

## A Strategy for Development in Cherwell

- A.1** A key role for the Local Plan is to set out the strategy for how Cherwell District will develop over the period to 2031. This strategy needs to be a “spatial strategy” – setting out how much the district will grow, broadly where this growth will take place and how the growth will be delivered.
- A.2** Underpinning this strategy is a vision for our district. We need to understand what we want Cherwell District to be like in 2031. What values and principles will shape our planning decisions?
- A.3** This vision should be distinctive to our local area, and it must be realistic and achievable. Importantly, it should relate to other vision statements made by Cherwell District Council and others. Local people need to be confident that the various public bodies responsible for planning the future growth of the district have the same overall vision for Cherwell District.

### **Cherwell in 2031**

- A.4** The purpose of a vision statement is to set out an image of the future that we are seeking to create. What type of place do we want Cherwell District to be in 2031? What values and principles should underpin our Local Plan?
- A.5** In identifying these issues, we have reviewed national, regional and local strategies, policies, and priorities; we have examined information which helps us understand the 'health' of Cherwell's economy, its communities and its environment and which highlights its opportunities and constraints; we have commissioned or produced new evidence on key topic areas such as flood risk, affordable housing and transport.
- A.6** In defining our vision statement, we are mindful that other vision statements have already been prepared by other bodies [and by the Council in earlier documents](#), and our statement must draw on these as appropriate. These ~~include~~[are](#):
- ~~The vision for the South East of England contained in the now revoked South East Plan~~
  - The vision for Oxfordshire 2030, prepared by the Oxfordshire Partnership
  - The vision for Cherwell District contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy and prepared by the Cherwell Community Planning Partnership
  - The draft vision for the LDF contained in the Issues & Options paper in 2006
  - The draft vision for the Core Strategy in February 2010.
  - [The draft vision for the Proposed Submission Local Plan August 2012 and Proposed Changes to the Proposed Submission Local Plan March 2013.](#)
- A.7** In the light of these, our vision for Cherwell District is as follows:

### **Our Vision for Cherwell District**

- A.8** By 2031, Cherwell District will be an area where all residents enjoy a good quality of life. It will be more prosperous than it is today. Those who live and work here will be happier, healthier and feel safer.

## A.9 For this to happen:

- We will **develop a sustainable economy** that is vibrant and diverse with good transport links and sound infrastructure, supported by excellent educational facilities. Our economy will grow to provide more diverse employment for our increasing population and reduce the need for our residents to travel outside the district for work.
- We will maintain and improve the **vitality of our town centres** as accessible economic, cultural and social hubs, offering improved leisure and shopping facilities as well as a diverse and vibrant evening economy.
- We will support a stronger, sustainable **rural economy** that is more diverse and not reliant entirely on agriculture. Our villages will be “lived in” as well as “slept in”.
- We will **improve road, rail and public transport links** and provide increased access to services and facilities to cater for the needs of the District. In particular, we will focus on measures aimed at managing road congestion, improving public transport and improving access to town centres and other shops and services.
- We will **build sustainable communities** by facing the challenges of a growing and an ageing population and ensuring that the settlements of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, along with the rural areas offer a high quality of life and meet the needs of all sections of the population.
- We will ensure that Cherwell can offer its communities a range and choice of **good quality, market and affordable housing**.
- We will ensure that by careful and timely investment in our **social and physical infrastructure**, people have convenient access to health, education, open space, [sport](#) and recreational activities when they need it. We will seek to address inequalities in health, and aim to maximise well-being maximised. Poverty and social exclusion will be reduced.
- We will cherish protect and enhance our distinctive natural and built environment and our rich historic heritage. Cherwell will maintain its rural character where its landscapes, its vast range of natural and built heritage and its market towns define its distinctiveness.
- We will protect our **natural resources**, embracing environmental technologies and adapting our behaviour to meet the global challenge of climate change. We will promote the use of alternative energy sources where appropriate and reduce the impact of development on the natural environment, including seeking to minimise flood risk.

## The Spatial Strategy for Cherwell District

**A.10** Implementing the vision for Cherwell District to 2031 [will be](#) through a spatial strategy which enables us to make decisions about the direction and nature of development.

**A.11** Our spatial strategy for Cherwell District is as follows:

- Most of the growth in the district will be directed to locations within or immediately adjoining the main towns of Banbury and Bicester
  - Bicester will continue to grow as the main location for development within the district within the context of wider drivers for growth
  - Banbury will continue to grow, albeit to a lesser extent than Bicester, in accordance with its status as a market town with a rural hinterland

- Away from the two towns, the major single location for growth will be at the former RAF Upper Heyford base which will deliver over 760 homes in accordance with its planning permission
- Kidlington's centre will be strengthened and its important economic role will be widened. Economic development will be supported close to the airport and nearby at Begbroke Science Park. at Kidlington will be supported but there will be no strategic significant housing growth at Kidlington but other housing opportunities will be provided.
- Growth across the rest of the district will be much more limited and will focus on meeting local community and business needs. It will be directed towards the larger and more sustainable villages within the district which offer a wider range of services and are well connected to major urban areas, particularly by public transport
- Development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled. In the south of the district, the existing Green Belt will be maintained, though a small scale local review of the Green Belt will be conducted to accommodate identified employment needs. In the north west of the district, the small area lying within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will similarly be protected

## Getting There - Our Strategic Objectives

**A.12** To achieve the vision we have set out to address the key issues that Cherwell faces, we have established a set of objectives for our themes of developing a sustainable local economy, building sustainable communities and ensuring sustainable development. These objectives steer our policy making for the district as a whole. These have been formed through discussions with partners such as Oxfordshire County Council.

## Challenges and Objectives for Developing a Sustainable Local Economy

**A.13** Cherwell is a relatively prosperous area with some areas of deprivation. It has high levels of employment, high dependence on manufacturing, a relatively low skills and education base, and workplace earnings below the regional level. There remains a lack of diversity in the local economy, ~~but~~ between 1995 and 2006 the level of employment in manufacturing fell by 4% from 28.9% to 14.1% as growth in other sectors occurred, particularly in distribution, hotels and restaurants. High employment rates were maintained through this change but the recent economic downturn has been begun to challenge this.

**A.14** Cherwell's key challenges to achieving a sustainable local economy are:

- The 'knowledge economy' needs to grow
- New employment sites are needed to meet modern business needs
- There is a need to make more efficient use of existing employment areas by prioritising the use of existing sites
- Improving our urban centres and existing employment areas to retain and attract business
- There is a need to adapt to the changing rural economy and to provide more employment opportunities and potentially suitable employment sites in rural areas

- Relatively large numbers of people in Cherwell are without qualifications and basic skills; the level of education and training needs to improve
- Pockets of multiple deprivation in the district
- ~~An increase in the number of residents seeking Job Seeker Allowance and National Insurance Credits in 2008/09 as a result of economic downturn – a faster increase than other Oxfordshire districts (Living in Cherwell, 2009)~~
- The average weekly wage is lower than the South East average
- The claimant count rose, particularly in Banbury, in 2009 as a result of the economic downturn. -In 2012 it was about twice the level it was in 2008
- Insufficient diversity in the local economy
  - Overdependence on a declining number of manufacturing jobs
- The need to respond to a growing and ageing population

**A.15** The central theme of our Economic Development Strategy (2011-2016) is the creation of 'economic resilience' by combining the resources of the private, social and public sector partners. The sStrategy seeks to continuously develop our local economy to ensure it remains internationally competitive, to enable the creation of jobs and prosperity now and for the future and to create a more diverse economy. It highlights the unique opportunity arising through the Bicester eco-town project ~~(which is currently evolving into a 'Garden City' scheme)~~ and recognises that the development of 'green' infrastructure, skills and technology will allow Bicester and the wider district to become more attractive for innovative business investment and the creation of 'higher value' employment opportunities.

**A.16** Leadership on developing a 'Low Carbon' economy will involve the development of 'green technologies' and 'green knowledge' around existing and new employers, sectors and clusters. The sStrategy seeks to support industry in developing alternative energy sources and maximising the opportunities within engineering and construction to develop practical solutions to mitigate the impact of climate change and secure competitive, green business practice. This includes increasing the capacity to design, build or upgrade existing infrastructure so that it does not contribute to climate change. It also means protecting the environment and enhancing biodiversity which will help also be a considerable attraction for sustainable business investment by businesses and for the visitor's economy.

**A.17** The Sustainable Community Strategy emphasises es the need to develop a diverse and resilient industrial base and an appropriately skilled workforce. It highlights sed the importance of supporting people in gaining the skills and flexibility to access local jobs and of attracting new businesses into the area which, in turn, will encourage our younger population to stay or return.

### **Our Strategic Objectives for Developing a Sustainable Local Economy**

- **SO 1** ~~—~~To facilitate economic growth and employment and a more diverse local economy with an emphasis on attracting and developing higher technology industries

- SO 2-\_\_\_ To support the diversification of Cherwell's rural economy
- SO 3-\_\_\_ To help disadvantaged areas, support an increase in skills and innovation, improve the built environment and make Cherwell more attractive to business by supporting regeneration
- SO 4-\_\_\_ To maintain and enhance the vitality, viability, distinctiveness and safety of Cherwell's urban centres.
- SO 5-\_\_\_ To encourage sustainable tourism

## Challenges and Objectives for Building Sustainable Communities

- A.18** The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) states that communities within Cherwell are generally harmonious and healthy. People like where they live and have a strong allegiance to their town or village but are not necessarily attached to Cherwell as a whole. However, it emphasises that rapid population growth and development has diluted local identity and a sense of belonging.
- A.19** The SCS highlights that support may particularly be needed by young people, older people, young families, people moving into the area from outside the UK and marginalised communities, for example people with disabilities or from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. It also points out that villages are being challenged by an erosion of the younger population, local employment and services. Housing is identified as a big concern for Cherwell, particularly the shortage of social / affordable housing. Concerns are also highlighted about secondary education, rural isolation and anti-social behaviour, especially in town centres.
- A.20** Some of Cherwell's key economic issues are also wider community issues: the need to address multiple deprivation; relatively large numbers of people without qualifications and basic skills; and the need to respond to a growing and ageing population.
- A.21** Cherwell's other key challenges to building sustainable communities are:
- The need to make market housing more affordable - Cherwell is the most affordable district for housing in Oxfordshire, but in 2009~~8~~ median house prices were still over ~~7~~<sup>8</sup> times median earnings
  - The need to provide more family housing for newly forming households in rural areas
  - The Council has been successful in the prevention of homelessness but it remains important to ensure an adequate supply of new housing for vulnerable households
  - The need to meet the requirements of a relatively young population, particularly those aged 0 to 15 in urban areas
  - Meeting the needs of an ageing population and those with special needs
  - Child well-being in Cherwell which is well below the other rural districts in Oxfordshire
  - Rates of claimants of health-related benefits in Cherwell are above the average for Oxfordshire but below the South East average with the exception of Attendance Allowance which is above the county and regional average. Cherwell has the highest number of adults between 18

~~and 64 with a serious physical disability compared to the rest of Oxfordshire (current total of 2,014 in 2008 rising to 2,193 by 2020). There are a further 7,108 people with moderate disabilities~~

- The need to improve educational attainment
- The level of adult obesity is above the levels in other Oxfordshire districts
- The percentage of Cherwell residents participating in sport and active recreation is below other rural Oxfordshire districts but above regional and national averages
- The need to consider the implications of low depopulation population growth (and potential depopulation) in Kidlington ~~(a fall of 2% between 2001 and 2009)~~
- The need to protect and enhance the identity of Cherwell's towns and villages, to maintain or create a sense of belonging and improve social cohesion
- Ensuring that the needs of a diverse Cherwell population are met, for example Cherwell has a relatively large Indian and Pakistani population compared to other rural districts in Oxfordshire
- A lack of affordable housing and the need to increase the proportion of the housing stock that comprises social housing.

**A.22** The community priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy include creating safe, strong and vibrant communities, reducing inequality and addressing deprivation and adapting to an ageing population. It aims for thriving communities where everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, feels safe in their homes and welcome in their neighbourhoods, where older people are able to live independently and where younger people have skills, opportunities and high aspirations.

### **Our Strategic Objectives for Building Sustainable Communities**

- ~~SO 6~~     -To accommodate new development so that it maintains or enhances the local identity of Cherwell's settlements and the functions they perform
- ~~SO 7~~     -To meet the housing needs of all sections of Cherwell's communities, particularly the need to house an ageing population and to meet the identified needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, in a way that creates sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities
- ~~SO 8~~     -To improve the affordability of housing in Cherwell and to provide social rented and intermediate housing to meet identified needs whilst ensuring the viability of housing development and a reliable supply of new homes
- ~~SO 9~~     -To improve the availability of housing to newly forming households in rural areas
- ~~SO 10~~    -To provide sufficient accessible, good quality services, facilities and infrastructure including green infrastructure, to meet health, education, transport, open space, sport, recreation, cultural, social and other community needs, reducing social exclusion and poverty, addressing inequalities in health, and maximising well-being.

## Challenges and Objectives for Ensuring Sustainable Development

**A.23** Like many areas in the South East, Cherwell has seen rapid post-war development. In terms of population, Banbury is over twice the size it was in 1951. Bicester is seven times the size. The construction of the M40 motorway through the district in the early 1990s had an enormous impact on the economic attraction of Cherwell and on relieving traffic congestion, but has also brought negative change in terms of the amount of traffic that travels through the district and with regard to the impact on the landscape and on air quality.

**A.24** A relatively high level of growth is expected to continue in Cherwell ~~which~~ places pressure on Cherwell's natural resources, on maintaining the quality of its built and natural environment, on maintaining and enhancing its biodiversity, and on ensuring that Cherwell is an attractive place to live and work. Climate change and the need to manage resources such as water and waste more responsibly compound these long-standing existing environmental challenges and are creating new issues such as the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

**A.25** Cherwell's key challenges to ensuring sustainable development are:

- There is a need to maximise the opportunities to significantly cut carbon emissions. ~~—a~~ Although compared to other 'significant rural' districts, Cherwell has lower domestic carbon dioxide emissions per person, it has higher overall emissions per person due to more emissions from industrial and commercial activity
- A need to consider the effects of development on air quality, including in relation to the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Banbury. ~~in relation to human health~~ and how development proposals can contribute towards improvements ~~in~~ ~~ing~~ ~~air~~ ~~quality~~
- A need to ensure that contamination is addressed effectively on sites through re-development
- There is a need to maximise opportunities for the use of renewable energy, efficient buildings and for using resources such as energy and water more efficiently
- There is a need to reduce dependence on travel by car and to manage traffic congestion - between 1981 and 2001 the number of cars in Cherwell increased by over 34,700 (97%), over double the growth in households (46%); residents in our rural areas are particularly dependent on their cars and congestion hotspots include junction 9 of the M40, on the A34, in the centres of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington at peak times and in villages with schools. Commuters in Cherwell travel relatively long distances to work.
- Maximise the opportunity to shift dependence from the car to sustainable modes of transport
- Cherwell is ranked very poorly on a national measure of geographical accessibility of services
- Water resources in Cherwell are limited and needs will continue to be met from outside the Cherwell catchment area
- Cherwell's rivers have been consistently assessed as poorer in chemical quality than rivers in other districts in Oxfordshire
- There is a need for a leap forward in sustainable design and construction in Cherwell

- There is a need to improve the quality of our built up environments and urban areas, to ensure that new development maintains or increases their distinctiveness and to improve the functioning of our towns and villages
- Cherwell's biodiversity needs to be protected and enhanced and measures need to be taken to ensure it is capable of adapting to a changing climate. There is need to support the management of existing woodlands and wildlife sites and to identify new wildlife sites. The reduction in nesting and roosting sites is a particular concern.
- A need to cherish, preserve and enhance our distinctive natural and built environment and our rich historic heritage including listed buildings and conservation areas. There is a need to improve the built up environments of our urban areas, to ensure that new development maintains or increases distinctiveness and improves the functioning of our town and villages.
- Cherwell households have the lowest access to natural green space across the whole of the South East; 72% of households meet none of the Accessible Green Space requirements - a reflection of the low number of country parks and areas of common land in the district.

**A.26** Cherwell's Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate (2008) highlights the common need to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, encourage the take-up of low carbon and renewable energy technologies, and reduce the need to travel and provide good access to public and other sustainable modes of transport. It notes the need to conserve water, to minimise flood risk, and to be resilient to the impacts of climate change.

**A.27** Minimising pollution, protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats, conserving cultural heritage and natural resources and minimising waste and maximising recycling are also highlighted as priority areas. These aims reflect the environmental objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

### **Our Strategic Objectives for Ensuring Sustainable Development**

- ☐ **SO 11.** To incorporate the principles of sustainable development in mitigating and adapting to climate change impacts including increasing local resource efficiency (particularly water efficiency), minimising carbon emissions, promoting decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy where appropriate and ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased
- ☐ **SO 12.** To focus development in Cherwell's sustainable locations, making efficient and effective use of land, conserving and enhancing the countryside and landscape and the setting of its towns and villages.
- ☐ **SO 13.** To reduce the dependency on the private car as a mode of travel, increase the attraction of and opportunities for travelling by public transport, cycle and on foot, and to ensure high standards of accessibility to services for people with impaired mobility.
- ☐ **SO 14.** To create more sustainable communities by providing high quality, locally distinctive and well designed environments which increase the attractiveness of Cherwell's towns and villages as places to live and work and which contribute to the well-being of residents.



- **SO 15** – To protect and enhance the historic and natural environment and Cherwell's core assets, including protecting and enhancing cultural heritage assets and archaeology, maximising opportunities for improving biodiversity and minimising pollution in urban and rural areas.

### **Duty to Cooperate**

~~The Council will continue to work with Neighbouring authorities and others on planning issues which cross administrative boundaries.~~

### **Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

**A.27a** The principles of 'sustainable development' are central to the planning system. The NPPF (para's 11-16) sets out what is meant by the "presumption in favour of sustainable development" and recommends that Policies in the Local Plan should follow this presumption.

**A.27b** The Framework recognises that sustainable development is about change for the better. It is about positive growth, making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly. They are mutually dependent.

**A.27c** In line with Government policy advice, the Council has adopted a positive approach in seeking to meet the objectively assessed development needs of the District. The policies in the Local Plan provide a clear framework to guide development that creates positive, sustainable growth, therefore following the presumption in favour of sustainable development, enabling proposals that accord with the Plan objectives to be approved without delay. This policy is therefore at the heart of decision making when assessing planning applications.

**A.27d** There may be instances where the Plan is silent or in future years, policies become out of date. To enable the Council to continue to take a sustainably positive approach to decision making, the applicant will need to assist by submitting evidence to demonstrate how the benefits of the proposal outweigh any adverse impacts.

**A.27e** The challenge here is to reconcile the need to deliver sufficient jobs and homes, supported by appropriate infrastructure to meet Cherwell's needs, whilst conserving the natural and built environment, minimising the need to travel and addressing climate change.

### **Policy PSD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

When considering development proposals the Council will take a proactive approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council will always work proactively with applicants ~~jointly~~ to jointly find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved

wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (or other part of the statutory Development Plan) ~~and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans~~ will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:-

- aAny adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- sSpecific policies in the at-Framework indicate that development should be restricted.