

## B Policies for Development in Cherwell

### B.1 Theme One: Policies for Developing a Sustainable Local Economy

#### Introduction

- B.1** This plan aims to support sustainable economic growth in the [De](#)district. Creating a broad ranging, diverse and resilient economy is also a key ambition of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy.
- B.2** Increasing the economic competitiveness of Cherwell District is fundamental to providing employment opportunities to reduce the level of out commuting as well as reducing traffic congestion in the District and in neighbouring [d](#)Districts and so shifting to a more locally [self](#)-sufficient, sustainable economy. As the cost of travel continues to increase, making commuting less viable, it will be important to provide employment opportunities within the district. A broad balance will also need to be maintained between labour supply and jobs.
- B.3** However, improving Cherwell's economic future requires more than providing land and infrastructure. It also requires consideration of how we manage and reduce the environmental impact of proposed development and to ensure it is of sufficient quality and in keeping with the landscape and existing urban character of the [D](#)district.
- B.4** Protecting the role and function of our existing town centres and employment areas, as well as enhancing our natural and built environment, will enable Cherwell to become as business-friendly as possible in support of jobs and prosperity. Improving our town centres will also encourage tourism.
- B.5** By working with our private sector partners we will take advantage of the locational advantages the District enjoys, the high economic activity level, the skills available and the clusters of specialist activity such as advanced engineering. We will support jobs-led economic growth and commercial investment that helps move the district towards a globally-competitive, lower carbon/green economy.
- B.6** As Bicester lies at the heart of the Oxford – Cambridge technology corridor, [and as while](#) Banbury has a strong manufacturing base and close links to the Motorsport sector, we are looking to strengthen the District's profile with Performance Engineering and will support investment made in the District in premises for new technology innovation.
- B.7** We will encourage investment in hi-tech industries at new sites in Bicester and support science and innovation investment at [Langford Lane in](#) Kidlington to create a critical mass of high tech research investment in this part of the District. This will enable the resources of Oxford University's Begbroke Science Park to connect with local businesses, strengthening technology transfer to both nurture enterprise and draw investment into the district.
- B.8** We will support limited new employment development in the rural areas to help strengthen the rural economy and increase employment opportunities throughout the [d](#)District.

- B.9** Our Economic Development Strategy (2011–2016) identified the following:
- Levels of employment are relatively high but not everybody is benefiting
  - We have increasingly relied upon public sector jobs which are set to reduce in number
  - The skill base of the district needs to be widened~~re-are still residents without the right skills~~
  - There remain pockets of deprivation within our overall prosperity
  - We have a diverse economy but often with 'lower value' activity similar to the south Midlands
  - Manufacturing is a particular strength but is often lower skilled locally
  - The knowledge economy is growing, but not quickly enough.
- B.10** Unemployment has increased in Cherwell, particularly in Banbury, since the start of the recession and employment in Cherwell grew more slowly than the national average in the same time period.
- B.11** Even though unemployment is not ~~that~~ high compared to other parts of the ~~C~~country, this needs to be addressed and is a one of the reasons for the focus of this Plan.
- B.12** Cherwell has experienced lower growth than some surrounding areas including locations such as Milton Keynes and Warwick. This may be due to a shortage in skills in some areas. However nationally, in terms of competitiveness, it is ranked 62 out of 379 local authorities.
- B.13** 41% of employment in the District is located in Banbury, 20% in Bicester, 14% in Kidlington and 25% in the rural areas. Overall the levels of economic activity are high, with 82% of the working age population economically active. Upper Heyford is a former RAF base which has consent for over 1,000 dwellings (including the existing homes) but which also has just under 1,000 jobs already located within the existing buildings with more to come as part of the sites redevelopment. As such it is one of the larger employment locations within Cherwell and provides a good range of jobs and premises from engineering and scientific activities to specialist storage activities.
- B.14** The population in Cherwell is highly skilled, however the levels of educational attainment are low in some areas. It will be important to ensure that the population is sufficiently skilled to attract companies and investment to Cherwell. We will support proposals to strengthen the skills base of the local economy through new facilities aiming to strengthen training and skills within the district. The planned investment in education (e.g. the University Technology College at Bicester) and skills will drive business growth, enhance the economy and improve our quality of life in the long term. Projects such as Brighter Futures and the Bretch Hill regeneration areasite identified in this Plan ('Policy Banbury 10: ~~Bretch Hill Regeneration Area~~') will assist in improving skills. There will also need to be: promotion of local training providers, an improvement of the relationships between companies and schools, colleges and the Universities and continuation of initiatives such as the Council's 'Job Club'. Existing partnerships such as Bicester Vision and the M40 Investment partnership should continue to make this their priority.
- B.15** Cherwell has excellent transport links with the M40 and a number of railway lines running through the District, some of which have recently been

upgraded or are the subject of planned investment. Bus services are also good in most areas of the District. Cherwell has a high proportion of employment in industrial sectors, logistics and retail and these contribute towards the local economy; but in order to be globally competitive and create a lower carbon economy more jobs are needed in the knowledge based sector. Wages are also relatively low in Cherwell and despite living costs being lower than many places in the South East, this means that there is less disposable income available for spending in the local area. An increase in jobs in [the knowledge based](#) sector will help improve this. Jobs in manufacturing are also at greatest risk from overseas competition where operating costs are much lower.

- B.16** Homeworking is increasing in the District but is slightly lower than the South East average. Superfast broadband provision will be sought as a standard item within new housing and commercial development to support home working and new enterprise throughout the District, including rural communities. We will support development proposals to enable working from home where appropriate. We will work with suppliers to encourage the provision of superfast broadband across the District. Home and flexible working reduces the need to travel, reducing travel impacts and congestion.
- B.17** As with many similar areas, the age profile of Cherwell is projected to continue to become older. The working age population only makes up a small part of the population and is expected to only rise by 1,000 ~~by~~ 2031. This is a trend that should be recognised as it may lead to a lack of labour supply. However a large proportion of the population is aged between 60 and 70. With the changes in retirement age, a reduction in pensions and the current economic climate it is likely that a significant proportion of people will continue to work into their late 60's and 70's. This group will need to be taken into account as a labour resource and it will be important that life long learning is provided so this group has the skills required to support the economic vision in this Plan.
- B.18** Increasing labour supply could be achieved by allocating significantly more land for housing but this is likely to have significant and unacceptable environmental effects. Building the right type of housing, such as family housing, to maintain a working age population will however will be important.
- B.19** Banbury is the most self contained settlement in Cherwell with 80% of its residents working there but there are about 5,000 more people leaving the District for work each day than entering it. The Council will attempt to 'reclaim' out-commuters and [provide jobs for local people attract more in-commuters](#) by providing [opportunities for jobs in a wider range of employment sectors](#), ~~which people currently commute to London and elsewhere for.~~
- B.20** According to forecasts set out in the Council's Economic Analysis Study 2012 the number of jobs expected to be created in Cherwell between 2011 - 2031 is about 7,000. The labour supply is unlikely to meet this requirement so Cherwell has to increase 'capital in use' and 'total factor productivity' collectively known as labour productivity. This means developing and growing its economy by improving skills to enable an increase in productive jobs with higher wages.

**B.21** The provision of a sufficient number and variety of available employment sites and the formation of planning policies which allow employment generating development to come forward in sustainable locations is critical to enabling existing companies to grow and to provide for new company formation. Employment sites are also needed in order to respond to inward investment including the planned electrification of the railway, new routes and stations in the District.

**B.21a** The Council belongs to two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which are formed by local government and businesses, which will be important for securing funding and in the implementation of projects. In the Budget of 2011 the government announced it would create Enterprise Zones across the Country which provide for tax incentives for businesses and 'relaxed' planning regulations. Enterprise Zones have been awarded to, and are being driven by, Local Enterprise Partnerships. There are currently no Enterprise Zones in the District and the Plan provides sufficient employment land and flexible policies to allow business to grow. ~~However, subject to government processes for Enterprise Zones, with the LEP the Council will continue to explore the opportunity for an Enterprise Zone at Graven Hill.~~

**B.22** The NPPF (2012) promotes the role of planning in achieving sustainable economic growth, in building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, and by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type, and in the right places, is available to allow growth and innovation.

**B.23** In 2006, the Council prepared an Employment Land Review (ELR). This study sought to assess the quantity, quality and viability of employment land across the district. It assessed employment land that was at that time currently available and assessed the need for further employment land within the District over the period of the Local Plan.

**B.24** The ELR concluded that the district had a stock of premises and land that provides a broad range of choice for investors. It recommended that some 89 hectares of (then) available employment land be protected to provide a continuity of supply of sites.

**B.25** The forecasting and scenario exercise in the updated ELR shows a net additional demand for between 52.6 and 87.2 hectares of employment land across Cherwell to 2026, with the medium growth scenario (seen as the most likely to occur) predicting a net additional demand of approximately 70 ha.

**B.26** A further analysis of the economy of the District and the changes it is experiencing was conducted in 2012, together with an update of the District Retail Study.

**B.27** A number of the strategic objectives of this Local Plan focus on supporting the local economy and fostering economic growth. These include objectives to:-

- Facilitate economic growth and a more diverse economy with an emphasis on attracting higher technology industries
- Support the diversification of Cherwell's rural economy

- Help disadvantaged areas, improve the quality of the built environment and make Cherwell more attractive to business by supporting regeneration
- Improve the local skills base.

**B.28** The support for business and economic development that the Local Plan has adopted is based on a strategic direction that gives focus to our efforts. We are looking to secure:

- Business-friendly and well-functioning towns
- An eco-innovation hub along the Oxford – Cambridge technology corridor
- Internationally connected and export driven economic growth
- Investing in people to grow skills and the local workforce
- Vibrant, creative and attractive market towns.
- Family housing
- Measures to reclaim commuters where possible
- Measures to increase labour productivity.

**B.29** In terms of the type of employment development the District wants to attract and we will concentrate on:

- Advanced manufacturing/high performance engineering
- The Green Economy
- Innovation, research and development
- Retailing
- Consumer services.

**B.30** We will support the logistics sector, recognising the jobs it provides and the good transport links that attracts this sector. However, land made available for these uses will be limited as our priority is to support investment that helps progressively change the structure of the local economy. The visual impact of the buildings is also a concern and high quality design will be expected. The significant amount of house building planned for the District will also lead to potential construction jobs (including in associated sectors) for local people.

**B.31** Significant employment growth at Bicester will be encouraged and we will:

- Encourage green technology and the knowledge based sectors, exploiting its position in the Oxford/Cambridge Corridor
- Exploit its transport connections
- Utilise the Ex-MoD land and facilitate the establishment of a modern logistics hub for the MoD
- Maintain and increase the motorsport industry and other performance engineering
- Create new opportunities for additional retail, leisure and cultural activities in an extended [tTown](#) [cCentre](#)
- Encourage retailers and visitors to Bicester Town Centre
- Continue to promote and expand Bicester Village where complementary to improving the [tTown](#) [cCentre](#)
- Encourage high tech companies
- Encourage higher value distribution companies
- Improve its utilities infrastructure
- Improve its sustainability and self sufficiency.

**B.32** There will be moderate employment growth at Banbury and we will:

- Build on its manufacturing base ensuring it encourages 'high end' manufacturing
- Exploit its transport connections
- Maintain and increase the motorsport industry and other performance engineering
- Maintain its sustainability and self sufficiency
- Expand the retail heart of the town
- Encourage the tourism industry around the canal and historic town centre
- Encourage green technology and the knowledge based sectors
- Encourage high tech companies
- Encourage higher value distribution companies
- Support its strong food production sector.

**B.33** There will be small scale employment growth at Kidlington and we will:

- Exploit its position in the Oxford/Cambridge Corridor
- Allow for appropriate growth plans at Begbroke [Science Park](#) and [at in the vicinity of Langford Lane Industrial Estate following a small scale Green Belt review](#)
- Connect with the Oxford economy
- Create new opportunities for additional retail, leisure and cultural activities, and environmental improvements, in an extended Village Centre
- Secure the growth potential from the presence of Oxford Airport.

**B.34** Employment growth in the rural areas will be limited and will involve:

- Farm diversification schemes
- Small scale, appropriate employment sites
- Sustainable growth in tourism [including and](#) recreation based tourism
- Improvement of existing employment sites and reuse of existing buildings and brownfield sites (reflecting their historic or cultural significance where appropriate)
- Support for working from home.

**B.35** More detail is provided in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'.

### **Policy SLE 1: Employment Development**

**B.36** The Council will, as a general principle, continue to protect existing employment land and buildings for employment (B class) uses. The Council will support existing businesses and will seek to ensure their operational activity is not compromised wherever possible. Inevitably, over the period of the Local Plan, businesses will relocate or close, leaving land and premises available for re-use or re-development.

**B.37** Where existing employment sites have good transport links for commercial vehicles and the use of these sites accords with the Local Plan we will encourage new development here to ensure the efficient use of land on these sites and in our towns, avoiding the need to use valuable countryside. This

will not always meet the needs of some companies so new sites will be required.

- B.38** We will create new employment sites for commerce and engineering/manufacturing to meet the needs of existing and new companies. We will also actively promote those sites for inward investment.
- B.39** To promote growth in total we have allocated an increase in the amount of employment land in the district. This is focused [more](#) at Bicester in order to match the growth in housing and make the town more sustainable.
- B.40** A flexible approach to employment development is set out in this plan with a number of our strategic sites classified as mixed use and many allowing for different types of employment. Employment development will be supported in a number of locations as long as it meets certain [Policy](#) criteria. In all cases very careful consideration should be given to locating employment and housing in close proximity and unacceptable adverse effects on the amenity of residential properties will not be permitted. Live/work units will be encouraged in locations such as Banbury Canalside.
- B.41** This Local Plan identifies strategic sites for employment use in Banbury and Bicester (see 'Policy Bicester 4: Bicester Business Park', 'Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway', 'Policy Bicester 11: North East Bicester Business Park', 'Policy Bicester 12: South East Bicester' in Section C.2 'Bicester'. The Local Plan also identifies two large 'committed' employment sites which are covered by Policy Bicester 4 Bicester Business Park and 'Policy Banbury 6: Employment Land West of M40 in Section C.3 Banbury) which have recent planning permissions. [The former RAF Upper Heyford site will also provide for employment uses.](#) The ~~se~~ sites [identified in the Employment Trajectory](#) covering ~~ing~~ 15534 hectares (gross). ~~Policies and support and~~ seek different types of employment units to ensure a range of employment uses are provided.
- B.42** To ensure employment is located in sustainable locations, to avoid problems such as traffic on rural roads and commuting, employment development in the rural areas will be limited. This accords with the Council's strategy for focusing new housing development at Banbury and Bicester, ensuring housing and employment are located in the same place.
- B.43** The new strategic employment sites set out in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places' have been allocated because they:
- Are, or will be accessible to the existing and proposed labour supply
  - Have good access, or can be made to have good access, by public transport
  - Have good access and transport links for commercial vehicles.
  - Have ~~no or~~ the least effect on the natural environment.
- B.44** The [new allocated](#) employment sites in Banbury and Bicester [along with existing employment sites](#) are considered to ensure a sufficient employment land supply.
- B.45** The Local Neighbourhoods DPD will consider where further, smaller, allocations need to be made in the urban areas to support the delivery of a

flexible supply of employment land. Where new small sites are proposed we will consider the most appropriate use class for the location. New employment uses will be supported where appropriate in residential areas, where they are proposed on existing employment sites. Employment development will be focused at the more sustainable villages. 'Policy for Villages 2: Distributing Growth Across the Rural Areas' identifies the villages considered to be the most sustainable to accommodate the new housing development. These villages are also considered to be the most appropriate for any further employment development.

- B.46** The Council will need to consider in more detail if sites are required and where to allocate any such sites for employment uses. These sites, if required, will be identified through work on the Local Neighbourhoods DPD. Opportunities for developing small 'hubs' of activity to meet local needs will be explored. Other policies in this Local Plan will help inform this decision, in particular 'Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement' and 'Policy ESD 16: The Character of the Built Environment'.

### **Policy SLE 1: Employment Development**

Employment development on new sites allocated in this Plan will be the type of employment development specified within each site policy in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'. Other types of employment development will be considered in conjunction with the preferred-use(s) set out if it makes the site viable.

In cases where planning permission is required, eExisting employment sites should be retained for employment use unless the following criteria are met:

- the applicant can demonstrate that an employment use should not be retained, including showing the site has been marketed.
- the applicant can demonstrate that there are valid reasons why the use of a site for the existing or another employment use is not economically viable.
- the applicant can demonstrate that there are other planning objectives that would outweigh the value of retaining the site in an employment use; and
- ~~where~~ the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal would not have the effect of limiting the level of provision and quality of land available for employment in accordance with policies in the Local Plan.
- 

Regard will be had to whether the location and nature of the present employment activity has an unacceptable adverse impact upon adjacent residential uses and if the site has been vacant in the long term.

Employment development proposals at Banbury and Bicester on non-allocated sites or on sites which are not shown as approved commitments will be supported if they meet the following criteria:

- Are within the built up limits of the settlement
- Make efficient use of existing and underused sites and premises, by increasing the intensity of use on accessible sites.
- Are, or will be, accessible to the existing and proposed labour supply

- Make efficient use of previously-developed land wherever possible
- Have good access, or can be made to have good access, by public transport and other sustainable modes.
- Are designed to a high quality, using sustainable construction, and are of an appropriate scale and character to the surroundings.
- Do not have an adverse effect on surrounding land uses, residents and the historic and natural environment.

New small scale employment proposals within rural areas will be supported if they meet the following criteria:

- They will be within or on the edge of the villages listed in 'Policy for Villages 2: Distributing Growth Across the Rural Areas'
- They will meet an identified local need, justifying the village/rural location for the proposal
- They will be designed to a very high quality using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and character to the village and its location
- They will be outside of the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated
- The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance).
- The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by private car.
- There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites

New dwellings will not be permitted ~~within~~ employment sites except where this is in accordance with specific site proposals set out in this Local Plan. Where any allocated employment sites in the district remain undeveloped in the long term and there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for that purpose other uses will be considered. Monitoring and review will be undertaken regularly.

## Policy SLE 2: Securing Dynamic Town Centres

- B.47** We are looking to ensure that Bicester and Banbury our Market Towns have a strengthened role in achieving economic growth, as a destination for visitors, and in serving their rural hinterlands.
- B.48** We are determined to secure dynamic town centres as the focus for commercial, retail and cultural activity at the heart of our district. The renewal and strengthening of the town centres is critical if the towns are to expand, with the creation of new retail, commercial and other employment generation (such as leisure) that reduces the overall level of out-commuting and maintains their role as the focal points of the district economy and their historic role as the heart of the community.

- B.49** We envisage town centres that are:
- Easy and pleasant to walk around
  - Attractive ~~Great~~ for shopping and going out
  - Easy to do business in
  - Have housing for all ages
  - Served by efficient public transport.
- B.50** The increasing rationalisation of public assets (libraries, civic centres & public access points), is an opportunity to ensure multiple use of public sector buildings and so strengthen their role as a draw to secure additional footfall into the town centres.
- B.51** In 2010 the Council commissioned an update to its 2006 PPS6 Retail Study. In 2012 a further study was commissioned which examines the capacity for comparison and convenience retail floorspace in the District. The study identified a need for comparison and convenience floorspace in the District to 2031. The town centres of both Banbury and Bicester will therefore need to grow. Sites have been identified in Banbury to accommodate growth. New retail will form part of proposals for Bolton Road, Canalside and Spiceball Development Area and in Bicester towards the improved Bicester Town Railway Station and on through to an expanded Bicester Village, which will be integrated more fully into the town ('Policy Banbury 7: Strengthening Banbury Town Centre' and 'Policy Bicester 5: Strengthening Bicester Town Centre').
- B.52** We will support businesses affected by the redevelopment of strategic development areas by assisting their relocation and ensuring alternative land is available locally elsewhere.
- B.53** New retail development will continue to be focused on our town centres ~~We do not support out of town office and retail development outside the two town centres and~~ all ~~All~~ new development ~~retail~~ will also be required to be built to high design and building standards.
- B.54** Town centre uses are considered to be the 'Main Town Centre Uses' defined by the NPPF ~~including~~; retail, leisure, offices, arts, tourism, cultural and community uses. We will ~~also~~ support the role that new restaurants and cafes have in the economy, of both towns in drawing people into the town centre. We will aim to attract ~~new professionals~~, new small businesses and to strengthen the draw of the town at the centre of its local hinterland. We will support uses which support the evening economy in appropriate locations.
- B.55** The urban centres within the district offer an important focus for shopping, commerce and the provision of leisure and other services to meet the needs of local people and visitors. The main centres in the district are the town centres of Banbury and Bicester and the village centre of Kidlington. There is also significant other shopping floorspace in the following locations:
- Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Centre
  - Banbury Cross Retail Park
  - Various other edge of centre & out-of-centre large stores including a number of major food stores
  - At various local centres within Banbury and Bicester.

**B.56** As well as serving the population of their immediate communities and more widely within Cherwell District, the retail centres serve a wider population and draw trade from towns such as Southam, Daventry, Towcester, Buckingham, Witney, Chipping Norton and Shipston-on-Stour.

**B.57** Each of the main urban centres within the district is unique and ~~today~~ faces different challenges and opportunities. More information, and specific policies for each of the centres, is included within Section C ~~'Policies for Cherwell's Places'~~ (Policies ~~y~~ Bicester 5, ~~:- Strengthening Bicester Town Centre~~, 'Policy Banbury 7 ~~and~~ ~~:- Strengthening Banbury Town Centre~~' and 'Policy Kidlington 2): ~~Strengthening Kidlington Village Centre~~'. A number of general comments can, however, be made:

- Both Banbury and Bicester town centres lie at the heart of towns which have grown significantly in recent years and, through the period of this Local Plan, will continue to do so.
- Banbury has seen significant retail growth ~~since the mid 1990s in the last decade~~ with the expansion of the Castle Quay Shopping Centre and this has helped to meet its immediate shopping needs. ~~There are~~ ~~Council intends to take the~~ opportunities ~~y~~ to expand its retail role.
- Bicester town centre has seen less growth. However, the re-development of the Bure Place car park ~~which~~ has begun to provide a substantial increase in shopping within the town centre (see ~~'Policy Bicester 6: Bure Place Town Centre Redevelopment Phase 2'~~). Away from the town centre, the Bicester Village Outlet Shopping Centre was opened in 1995 and extended in 2000 and 2008. ~~and~~ Bicester Avenue opened in 2007. Further developments in the town centre will need to ensure that the town remains accessible by all forms of transport for residents and visitors. Further growth of the Outlet Village will also ensure its role as a major national and international retail draw continues with all the employment gain this brings to the town. It must, however, be integrated into an improved town centre.
- Parts of both Banbury and Bicester town centres lie within conservation areas which protect their historic core. Maintaining the quality of these areas is important and any development in these areas will need to preserve and enhance the character of these areas and historic environment.
- Kidlington centre is considerably smaller than the two town centres, however it plays an important role in serving the local population. Additional shopping floorspace was opened in the centre in 2004 and there is capacity for further floorspace in the period up to 2031.

**B.58** The Council is committed to supporting its town centres and to maintain~~ing~~ and enhanc~~ing~~ their vitality and viability and their associated infrastructure to create vibrant retail environments~~s~~.

## Policy SLE 2: Securing Dynamic Town Centres

Retail and other 'Main Town Centre Uses' will be directed towards the town centres of Banbury and Bicester and the village centre of Kidlington in accordance with Policies Bicester 5, Banbury 7 and Kidlington 2. The Council will apply the sequential test as set out in the NPPF as follows:

- Proposals for retail and other Main Town Centre Uses not in these centres should be in 'edge of centre' locations.
- Only if suitable sites are not available in edge of centre locations should out of centre sites be considered.
- When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. An impact assessment will also be required in accordance with requirements in the NPPF.

The Council will consider if the proposals satisfy the sequential test and if they are likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the factors in the NPPF.

All proposals should:

- Reduce the need to travel by private car
- Be ~~and can be made to be~~, accessible and well served by a choice of means of transport, especially public transport, walking and cycling as well as by car

The Council will require an impact assessment if the proposal is over 2000 sq metres in Banbury, 1500sq metres in Bicester and 350 sq metres elsewhere.

Evidence in the Council's Retail Study will also be considered in determining applications.

Proposals should comply with Policy ESD16.

The Council will support the provision of new local centres containing a small number of shops of a limited size within the strategic housing allocations on strategic sites set out in this Local Plan.

## Policy SLE 3: Supporting Tourism Growth

**B.59** Given the growing role that tourism has to play in the local economy, developments in this sector will be supported, especially new attractions and new hotels at the two towns to reinforce their central role as places to visit and stay. We will support new tourism provision that can demonstrate direct benefit for the local 'visitor' economy and sustaining the rural economy.

**B.60** We will support an increase in the number and quality of hotel beds available in our towns to meet the needs of visitors and to end the current under provision. Valuable expenditure associated with overnight stays is potentially being lost, meaning that tourism has scope to play a significant wealth-creating role for the district.

**B.61** Tourism can help support local services and facilities, provide employment, promote regeneration and help preserve the natural and historic environment. It can include day visits by local people through to visits from overseas. Tourism is a vital component in the make-up of the national economy. Currently tourism is worth over £300 million in Cherwell District and makes a significant contribution towards the development of a sustainable local economy. 1.2 million people live within a 30 minute drive time of the district boundary.

**B.62** A tourism study was completed for the district in August 2008 in order to assist the Council in gaining a broad understanding of tourist activity and trends in Cherwell District and nearby. ~~This highlighted a number of issues and made recommendations.~~ It highlighted that tourism was not as great a part of the local economy as for some locations, but that initiatives to further encourage tourism could be considered. The following observations and issues were identified:

- The ~~D~~istrict will not attract the level of tourists who visit surrounding destinations but should make the most of its proximity to these destinations and its good transport links
- The 58km of Oxford Canal in Cherwell is a resource that is not used to its full potential and access should be improved to promote green and sustainable leisure opportunities – using the towpath for walking and cycling as well as the water for boating
- Business tourism is important to Cherwell's economy
- Cherwell's villages are attractive and distinctive and many have places of interest
- Banbury's historic town centre is somewhere to visit and also to stay if visiting popular destinations nearby such as Oxford or Stratford. It also acts as one of the main retail destinations in the area
- Bicester Village is the District's most visited tourist destination
- That ~~RAF Bicester~~Former RAF Bicester represents a potential new tourism development (see 'Policy Bicester 8: ~~RAF Bicester~~Former RAF Bicester')
- There are mixed trends in terms of the occupancy of tourist accommodation which is often below average but hotels are also turning away guests on other occasions
- A large new hotel was completed in Banbury, near the M40, in 2008. A new hotel has been built near Bicester and further such investment is planned. Demand for hotel and other overnight accommodation continues.

**B.63** Other policies in other sections of this Local Plan will contribute towards addressing these issues and encouraging sustainable tourism development; for example by:

- The regeneration of Banbury Canalside ('Policy Banbury 1: Banbury Canalside')

- The development of the Spiceball Development Area in Banbury ('Policy Banbury 9: Spiceball Development Area')
- The maintenance of village services and facilities
- The preservation and enhancement of the historic environment in both towns and villages.

**B.64** The Development Management DPD will also support tourism by including policies encouraging new accommodation and the allocation of smaller sites for tourism related development.

**B.65** There are other factors which are beyond the scope of the Local Plan which are important to drawing visitors to Cherwell's towns, villages and countryside. The Council, working with partners, already undertakes marketing, but to increase the number of visitors to Cherwell and to compete nationally, this will need to be maintained and enhanced.

### **Policy SLE 3: Supporting Tourism Growth**

**The Council will support proposals for new or improved tourist facilities in sustainable locations, where they accord with other policies in the plan to increase overnight stays and visitor numbers within the [District](#).**

### **Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections**

**B.66** The ~~location of the [District](#) [has is superb, with](#)~~ excellent road and rail links. New investment has substantially reduced the travel time from Banbury and Bicester to central London and Birmingham, with regular high quality train services via the Chiltern line. New investment is due in the Plan period to open up frequent rail links between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford reinforcing the role of Bicester. The M40 corridor provides links to the wider national motorway network and rail links help secure a central location for rail based freight movement.

**B.67** The Local Plan promotes a series of proposals to support a modal shift away from an over reliance on the car to less energy intensive forms of transport. The strategy proposes more sustainable locations for housing and employment growth, whilst recognising the importance of the car in a rural District. The strategy seeks to avoid increasing the function of the towns as dormitory centres by strengthening their employment base and transport connection to those sites.

**B.68** Over the life of the Local Plan public transport will continue to improve and become more demand responsive. The partners to the plan anticipate that support will be provided for the extension of real time timetable information across the network, across the whole District.

**B.69** Over the life of the plan there will be investment in the highway network as well as contributions from development to strengthen the road infrastructure of the plan area. This will include the SW Bicester Perimeter Road (Vendee Drive, already completed) and [new strategic highway improvements including, potentially, on peripheral routes in Bicester, a possible new relief road at South East and East Bicester,](#) improvements ~~to Windsor Street in~~

~~Banbury~~, the A34 south from Bicester and improvements to Motorway junction 9 and 10 on the M40 of which junction 9 is programmed for early delivery. There will also be improvements to the Windsor Street/Upper Cherwell Street Corridor. These improvements will collectively enable additional development capacity to be provided within the two towns. ~~The assessment of routes for the potential relief road referred to in the policy below would need to take into account~~ the environmental impact of the proposals including the impact on the purposes of the green buffer policy will need to be taken into account.

- B.70** Phase 1 Improvements to junction 9 of the M40 motorway are complete and Phase 2 is being progressed with the Department for Transport, Highways Agency and Oxfordshire County Council. The proposals to improve the rail link between Bicester and Oxford are also supported as it will promote more sustainable modes of transport and reduce congestion on the A34 and M40 trunk roads. These improvements will enable additional development capacity to be provided within the two towns.
- B.71** The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2030 provides the strategic framework for transport in the County. It aims to support the local economy and the growth and competitiveness of the county; to make it easier to get around the county and improve access to jobs and services for all by offering real choice; to reduce the impact of transport on the environment and help tackle climate change; and to promote healthy, safe and sustainable travel. It aims to tackle congestion, deliver accessibility, safer roads and improve the street environment. Our strategy for managing growth across the district is to locate development in sustainable locations and identify appropriate and deliverable measures to meet the transport needs of the district.
- B.72** Integrated Transport and Land Use Studies for Banbury, Bicester and the Cherwell Rural Areas were completed –on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council and have informed the Local Plan.– More recent Movement Strategies have been produced for Bicester and Banbury to support the preparation of through the Banbury and Bicester Masterplans s. process. Together the Movement Strategies inform the Local Plan and identify the transport infrastructure required to facilitate sustainable development in the district up to and beyond 2031. They focus on reducing dependency on the private motor car and reducing carbon emissions. The Movement Studies propose sustainable movement and access strategies.
- B.73** Infrastructure will need to be provided which allows for more walking, cycling, the use of public transport and integration between modes. Cycling and walking in the two towns is a means to secure an effective integration between the established areas and new areas of development. Consideration will be given to the implementation of walking and cycling improvements which connect to employment areas, the town centre and key services and that link urban routes with the rights of way network. strategic cycle lanes which provide safe routes to schools and town centre locations. We will also seek improved public access to the River Cherwell ~~v~~ valley in support of our policies to increase tourism and public well-being.
- B.74** New rail investment provides the opportunity to both strengthen the role of the two towns and their locations as places to live and work. The new East - West rail project will strengthen the location of Bicester through a vastly improved

connection and service links to Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford. Rail investment, including electrification, reinforces the critical role that rail has to play as the centrepiece of wider town centre regeneration in Banbury associated with Canalside redevelopment (~~Policy Banbury 1~~: [Banbury Canalside](#)); and in Bicester, associated with the town centre and through to Bicester Village from an upgraded Bicester Town Station. Due to the implementation of strategic development proposals in the Plan including East West Rail, the new station at Water Eaton and a growth in employment opportunities at Kidlington and Bicester the Council would expect demand for an increased role for Oxford airport. The Council will work with [London-Oxford Airport](#) operators, the County Council and the Civil Aviation authority and other stakeholders to consider any proposals.

- B.75** We will support expansions to the existing railway stations at Banbury and Bicester and in the villages to provide improved access to the wider rail network. Proposals should accord with other policies in the plan.
- B.76** At Bicester, the Graven Hill site ('Policy Bicester 2: Graven Hill') has the major potential to capitalise on the Network Rail Freight Route Utilisation Strategy (2007) for upgrading the national freight network. This will assist removing freight travelling north from Southampton on the A34, past Oxford and onto the M40 and A43, with consequential gains for the environment with reduced emissions.
- B.77** This development will confirm Bicester's location as a Rail Freight Interchange (RFI) and a distribution hub within the regional economy, which will help consolidate its economic growth.
- B.78** A skilled workforce is available at Bicester, one of the locational factors necessary for the RFI to operate successfully, as stressed in the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Policy Guide (DfT 2011). Recent studies from Cranfield and GVA Grimley show that logistics employment output is 30-40% greater than manufacturing. In addition, the range of jobs engaged in logistics has widened to include a higher proportion of elementary and process operatives skill levels employed compared with the manufacturing sector, and this proportion has been rising. Cranfield and GVA Grimley also revealed that wage levels are between 10 & 17% higher in the distribution sector than the manufacturing sector. At a time when UK manufacturing has declined, High Performance Engineering and Defence continue to grow, as does logistics. Bicester has a unique opportunity from the presence of all three sectors.

#### **Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections**

**The Council will support the implementation of the proposals in the Movement Strategies and the Local Transport Plan ~~to~~ to deliver key connections, to support modal shift and to support more sustainable locations for employment and housing growth.**

~~Following consideration of the results of 'areas of search' W~~we will support key transport proposals including:

- Transport Improvements at Banbury and Bicester in accordance with the County Council's Local Transport Plan and Movement Studies. Bicester South East relief road
- Projects associated with East-West rail ~~and Evergreen 3~~ including new stations at Bicester Town and Water Eaton
- Rail freight associated development at Graven Hill, Bicester.
- Improvements to M40 junctions

~~The progression, location and impacts of these proposals will also be determined and consulted upon through other planning policy documents and any potential planning applications.~~

#### **Policy SLE 5: High Speed Rail 2 - London to Birmingham**

**B.79** In December 2010 the Government announced a preferred route option for the proposed High Speed Rail link between London and Birmingham, known as High Speed 2 (HS2). The preferred route passes through Cherwell district, through Fringford ward to the north of Bicester and stands to have an impact on the environment and local communities in that area.

**B.80 (Para' Deleted)**

#### **Policy SLE 5: High Speed Rail 2 - London to Birmingham**

The design and construction of the High Speed 2 Rail Link must minimise adverse impacts on the environment, the local economy and local communities and maximise any benefits that arise from the proposal.

The implementation of HS2 will also be expected to:

- Deliver high quality design to protect communities and the environment from noise and visual intrusion
- Manage the construction to minimise the impact on communities and the environment
- Adopt sustainable procurement and construction methods
- Minimise adverse social and economic impacts, by maintaining accessibility and avoiding the severance of communities and agricultural holdings
- Ensure that community and other benefits are fully realised.

HS2 is a national infrastructure project. The line of the railway and associated works will be established and authorised by the way of primary legislation, requiring a hybrid Bill to be introduced to Parliament which, if passed, will become an Act of parliament by late 2013. Cherwell District Council will work with High Speed 2 Ltd, with the aim of influencing the design and construction of the route through Oxfordshire. Recognising that the decision to authorise the railway and associated works will sit with Parliament, the Council's

involvement will be focussed on seeking the best outcome for the environment, local communities and businesses affected by the proposed railway scheme.

The Council will work with HS2 Ltd to:

- Develop a route-wide planning regime to be included within the hybrid Bill, which supports the Council's aspirations for a well designed, sustainably constructed railway
- Support work necessary to ensure a robust environmental impact assessment is carried out to determine significant environmental effects of the railway in Cherwell District
- Support the development and implementation of a Code of Construction Practice to address the construction impacts of the scheme
- ~~Support HS2 Ltd to~~ Achieve its sustainability objectives