

Executive

Design and Conservation Strategy for Cherwell

3 September 2012

Report of Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the approval of the Executive for the adoption of the Design and Conservation Strategy for Cherwell.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To consider the content of the Design and Conservation Strategy.
- (2) To adopt the Design and Conservation Strategy for Cherwell.

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 and sensitively managing change. Heritage-led regeneration can add value and local distinctiveness, and contribute to high quality design.
- 1.2 The strategy sets out the Council's remit in the areas of design and conservation, illustrates what has been achieved and what we will strive to achieve in the future. The document covers a three year period from September 2012 to March 2015.
- 1.3 It has been the subject of public consultation since the Executive approved the draft strategy in April 2012. The consultation ran until 25 June 2012.

Background Information

- 1.4 In terms of pure designations, in Cherwell there are currently 59 conservation areas, over 2,700 listed buildings, 56 scheduled ancient monuments, 7 Registered Parks and Gardens and one Registered Battlefield at Cropredy. In addition, there are curtilage listed buildings and many non-designated 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 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. It is important that we manage growth in a way that reinforces and enhances the unique character of the area.
- 1.6 The Strategy sets out the national and local policy background on design and conservation 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 military heritage, major development and urban extensions, and land and buildings in the Council's ownership.
- 1.8 It looks at resources, remits and sets priorities for the work of the Design and Conservation Team for the forthcoming three years.

Conclusion

- 1.9 The Strategy sets the following priorities for the period 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 EH Heritage at Risk Register.
 - Consider additional powers of control and work towards significant upgrading of the environment in Grimsbury.
 - Work closely with the owners of former RAF Upper Heyford to ensure all buildings of historic interest, including unlisted buildings, are brought to a wind and weather tight condition pending future suitable uses.
 - Work with DIO on the disposal of RAF Bicester technical site and flying field to enable the development of the site for heritage-related tourism and, in the interim, work to ensure that the buildings are brought into a wind and weather tight condition.
 - 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, Bicester, are of the highest quality and that a memorable people-oriented place is created in the heart of the 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 Street and Centre Street, Grimsbury.

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

- Submit a report to the Council's Executive identifying the non-designated 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 non-designated heritage assets will be identified on the Council's web site. A policy that aims to provide non-designated heritage assets with a level of protection reflective of the NPPF will be included within the Local Plan.
- Review six conservation areas annually. During 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.
- Work with Economic Development and Development Management to secure suitable uses for heritage assets that promote economic development and tourism.
- Consider requests for further conservation area designations formally submitted by Parish 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.
- Strive to remove one building from the 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 online mapping service updated whenever new designations are made and strive to secure ongoing improvements to it for public use.
- Provide design and heritage input to Council-led regeneration and development initiatives.
- Contribute 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 places.
- Publish Design / Planning Guidance on other key sites to promote sensitive redevelopment of gap sites within the 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 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.
- Work with the Customer Service Team to enable them to expand their remit to cover general conservation-related telephone enquiries.
- Investigate a Cherwell Design Award for renovation, built and landscape design on a three yearly rotation.
- Maintain staffing at current levels and retain the urban design / master planning resource.
- Strive to ensure that the provision of specialist advice on Development Management matters and heritage / design policy formation will be equally balanced in the work of the team.
- 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, SPDs and Development Principles for Strategic Sites.
- Publish other site specific development briefs and generic guidance as required.
- Continue to consult local historical societies with regard to better community involvement in the design and conservation of villages and urban centres.
- 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 adoption of the Design and Conservation Strategy.

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

Option One	To accept the recommendation
Option Two	To not accept the recommendation, thereby not establishing and setting clear priorities for the way the Council approaches design and conservation matters for the next three years.
Option Three	To not accept the recommendation and refer the document back to the Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy for further alterations.

Consultations

Oxfordshire County Council	The County Council has been consulted and has no comments on the draft strategy document.
Town and Parish Councils in the District	The Town and Parish Councils were consulted. Any comments received are listed below.
Banbury Civic Society	Concern that archaeology and parks & gardens have so little protection. Would like enhancement proposals to use quality design consultants. Would like up-to-date annual review of Heritage At Risk.
Banbury Town Council	Broad strategy is welcomed. Important to retain the uniqueness of the district. Possibly some confusion amongst the public as to what a conservation area is. Appraisal, local lists, advertising, redevelopment, landscape enhancements are important, as is good design advice for residential developers.
Bicester Local History Society and Bomber Command Heritage	The groups supported the document wholeheartedly.
British Waterways South East	Support the priorities listed.
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Banbury	Urges closer liaison with OCC Highways to reduce visual clutter. Encourages links between tourism and Oxford Canal. Cautions care at the edge of conservation areas regarding compromise of settings. Encouraged by mention of enhancement schemes. Considered aims and objectives well set out.
English Heritage	Welcomes Council initiative. Encouraged to see OCC Highways protocol. Encourages criteria, consultation and ratification for non-designated heritage assets to be published. Timescale needed for Article 4 work. Desires

local plan policy for protection of parks and gardens. Welcomes pro-active approach to curtilage listed buildings. Supports in principle working with DIO over RAF Bicester.

Launton Parish Council

Excellent document. Pleased to see specific priority given to sensitive re-use of RAF Bicester flying field and technical sites, and preservation of unique village identities.

Oxfordshire Geology Trust

Identification of local building materials important. Impact of local nature and heritage important to health and well-being of the district.

Oxfordshire Inland Waterways Association

Pleased at the special mention of the Oxford Canal. Suggests other documents which have relevance to the preservation of the canal and wider district.

Sue Marchand, CDC Biodiversity and Countryside Officer

High quality urban design is required to promote energy efficiency in new buildings which also aid biodiversity (green roofs/walls, nests etc.). Landscaping schemes for new and existing developments are also essential to establishing good quality residential areas.

Mr C Astley, Adderbury Resident

Design guidance for residents and Parish Councils would be useful.

Implications

Financial:

The cost of preparing and consulting on this Strategy has been met from existing resources.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance and Procurement, 0300 0030106

Legal:

This Strategy will form non statutory guidance; it is therefore essential that the priorities set out are fed into the Proposed Submission Draft Cherwell Local Plan to ensure they have sufficient weight to be a determining matter in the forward planning of the District and in determining planning applications.

Comments checked by Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance, 0300 0030107

Risk Management:

The adoption of this Strategy following will ensure that the priorities reflect the aspirations of the District and will inform the preparation of the Core Strategy.

Comments checked by Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance, 0300 0030107

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

**Cleaner Greener Cherwell
A District of Opportunity**

Executive Lead Member

**Councillor Michael Gibbard
Lead Member for Planning**

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Design and Conservation Strategy for Cherwell 2012 - 2015
Background Papers	
None	
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