

Executive

Draft Conservation and Urban Design Strategy for Cherwell

2 April 2012

Report of Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the approval of the Executive to the Draft Conservation and Urban Design Strategy for Cherwell for public consultation purposes.

This report is public

Please note that Appendix 1 will be circulated under separate cover.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To consider the content of the Draft Conservation and Urban Design Strategy.
- (2) To approve the Draft Conservation and Urban Design Strategy for public consultation purposes.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 Cherwell boasts a fine historic and high quality environment. It is also an area of sustained pressure for growth. It is vital that we identify, understand and preserve what is special in sensitively managing change. Heritage led regeneration can add value, local distinctiveness and contribute to high quality urban design.
- 1.2 This draft strategy sets out the Council's remit in the areas of conservation and urban design, illustrates what has been achieved and what we will strive to achieve in the future. The document covers a three year period from April 2012 to March 2015.
- 1.3 If approved, it will be the subject of public consultation before being brought back to the Executive for adoption.

Background Information

- 1.4 In terms of pure designations, in Cherwell there are currently 59 conservation areas, over 2,700 listed buildings, 52 scheduled ancient monuments, 10 Registered Parks and Gardens and one Registered Battlefield at Cropredy. In addition, there are curtilage listed buildings and many undesignated heritage assets, which we record on a Local List. This is a high level of protection for the historic environment for a District of this population
- 1.5 The protection of the local heritage and the promotion of high quality urban design are very important to Cherwell District Council and the people who live and work in the area. The intrinsic quality of the environment brings visitors and inward investment. Due to the high pressure for growth, this could be vulnerable if not properly managed.
- 1.6 The Draft Strategy sets out the national and local policy background on conservation and urban design within which we operate. It explains how we work in partnership with others, including national and local organisations.
- 1.7 It discusses the pressures for change expected in the District, including in our town centres, the rural areas, associated with the Oxford Canal, the unique military heritage, the major development areas, urban extensions and land and buildings in the Council's ownership.
- 1.8 It looks at our resources, our remit and sets priorities for the work of the Design and Conservation Team for the forthcoming three years.

2 Conclusion

- 2.1 The draft Strategy sets the following priorities for the immediate year 2012-13:
 - Designate a new conservation area along the length of the Oxford Canal.
 - Review the following conservation areas: Barford St John, Barford St Michael, Hornton, North Newington, South Newington and Steeple Aston
 - Aim to remove Duns Tew and Cropredy from the English Heritage at Risk Register.
 - Consider additional powers of control and work towards significant upgrading of the environment in Grimsbury.
 - Continue to work closely with the owners of former RAF Upper Heyford to ensure all structures of historic interest, including undesignated assets, are brought to a wind and weather tight condition pending future suitable uses.
 - Continue work with DIO on the disposal to the market of RAF Bicester technical site and flying field to enable the development of the site for heritage related tourism and, in the interim, on bringing the buildings at risk to a wind and weather tight condition.
 - Work with the Economic Development and Development Management

Services to secure suitable uses for heritage assets that promote economic development and tourism.

2.2 The Draft Strategy sets the following priorities for the longer period 2012-15 :

- Review six conservation areas annually. During the period 2013-15 twelve further conservation area appraisals will be published and this will ensure that all the conservation areas in the District will have been the subject of review within 10 years. Thereafter, assuming that the number of designations remains the same, a programme that continues with 6 appraisals a year will ensure that every conservation area is reviewed on a ten year cycle.
- Consider requests for further conservation area designations formally submitted by Parish and Town Councils as resources allow.
- Continue to engage local communities in the preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Strive to ensure that the historic parks and gardens in the District are protected from unsuitable development.
- Continue to identify curtilage listed buildings as opportunities occur, inform owners and make the information publicly available on the Council's web site.
- Submit a report to the Council's Executive identifying the undesignated heritage assets across the District, the special significance of each and the implications of inclusion on such a list. Once the list is approved by the Executive, the undesignated heritage assets will be identified on the Council's web site. A policy that aims to provide undesignated heritage assets with a level of protection reflective of PPS5 will be included within the Local Plan.
- Strive to remove one building from our Building at Risk Register every year. If necessary we will use our powers under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation areas) Act 1990 to serve Repairs Notices or Urgent Works Notices as appropriate.
- Give careful consideration to the benefits of removing specific permitted development rights through Article 4 Direction, report to the Council's Executive and consult publicly on any such proposal.
- Keep the on-line mapping service updated whenever new designations are made and strive to secure ongoing improvements to it for public use.
- Provide urban design and heritage input to Council led regeneration and development initiatives.
- Contribute urban design advice to private sector led development projects, including with the developers of major sites, urban extensions and NW Bicester to ensure that the proposals create high quality and sustainable urban design.
- Publish Design and Planning Guidance on other key sites to promote sensitive redevelopment of gap sites within our market towns and mend the holes in the historic townscape.

- Work with DIO to ensure that the former flying field and technical site at RAF Bicester are disposed of for gliding and heritage tourism purposes and work with successor land owners to bring forward the phased restoration of the technical site that enables public access.
- Work with the owners of the former RAF Upper Heyford (now Heyford Park) to ensure that the creation of a new living and working environment preserves and enhances the established character and appearance of the former Cold War airbase.
- Publish Guidance on the design of Shop Fronts for use as a tool in the regeneration of Town Centres in the District.
- Work with Oxfordshire Highways to ensure that the detailed design and implementation of environmental enhancements in Market Square are of the highest quality and that a memorable people-oriented place is created in the heart of this historic town.
- Seek a contribution to public art in major developments across the District and to appoint public artists who engage with the local community to create locally distinctive public realm, ideally as part of the Design Team from the outset of a project.
- Work with our partner authorities and local people to implement soft landscape proposals to upgrade the local environment in East St and Centre St, Grimsbury.
- Respond to requests for advice on planning and listed building applications within 10 working days.
- Provide urban design and heritage input into the Local Plan process, including policy formulation, Supplementary Planning Documents and Development Principles for Strategic Sites.
- Publish other site specific development briefs and generic guidance as required.
- Work with the Customer Service Team to enable them to expand their remit to cover general conservation related telephone inquiries.
- Instigate a Cherwell Design Award for renovation, architectural and landscape design on a three yearly rotation.
- Establish a Cherwell Design Service panel of local professionals to provide a design review service on a voluntary basis.
- Invite local people to set up and contribute to Conservation Area Advisory Committees and, where there is sufficient interest, assist and support the establishment of such groups.
- Continue to contribute to the BOBMK Design Review Panel and to avail ourselves of its service in equal measure, which will be cost neutral.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 To approve the Draft Conservation and Urban Design Strategy for consultation purposes.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendation is believed to be the best way forward

Option One	To accept the recommendation
Option Two	To not consult on the draft strategy and miss the opportunity to establish and then set clear priorities for the way the Council approaches conservation and urban design matters for the next three years.

Consultations

Oxfordshire County Council	This is Draft Strategy. The County Council will be a consultee and the comments received will be reported to the Executive prior to adoption of the Strategy.
Town and Parish Councils in the District	This is Draft Strategy. The Town and Parish Councils will be consultees and the comments received will be reported to the Executive prior to adoption of the Strategy.
Other stakeholders	This is Draft Strategy. Other stakeholders will be consulted and the comments received will be reported to the Executive prior to adoption of the Strategy.

Implications

Financial:	<p>The cost of preparing and consulting on this draft Strategy is being met from existing resources.</p> <p>Comments checked by Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant 221559</p>
Legal:	<p>Once consulted upon and adopted, this Strategy will form non statutory guidance; it is therefore essential that the priorities set out are fed into the Core Strategy to ensure they have sufficient weight to be a determining matter in the forward planning of the District and in determining planning applications.</p> <p>Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader – Planning and Litigation, 01295 221687</p>
Risk Management:	<p>The adoption of this Strategy following consultation will ensure that the priorities reflect the aspirations of the District and will inform the preparation of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader – Planning and Litigation, 01295 221687</p>

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

Cleaner Greener Cherwell
A District of Opportunity

Lead Member

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Lead Member for Planning

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
One	Draft Strategy
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Linda Rand, Design and Conservation Team Leader
Contact Information	01295 221845 linda.rand@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk