances and demands. In order to achieve this quality, the built environment of this strategic development needs to be adaptable at every scale. The layout itself should be based on block sizes and a pattern of streets that allow flexibility in terms of the variety of uses that could be developed over time. Public spaces within the scheme should be designed to accommodate a variety of uses and activities. Developers and designers should seek to ensure that the buildings they deliver within the development are as robust as practicable, by giving careful consideration to characteristics such as height, depth and access, all of which influence how adaptable buildings are to new uses.

B.16 A key factor affecting the robustness of housing is the amount of space that individual units provide. The vision here is for a range of house types offering choice in the amount of space provided. In particular the Council will seek to ensure that some house types provide sufficient space to facilitate home working. Where possible, the design of housing should also provide opportunities for future enlargement, which would not compromise the original design concept for the surrounding part of the development (e.g. the street).

B.17 Places that are easy and practical to manage tend to be more resilient, for example where maintenance and policing are supported by good access, natural surveillance and hard wearing, easy to repair materials.

Ease of Movement

B.18 The application of these development objectives shall create an environment that is easily understood. Successful towns are typically arranged around one or two primary streets lined by commercial uses, with smaller scale streets leading off into residential areas. In historic townscapes the most important streets are often distinguishable from others because of their width and their grand buildings, whereas quiet residential streets often have a much more intimate character. Public buildings and other landmarks are often located at key nodes. Places with this sort of hierarchy of streets, nodes and built form are easier to understand than large areas of uniform housing development. Emulating this traditional approach to town planning is a key development objective.

Chesterton Vision and Objectives B

B.19 It is envisaged that a main street will be provided through the site between the Tetbury Road and Wilkinson Road. The option of including a bus gate, to control the amount of traffic that can access Wilkinson Road, will be carefully considered. Master planning work will investigate options for locating the proposed neighbourhood centre at an appropriate point on the main street, ideally on an intersection with other key routes.

B.20 Specially designed buildings will mark important corners, and formal groupings of buildings will enclose and define key public spaces. Developers and designers will be required to ensure that their scheme proposals play a positive role in improving legibility across the development. In particular they will be required to identify and maximise opportunities for landmark buildings, vistas and focal points.

B.21 The intention is not, however, to create areas with contrived or superficial characters that derive primarily from the external appearance of buildings. Rather the intention is to create a new townscape, where intrinsic variations in development form (e.g. layout, density, scale and massing) create an easily understood hierarchy of streets and spaces. The introduction of special or unusual features will be encouraged to add a further layer of legibility and to enrich the public realm.

B.22 The 'street' will be of the utmost importance within this development. As well as providing places for interaction, each street will contribute to the creation of a comprehensive interconnected network.

B.23 A finely branched network of footpaths and cycleways will complement the street network. Together they will form a highly permeable grid of movement for pedestrians and cyclists, which always offers a choice of routes to facilitate efficient and direct journeys. This network of footpaths and cycleways will help connect the development to destinations beyond the site boundaries (e.g. the town centre, Kemble station and the Cotswold Water Park). The network will be less permeable for private cars, making walking and cycling more attractive options for local trips.

B.24 Traffic management will be integral to the urban form within this development, and will be achieved through a wide variety of means. Whilst cars will not be excluded (as they can contribute to the liveliness of the public realm), the design will encourage drivers to behave in a manner that is conducive to a pedestrian/cyclist friendly environment. The relationships between building frontages and the streets will be carefully designed to encourage lower vehicle speeds. Along the primary streets vehicle speeds will be restricted to 30mph and this will drop to 20mph in secondary streets and minor residential streets.

B.25 The integration of public transport, primarily new bus services, into the built environment and into the lifestyles of those living and working within this development is a key development objective.

B.26 A bus service route will be provided through the development to connect key locations and facilitate efficient public transport penetration of the development. All homes will be within 400 metres of a sheltered bus stop, and the bus route will allow buses to circulate in each direction increasing frequency and convenience. The provision of new high frequency, high quality bus services between the development and significant destinations beyond the site is a key development objective.