

Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy

Our District, Our Future

Cherwell local
strategic **Partnership**

Foreword

Cherwell's Sustainable Community Strategy, 'Our District, Our Future' sets out our vision for the area for the next twenty years. It has been developed by the Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership, through consultation with people in the community: residents in rural and urban settings, young and older people, carers, parents, forums representing local people and a range of organisations working with different groups across Cherwell.

Our District, Our Future is for everyone. Its content will affect us in our everyday lives, from work to leisure, from planning and development to protecting the environment and using our resources wisely, while providing quality services.

As a vision, it sets out the changes we want to see and has incorporated many views; we believe it reflects the real issues people in Cherwell experience.

What has been exciting throughout the development of Our District, Our Future is how many people have given time to get involved creating it. We want to maintain this impetus and continue the two way process of feeding back what we have achieved and hearing views about what it is like to live in Cherwell and ideas on how to make changes.

But vision is not enough, it must be accompanied by action and in this document and the accompanying Delivery Plan, we have set out how our ambitions will be achieved.

Our vision for Cherwell in 2030 is ambitious and aspirational and we recognise that along the way we will need to adapt to take account of new challenges. We believe that setting out a shared vision for the long term and working together to achieve it is essential to the future success of Cherwell.

A vision for Cherwell in 2030

A diverse economy with opportunities for all, vibrant communities connected by a sense of pride, place and purpose.

Cherwell in 2030

By 2030, Cherwell will be a district more prosperous than it is today. Those who live and work here will be happier, healthier and feel safer with high aspirations and expectations. People will feel they belong here and diversity will be celebrated. Everyone will share in a better quality of life.

In Cherwell older people will lead independent and healthy lives for longer with access to excellent services. Young people will have high personal aspirations, satisfied by a wide variety of local opportunities to achieve appropriate skills, qualifications and jobs.

The quality of our natural and built environment will be protected and enhanced. We will embrace appropriate environmental technologies and adapt our behaviour to meet the global challenge of climate change.

Our economy will be vibrant and diverse; local people will be skilled and able to access good jobs. Our economy will have grown to provide employment for our increasing population and reduce the need for our residents to travel outside the district for work.

We will have maintained the vitality of our urban centres as economic, cultural and social hubs, offering improved leisure and shopping facilities as well as a diverse and vibrant evening economy. Our villages will be “lived in” as well as “slept in”, helping to sustain a rural way of life with an economic base that is not reliant entirely on agriculture.

By 2030 we will have many more homes and we will pay particular attention to both their quality and affordability. We will ensure that careful investment in our infrastructure will increase the capacity of our communities and address current deficiencies in provision. In particular, we will focus on measures aimed at managing road congestion through encouraging less car use, increasing cycle paths and improving public transport.

The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership and people across the district are committed to working together towards achieving this vision of the future and, as we do, we will celebrate our achievements and successes along the way.

Introduction

What is a sustainable community and what is the strategy for?

Sustainable communities are vibrant and active. They meet the needs of us all, current and future residents, and those who visit, work or do business. They are the foundation for a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choices for everyone. Sustainable communities make effective use of resources, enhancing both the natural and built environment, provide accessible services, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity.

This strategy sets out our overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Cherwell until 2030, in a way that tells the 'story of the place' – a distinctive vision for the area, backed by clear evidence and analysis. All other strategies, and the plans of organisations across Cherwell delivering them, will reflect the long term aspirations contained here.

Because this strategy was developed in the turbulent economic times of 2009, we have adopted a 5 year focus for our objectives and priorities. These are not intended to last us until 2030, circumstances will change and progress will be made and it is vital the aims we have identified during 2009 are regularly refreshed and revisited to make sure they still work for us.

This strategy has a delivery plan and links into the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement for Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire 2030). Both will be used to drive delivery and assess our progress towards our ultimate goals for Cherwell.

The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership for Cherwell is made up of representatives from Cherwell's public, voluntary and private sectors. As a partnership we believe that by working together we are more effective. We are responsible for developing the community strategy for the district and ensuring the objectives, priorities and actions it contains are delivered.

ADD Logos and LSP diagram

How did we develop this strategy?

We have worked hard to speak to as many people as possible, local councillors, community and voluntary groups, faith leaders, local business representatives, head teachers, students, and many others to develop the vision, ambitions and objectives within this strategy. We have asked about people's aspirations and ambitions for the area and their views on what we can all do to bring them about.

We have looked at the statistical evidence available, both for current issues and the challenges we face in the future. We have thought about how we fit with our neighbouring counties and districts and considered regional strategies, the Oxfordshire county wide vision and strategy for 2030 and our district's own Local Development Framework and its supporting evidence base.

This strategy reflects what we have heard through our consultation and builds upon the successes of the Cherwell Community Plan 2006-2011. It's a shared vision and it's up to all of us to work together to make it a reality.

Our pledge to you

The purpose of this document is to focus on where we face challenges. But we must always remember that Cherwell is a great place to live, work and visit; a thriving area with a diverse population and beautiful countryside. We intend, through the use of this strategy, to make sure it stays that way. We want to bring about the change and development that we need by working together across four closely linked themes, our community, the local economy, local infrastructure and the environment and effective leadership accountability and delivery.

What's in this strategy?

Our District, Our Future sets out an aspirational vision for the Cherwell in the future. The content is based upon statistical evidence, regional and county wide strategies already in place and the opinions and views of residents. There is much to do and the priorities identified here are reflected within a delivery plan which is to be worked on by the Local Strategic Partnership in the short, medium and long term.

Seeing into the future is always challenging, but, what we can do is to take the best evidence we currently have, listen carefully to the sort of place and lives that local people want, and tailor our aspirations accordingly. This process has helped us understand what we wish to protect about our area now, what we want to change and what new ideas we want to embrace in so we can hand on a thriving district to future generations.

The vision describes our shared aspirations for the future of Cherwell based on what we have heard through consultation and the key challenges that we face.

Cherwell today explains the context in which we live and work and describes the features and character of the district.

Future challenges covers what we think are the most important cross-cutting issues that run throughout the whole strategy, the challenges we feel are important to bear in mind as we tackle our objectives.

Our ambitions for the future: each theme has its own section which reflects our opportunities and challenges and contains a description of our objectives and priorities.

1. Opportunities for all – our communities in 2030
2. Diverse and resilient – our economy in 2030
3. Connected and protected – our infrastructure and environment in 2030
4. Resourceful and receptive – community leadership in 2030

Delivering this strategy

Throughout the development of this strategy there has been a great deal of emphasis from people wanting to know how this strategy will achieve its ambitious goals. The strategy will be delivered by the Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the area. Members of the LSP take responsibility for different objectives within the strategy and have named roles in line with their expertise and responsibility. Our District, Our Future aligns strongly with the wider sustainable community strategy for the whole of Oxfordshire.

The consultation has also brought out a desire in people to continue to be consulted and play a part in the delivery of Our District, Our Future. Developing an ongoing and two way process to listen and learn will mean that future reviews of the strategy will continue to reflect local concerns.

To achieve this at least one annual event a year will be open to the public to present progress on the plan and information will be made available in simple and accessible formats in addition to this outlining what has been achieved and what still needs to be done.

Further analysis of the challenges and sources for all the data we have used in this strategy can be found in the Digging Deeper analysis document which accompanies this strategy. An overview of our approach to consultation and responses we have received can be found in the accompanying Consultation Review. The Delivery Plan outlines our approach to implementing the strategy and includes the actions and targets we will adopt to meet our objectives.

Cherwell today

Our location

Cherwell covers an area of 590 square kilometres (228 square miles) in north Oxfordshire. Named after the River Cherwell which flows through it, the district is located between London and Birmingham, at the most northern point of the South East region, where it meets the West Midlands and East Midlands. The M40 passes through Cherwell and there are good rail connections to London and Birmingham.

138,500 people live in Cherwell, over 60% of the population live in the principal centres of Banbury (approx 43,800), Bicester (approx 32,000) and Kidlington (approx 13,100); the rest in more than 70 smaller settlements of between 50 and 3500 people. 85% of the district is farmland and 14% lies within the Oxford Green Belt, contributing to making Cherwell the 12th least densely populated district in the South East. But the district also has a rich built heritage, with approximately 3,000 listed buildings (8.6% of the South East's total) and 58 conservation areas.

Our changing population

Between 1991 and 2001 Cherwell's population increased by almost 12% and by a further 4.5% since 2001. Growth predictions of a further 8% by 2016 and a cumulative 15.6% by 2026 are significantly higher than regional and national rates. Most of the recent growth has been in Banbury and Bicester and this will continue. Bicester's population is projected to grow by 13.8% between 2001 and 2016. Our challenge is to ensure that the public, community and private sectors work together to make certain that the levels of housing growth, including affordable housing required across the district, can be accommodated with appropriate infrastructure while protecting and enhancing the character of our urban centres, villages and landscapes.

Our population is changing. The 2001 Census showed that 3.9% of the district's population was of non-white ethnic origin. These low numbers were generally widely dispersed, apart from higher concentrations in some Banbury Wards (such as Banbury Grimsbury where 10.9% was of black or minority ethnic origin). 2006 estimates indicate that the non-white population has grown to 5.9% overall. In 2001, 7.5% of the population considered themselves to belong to a group other than white British. By 2006 this had grown to 10.7%. Our research and experience demonstrates that this growth has come and continues to come from migrant workers from Polish and other Eastern European communities.

Cherwell now has the highest proportion of 0-15 year olds in Oxfordshire and there is strong demand from parents and their children for affordable activities for young people. By 2031 the population is forecast to age dramatically, with numbers in each of the over 65s, over 75s, and over 85s bands increasing by at least 23 percentage points above national rates, and by more than 47

percentage points for over 85s. We have to continue anticipating the future services required by our older population, building on our strong track record of ensuring the needs of older residents are met.

Economy, skills and aspirations

In 1995 manufacturing jobs accounted for 28.9% of employment in the district. By 2006 they accounted for 14.1% with this shift matched by a growth in the service and tourism sectors, particularly in distribution, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communications. Our historically high employment rates have been maintained through this change, although the employment mix means that earnings from Cherwell workplaces are 3.9% below the national average.

Residents' earnings, however, are just above the national average. Bicester, for example, has a particularly high proportion of residents employed in higher level positions. 65% of Bicester's residents leave the town to work. We must continue the push to attract more high-tech, knowledge-based industries in order to provide more local, attractive employment opportunities to these residents. At the same time we need to raise aspirations and the demand for skills in Banbury where there is an above average concentration of people employed in low-skilled and lower paid occupations. But if new opportunities are to be accessible to our own young people, the performance of school pupils at GCSE needs to be brought at least in line with county and national averages.

Our rural areas have a relatively low business density compared with the regional rural average, although levels of home-based working are higher in Cherwell than in the rest of Oxfordshire and in the South East. Although farming employment has declined almost 20% since 1990, farming retains its vital role in maintaining the environment and defining our district.

Community challenges

Cherwell is ranked as the 276th least deprived of 354 Local Authority areas by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, this masks a number of issues of deprivation and disadvantage. Parts of Banbury Ruscote ward are in the 20% most deprived areas nationally and 11 rural wards feature in the 20% most deprived for barriers to housing and services.

We have to focus on addressing the needs of the disadvantaged whether they are, for example, the rurally isolated, older people and those with disabilities, people from black or minority ethnic communities or those in particular localities.

Housing is a pressing issue in Cherwell. In 2004 Cherwell had an annual shortfall of 686 affordable homes, the highest in Oxfordshire, outside Oxford. While this has been reduced to 529, increasing the numbers of affordable homes in both urban and rural areas remains one of the population's and District Council's top priorities. The 2007 median house price to income ratio

is 8.9, up from 7.7 in 2005, above both South East and English averages, only reinforcing the focus needed on this. The development of Heyford Park, a former American airbase into an area of temporary housing accommodating 900 people has led to a community quite isolated in terms of services and resources and a community in waiting as development decisions have been changed and delayed. Cherwell District Council supports the development of this area and we aim to resolve the issues for these residents.

Cherwell is a safe place to live. Overall crime levels dropped by 13.2% between 2003/04 and 2007/08 (a real reduction of 794 reported crimes), compared with a 10.9% reduction across Thames Valley. Most of the crime recorded in Cherwell is committed in the urban areas. But some residents are concerned about the visibility of police officers and response rates in our rural areas and think that these are contributing to lower reporting levels and therefore lower resources. In 2006 residents across the district felt less safe than those in any other Oxfordshire district in terms of being alone and walking alone during the day or at night. Anti-social behaviour is a key concern of residents. Addressing residents' perception of crime and delivering lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are priorities.

Cherwell compares well with the rest of the country on most health indicators and the health of children and young people overall is better than the national average. But there are health inequalities by location, gender and ethnicity. For example, Cherwell has a high and rising rate of teenage conception with four out of six Banbury Wards in the highest 20% in England in 2005. We must work to eliminate these inequalities, delivering affordable recreational opportunities to help residents of all ages stay healthy, and securing the long-term future of Banbury's Horton District General Hospital and, with it, accessible healthcare services for people everywhere in the district.

Currently, people identify with the urban or rural settlements where they live but not strongly with Cherwell as a district. Some residents have strong relationships with other areas outside our area, for example those who commute to other towns for work, shopping or to access services such as health services in Oxford. Because of its geographical position on the northern most edge of the district, county and region, Banbury recognises the concept 'Banburyshire' and the inter-dependence of cross boundary services. Kidlington is keen to retain its village identity and, in common with Bicester, wants to improve its image and demonstrate less reliance on Oxford.

Environment and infrastructure

Cherwell residents travel further to work than people in the rest of the South East and nationally. Car ownership overall is high and residents in our rural areas are particularly dependent on their cars. Our dependence on our cars has produced a number of congestion hotspots in the district, not least at junction 9 of the M40, on the A34, in the centres of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington at times and in the villages with schools. Some residents are keen to push for a second M40 junction to service Banbury and a bypass/ring road for the town. Significant planned improvements to the railway infrastructure

will better connect Bicester to Oxford and London. Such improvements will bring enormous benefits but will need to be complemented by much work to change attitudes to public transport and our willingness to walk more and cycle more.

High levels of out-commuting contribute to environmental issues and these are another reason for trying to influence the employment and skills mix in the district. Per capita carbon dioxide emissions in Cherwell in 2006 were significantly higher than regional and national levels, although domestic emissions were the lowest in Oxfordshire. Many of our consultations brought out ideas around increasing cycle paths, reducing car use and increasing homeworking to reduce commuting levels. Cherwell's residents are committed to recycling with excellent rates and we need to continue to focus on minimising waste.

The UK climate projections (2009), based on Met Office science, illustrate the extent of changes we may face if we don't cut carbon emissions. For example, in 2050 the South East could face an increase in average summer temperatures of approximately 3.1 degrees. Without decisive action there will be an increase in water shortages, heat stress and floods. All of these could have a significant impact on people's health and quality of life, the economy and the natural environment.

Cherwell into the future

This overview provides a sense of Cherwell as a place and sets the scene for the future challenges we are facing and the steps we need to take to retain our many strengths and make the best of the opportunities we have.

This evidence based strategy has used a wide range of information sources to inform the development of objectives and priorities. This evidence has included official statistics (such as those available from the Office of National Statistics) and more locally based sources (such as community surveys undertaken for Parish Plans).

A summary of the key statistics from the evidence base has been included within the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Digging Deeper document. The figures and indicators will change over the time period covered and new trends or issues may emerge. The Local Strategic Partnership are committed to producing an evidence base update and undertaking review of the Sustainable Community Strategy to reflect new evidence that becomes available on an annual basis.

Future challenges

In Cherwell we have good homes, a wide range of jobs, enjoy beautiful countryside and we have a sense of pride and satisfaction with where we live. Nonetheless, we face some challenges. These include adapting to the impact of climate change, a changing and growing population with a higher proportion of older people, fewer young people and significant growth in housing required as well as the need to include and welcome everyone, regardless of their needs.

In the coming years there will be political and policy changes along the way, we'll need to develop and deliver new services and there can never be enough resources to do everything we want.

We don't know exactly what will happen economically, socially or environmentally and the challenges will change over time, but this strategy will help equip us to cope, whatever happens. The themes in this section are inter-related and indicate where we need to focus our attention and plan for what is to come.

Managing growth

These are changing times for our district, of growth and expansion. We need to ensure new development is a foundation for our future prosperity and dynamism. New housing development will enable us to build more successful and thriving towns, revitalise and bring resources into our villages which need new families and employees, new entrepreneurs and volunteers to continue to evolve over time.

This raises significant challenges to our communities in accompanying this growth with a matching rate of investment in infrastructure, public and community services, growing our economy to provide jobs, ensuring our centres are equipped to support this increased community and encouraging residents to identify with their neighbourhoods and take part in community life

"We need infrastructure before expansion for it all to make sense" Resident.

It is our job to be sure that we take a strategic and holistic view of where and how we manage growth. The Local Development Framework sets the direction and it is vital to keep a clear eye on how our district works, building on existing resources and introducing new ones where needed. This represents a great opportunity to plan our built environment in order to make significant contributions to all our key challenges, many of which are affected by the way our infrastructure and housing works.

Managing resources and creating prosperity

Managing resources is a key challenge for us and we will make sure that we utilise what is available across the partnership to maximum effect. The money available to support change and meet challenges is going to be affected by the economic downturn; the public sector will have less to spend. We are realistic about the fact that we will not have the resources to do everything immediately.

We have some gaps in facilities, and we must now look at how we can address this in a climate of scarce public and private sector investment; ensuring the growth in housing is accompanied by investment from both the private sector through planning contributions and the public sector in their investment programmes. The prosperity of the district is not the sole responsibility of the public sector and our overall wealth and development will be immensely affected by our local economy and the wealth this generates within communities. This is why our economy is a key theme in this strategy, helping to bring about the prosperity and wealth we need locally to help fund our plans and ambitions.

Tough decisions will need to be made between sometimes conflicting priorities. It is our responsibility to balance these tensions and a key principle here is to ensure that resources follow need, balancing the focus on deprived areas and the need for services across the district. More than ever we will need to harness the abilities of the private, voluntary and public sector to deliver what is needed.

One opportunity to help manage resources effectively is through supporting increased levels of volunteering; harnessing the skills of people willing to give their time to support others. We will work with the voluntary sector to improve the support we give to voluntary and community groups and we will work with the voluntary sector help improve the services we deliver.

Adapting to an ageing population

Like many other areas of the country, our older population is predicted to double between 2009 and 2031, with particular growth of the 85's and over. It is vital that we develop flexible and accessible services that meet our future needs and support independent living for as long as necessary.

There is a need for adequate care services, both for people still living independently who want to lead active lives and for those for whom independent living is no longer possible. This is magnified in rural areas where access to services, particularly health care, and other activities is limited.

Caring is a hugely expensive activity in terms of time and money. Often the carer needs to give up work to provide care and so travel and other everyday costs become unaffordable; information about support and benefits needs to

be available. We want to provide more support to carers, acknowledge that the range of people caring can be young people, young parents and people who are quite elderly themselves and make provision for the increased caring that an aging population will bring.

Housing is also problematic for some older people who can no longer maintain their homes and need to live in smaller one-level housing with facilities for outside space and room to accommodate visiting families. There is shortage of small properties available, an issue which affects younger and older people alike and around Bicester there is also a specific issue around people retiring from the military and needing to resettle.

Our challenge is to address isolation and fear of crime, ensure that accommodation is appropriate to need, that a range of activities engage older people in the community and that they are well cared for in a range of settings. This older population offers Cherwell a great opportunity to fully harness the skills, knowledge and experience that is gained through maturity and many older people provide vital community activities through volunteering that would simply not exist without them. Their skills, time and experience are valuable and important. As one participant in a workshop said:

“I’m old now but you will become old, it’s your future we’re discussing, not mine”. Resident.

Empowering the next generation

Our younger people are our future, moving towards being active, engaged citizens and playing a full role in shaping and maintaining our communities. It is vital that we keep them safe, encourage them to take their place in democratic processes, and that they have a chance to express their opinions and help us to understand contemporary life now and in the future. They are a great resource and we are determined to offer them the best chances they can have to build fulfilling and rewarding lives.

There is concern that some young people in Cherwell seem to lack aspiration beyond basic jobs or their immediate neighbourhoods. One cause of this may be the level of academic success young people are achieving, but it also about facilities and spaces for young people, parenting influences and not having enough awareness of what is on offer. There is a strong desire to improve their achievements and prospects so that they too have the opportunity to secure employment and take part in the prosperous economy around them. We are aware that not all young people are being equipped with the skills they need to get work and have a career. A common refrain from young people is about a lack of facilities and activities. Some young people are affected by rural inaccessibility and are unable to use facilities which are usually held in the three urban areas. There are sometimes very simple solutions on offer. As one young person said:

“There are only two activities in my village during the week and they are on the same night so I can’t do both!” Resident.

Addressing these issues requires a real commitment to include and listen to young people. We need to engage young people in their communities, provide support to gain skills, raise aspirations and ensure this has a positive impact on the quality of life for everyone.

Reducing inequality and addressing deprivation

Cherwell is a prosperous area with a history of high employment and high standards of living, but it has been affected by the 2009 economic downturn leading to empty shops in high streets and an increase in unemployment. Despite its prosperity, there are parts of Banbury that fall into the category of high deprivation. This has resulted, in some cases, in poor academic achievement, low skills and a higher rate of teenage pregnancy than elsewhere. Parts of Kidlington and Bicester also experience deprivation in the form of poor housing, low income and lack of access to good schools, although this may not be in concentrated enough measure to fall into a recognisable deprivation category.

In rural areas, some people experience isolation from services and a lack of affordable and local services exacerbated by poor transport links to some villages. For people with disabilities this lack of transport has a significant impact on their ability to access services. We need to find ways to identify and address hidden inequality. Hardship is especially difficult to identify in rural areas, where our traditional sources of evidence fail to provide us with detailed information to identify those who are in need of extra support and assistance.

Our projected growth over the coming years means existing communities evolving and some altogether new ones emerging. Diverse communities add to cultural vibrancy and a mix of approaches leads to a better understanding of different ways of life. People from minority ethnic groups in the area include a significant Kashmiri community and established Chinese and Asian communities. More recently there has been an incoming Eastern European community, particularly from Poland. Reports from these groups include a need for improving access to health and education services for their families. We want to make sure that people in these groups have access to all the services they need and that they are not marginalised by virtue of their difference. We will continue to welcome those who choose to make Cherwell their home, including them in our towns, villages and way of life and embrace the contribution they make to our district.

Safe, strong and vibrant communities

Many of the communities in Cherwell are vibrant, welcoming, cohesive and active. We want to ensure that this is maintained and strengthened and that we encourage activity and participation in local communities.

We recognise that not all groups within our community feel able to participate and are keen to ensure that younger people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and faith groups, those in communities where there are currently fewer opportunities to get involved and people who have access problems or who are new to the district are able to participate. We want to support volunteers and reduce the barriers to voluntary work as we recognise the vital role the voluntary sector plays in building strong communities.

Whilst crime is low in the area, many people fear crime and anti-social behaviour and a disproportionate number of people do not feel safe in their everyday lives. Older people do not always feel it is safe for them to go into towns after dark. The role of the police and visible policing are vital in maintaining a sense of safety as is the swift and appropriate reaction to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Adapting to climate change

In the South East of England by the 2050s the average summer temperature could be around 3.1C warmer, rainfall could decrease by 40% and winter rainfall could increase by 20% (UK climate projections 2009). We face dramatic changes as we enter an era when fossil fuels are more expensive and less available. It is our responsibility to take a robust approach and adapt to these climate and environmental changes as they occur. We must plan effectively now so we can meet the challenge. As individuals, businesses or organisations, we all need to find new ways to lead sustainable lifestyles reducing our carbon emissions, energy and water use.

Traffic volumes and limited public transport across the area are two of the biggest challenges and we have considerable commuting within and to and from the district and heavy traffic at 'hotspots'. We need to find ways to reduce car use and press for changes to public transport routes in line with public need. There is significant housing growth planned for our area and this has implications for managing flood risks, making sure our buildings are as close to carbon-neutral as possible and providing an effective and responsive infrastructure. Protecting the countryside and encouraging biodiversity is a key priority and vital in terms of our impact on climate change.

Our ambitions for the future

To help us meet our vision for Cherwell in 2030 we have four ambitions and under each of these we identify objectives and priorities for action.

1. Opportunities for all – our communities in 2030
2. Diverse and resilient – our economy in 2030
3. Connected and protected – our infrastructure and environment in 2030
4. Resourceful and receptive – community leadership in 2030

1. Opportunities for all – our communities in 2030

We aim to build strong and thriving communities so that everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, feels safe in their homes and welcome in their neighbourhoods. Cherwell wants to be a place where older people are able to live independently and where younger generations have the skills and opportunities to build a future. We hope our communities will value the contribution made by a wide variety of voluntary organisations and the shared values of our faith groups. Disadvantaged families and residents will be supported to help themselves benefit from the new housing, educational and economic opportunities available to them. A consistently innovative and varied range of cultural events will build a sense of place and a unique identity for the district.

Cherwell does not hit national headlines for poor education, housing, or significant socio-economic problems. The communities within Cherwell are generally harmonious and healthy. People like where they live, have a strong allegiance to their town or village and strong feelings about what does and doesn't work. Communities are often very local, at a neighbourhood or estate level, and not necessarily attached to Cherwell as a whole. Some places have already experienced rapid population growth and development, which has diluted local identity and a sense of belonging. The arts, culture and creative industries of the area make a vibrant contribution to our communities. They provide recreation, companionship and shared interests within groups and societies and are often a focus for community activity.

“A successful community is comfortable, green, caring, confident, clean, sharing and learning.” Resident

We see communities as people brought together by common interests, culture, activities and geography, including and focusing on those who do not benefit as much as they could from the area. Those which may need extra support in Cherwell include 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. Traditional rural villages are experiencing changes: an erosion of the younger population, local employment and services. Residents

are passionate about keeping their villages thriving and inclusive. It is the areas which impact on our quality of life that are the focus of this section. Specifically sense of community spirit, educational achievement and aspirations, health, well-being, housing and a sense of belonging. We want to ensure a high level of community capacity and engagement, supporting communities to find their own solutions.

Housing is a big concern for everyone. There is a shortage of social housing, a shortage of affordable housing generally and uncertainty within communities about the impact of housing growth upon their area and how they can influence this. However, it must be remembered that Cherwell also has a breathtaking array of listed buildings and a generally high quality built environment, villages and towns. We have the Local Development Framework to structure our approach to tackling our challenges and most parishes have completed parish plans or are working on them to help inform decisions.

There are issues which need our attention if they are not to become longer term problems. For example, secondary education is of concern in the area. Older people, young people and young families can experience isolation, especially in rural parts of Cherwell; a significant proportion of the area.

Work with the under fives is as important as working with teenagers and young adults to ensure that families are supported and there are activities, pursuits and opportunities to learn for young people of all ages. Some areas suffer from anti-social behaviour, especially in our town centres and at night, which impacts on those using these centres, affecting their sense of safety. This may hinder our towns' development as cultural hubs in the longer term. Giving young people plenty to do, increased facilities and encouraging greater engagement has been shown to decrease the incidence of such behaviour. We are committed to looking at ways of doing this that involve young people

Did you know?

- Health indicators show that the health of residents in the area is better than in Oxfordshire or England, life expectancy is above average and investment is being made in new health facilities
- Older people will make up an increasingly large percentage of the population, with projections for the number of over 65's to increase by over 21% and the over 85's by over 20% between 2006 - 2016.
- Average net household income is £24,336 and entry level property costs £118,000, leading to an increasing gap between what can be afforded and what is available
- Fear of crime is the highest in the county although crime levels are comparatively low
- Generally, Cherwell residents are slightly better qualified than the national average. Banbury has the poorest skills and education statistics of any of the three main towns in Cherwell, with a third of residents having no qualifications and 28% of the population in Kidlington have no qualifications
- Parts of the Banbury Ruscote ward are in the 20% most deprived areas nationally and pockets of Kidlington and Bicester experience deprivation and poverty
- Rural isolation is a key feature of the area affecting older, younger and poorer people more profoundly. 11 rural wards fall into the 20% most deprived nationally in terms of access to housing and services

Our community objectives for the next five years

Whilst overall the area enjoys a relatively high quality of life, good employment levels and relatively high standards of living, there are underlying issues around deprivation, social exclusion and disaffection emerging in some areas. In the long term, demographic shifts in population growth and age will present some priority areas to focus on. We are already working together to build stronger and safer communities and will continue to do so, ensuring that the vital role of voluntary and community groups is acknowledged and valued for the contribution it makes.

We will:

- 1. Provide support for older people to ensure they can live independently for as long as possible and appropriate facilities and care are delivered.**
 - Support older people to remain healthy and live independently, through multi-agency working and providing relevant information and activities.
 - Support the role of volunteers, the community, churches and other faiths in sustaining the wellbeing of the district and in delivering local activities and services.
 - Initiate and support housing initiatives and work with agencies providing care to ensure older people are aware of what is available to them, receive it and care is adequately supported.

- 2. Focus activity on tackling deprivation in both urban and rural Cherwell to ensure that we do not develop further into the “haves” and “have nots” and to create cohesive neighbourhoods where all people receive their fair share, get on well together, and have a real sense of belonging.**
 - Ensure that the expansion of housing and provision of housing supports community cohesion through effective design and investment, providing a range of housing options, including affordable housing.
 - Improve access to services for vulnerable or harder to reach communities to address inequalities in education, access to services and to support integration.
 - Work to develop forums with the voluntary and faith sectors to ensure that we are able to hear representative views about experiences of living in the area and act to support equality.

- 3. Offer high quality education, support and opportunities to our young people and families to achieve suitable and appropriate qualifications to enable them to realise their ambitions.**
 - Increase opportunities to access lifelong learning and re-training and support a multi-agency approach to providing services and information to young people.

- Improve educational attainment and develop better access to post-16 qualifications.
 - Target support for young people and families to engage them in appropriate activities and increase their aspirations and a reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- 4. Reduce the number of people who fear crime and feel unsafe in their area, tackling incidences of anti-social behaviour and building confidence in the police and local authority.**
- Work with the police and local communities to build a sense of strong community, increased visible policing across the district and increase confidence in the police.
 - Reduce fear of crime and address the causes of and perception of anti-social behaviour.
 - Work with the police and residents to identify criminal activity and reduce levels of crime.
- 5. Maintain and develop health services, including preventive health programmes, that directly address health inequality and which enable residents to access services and information in order to lead healthy lives.**
- Ensure that healthcare is accessible to people, particularly people without transport or people who have difficulty getting around.
 - Undertake a health inequalities programme that narrows the gap in life expectancy across the district.
 - Improve levels of health, and well being in areas where there are identified health issues.
 - Recognise the increased levels of health resources needed for issues around mental health, linked to dementia and the growing population through round table discussions about this with health professionals, care organisations and support initiatives which address this need.

Local focus

In addition to district wide priorities we recognise that different areas across the district will have their own issues and we will identify specific actions to address them.

Banbury

- Address and reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour and improve school attendance and achievement.
- Improve support for new communities to access services and have their needs met.

Bicester

- Improve leisure, recreation and community facilities.

- Increase the sense of pride and belonging to Bicester to create more community cohesion.

Kidlington

- Increase consultation with and facilities for young people.
- Ensure sufficient access to services for a village of this size.

Rural Areas

- Design and deliver appropriate services to the right people on an outreach basis or at least being sure that there is adequate transport to centres of support.
- Define the role of the police in rural low-crime areas and what it can reasonably be expected to deliver.
- Provide a range of and more affordable housing and include the villages in the planning process.
- Increased support for youth, senior and community activities in rural locations.
- Explore the options for creative use of community buildings

2. Diverse and resilient – our economy in 2030

We aim to develop a diverse and resilient industry base and an appropriately skilled workforce that can adapt to the challenges of climate change, supported by a well planned and effective infrastructure of housing, transport, leisure and services. We need appropriate growth in housing development to meet the needs of the population. We need to link this to supporting the population to gain the skills and flexibility to access local jobs and actively attract new businesses into the area which, in turn, encourages our younger population to stay or return here. A resurgence in localism, support for local products and businesses, and appropriate evolution of villages will strengthen our farming and rural areas.

Our economic ambition takes into account the jobs we have now and the jobs we would like to have in the future, the skills of our workforce and the wealth of enterprise and innovation on our doorstep. A vibrant and diverse economic infrastructure is the bedrock on which we can build a sustainable future.

Cherwell has long been a prosperous district with very low unemployment, a wide variety of successful businesses and thriving towns and villages. However, as this strategy has been developed, the national and global economy has seen its worst downturn for 50 years and this has forced us all to evaluate how comfortable we are and how potentially vulnerable we might become.

“The ‘credit crunch’ has forced us all to take a long look at what we want for our district’s economy and has given us a chance to pause and plan now for the future.” Consultee

We recognise that much of our economic stability and growth comes from small and medium sized businesses and it is these entrepreneurial companies which provide most employment and growth. These businesses and our rural enterprises need support as well as those which are at the cutting edge of innovation and technology or the larger employers who provide great opportunities locally. We need to ensure that our population has the skills to meet the needs of these companies and that our economic infrastructure can accommodate them. New businesses need to be actively attracted to the area. Retail is an important business sector, especially our town centres, Bicester Village, and the Bicester Avenue retail park, a creator of local jobs and a significant tourist draw.

Everyone in our community should have the opportunity to earn a good living and have a job that they enjoy, enabling them to provide for themselves and their families and to reap the benefits that a stable income can provide. To achieve this we must ensure that our infrastructure develops to support the economy and attract the right businesses to the area.

There is a national and local trend towards locally produced food, goods and services and the protection of our environment, which represents an

opportunity to shape our own district. We are lucky to have some excellent food producers and rural enterprises perfectly positioned to take advantage of the growing demand and others ready to take up the environmental challenges. Our rural enterprises have already diversified into a wide range of industries and tourism is a strong contributor to our local economy.

Finally, as the key challenges section of this strategy has outlined, we are facing an ageing population and a rapidly growing one. We need to be secure in the knowledge that there are opportunities to harness the skills and experience of our older residents and that we are providing great chances for the younger ones.

Together, we will work towards an innovative and resilient economy that offers a variety of opportunities, celebrates the success of our enterprises, supports our workforce and enables Cherwell residents to thrive in our towns, villages and countryside.

Did you know?

- There are approximately 68,000 jobs (80% in service industries) in 5,800 VAT registered businesses in Cherwell with a healthy surplus of new VAT registrations, an illustration of an entrepreneurial culture.
- Banbury dominates the economy of the district, with approximately one third of workplaces located in the town. Just under one in five is located in Bicester and one in twelve in Kidlington
- The district has a higher than average proportion of jobs in manufacturing, with 12.3% falling into this sector, compared to 8.5 % across the south east region.
- Businesses in Cherwell are generally small with only 16% having 10 or more employees.
- Farming employment in Oxfordshire has declined by almost 20% since 1990.
- Tourism related expenditure translated to over £294m worth of income for local businesses. It is estimated that tourism activity in the district supports 5,728 jobs in Cherwell.
- In September 2009, there were 2255 claimants of job seekers allowance across the district. This equates to 2.6% of the resident working age population.
- 8% of 16 – 19 year olds are not in education or employment – OCC to update.

Our economic objectives for the next five years

- 1. Raise expectations and ambitions and provide a range of economic opportunities for everyone including lifelong learning and retraining. We will foster and develop alternative ways of accessing employment such as apprenticeships, volunteering or work-based training.**
 - Tackle the causes of under achievement which include engagement in education and training, poor housing, lack of access to transport, poor social and economic cultures and dependence on benefits.
 - Improve access to skills, training and employment opportunities.
 - Encourage volunteering, explore the potential of apprenticeships and take a multi-agency approach to what learning and training is available so that it equips people for work in the area.

2. Manage our infrastructure development, matching housing growth with local jobs, transport to work, facilities and services. We will plan effectively for our future workforce and employment patterns, focusing on what we need to achieve in raising our skills and actively attracting the right businesses into the area.

- Enable a good supply of housing and a wide range of affordable housing opportunities to ensure that housing provision is able to support the development of the local economy and people's ambitions and needs.
- Create strong links between the private, public and voluntary sector with clear roles and contributions to the economic, aspiration and skills agenda.
- Reduce congestion in the town centres, reducing the numbers of people commuting out of the area to work by increasing the number and variety of jobs locally.
- Encourage homeworking, shared travel to work scheme, networks and hubs for home workers and ensure that rural areas are able to access the technology and services they need to work sustainably in the district.

3. Promote and support business diversification and a sustainable economy in both urban and rural environments. Protect and grow local services and businesses, while supporting town centres to be attractive economic hubs for the district.

- Promote environmentally sensitive and innovative enterprise, supporting new initiatives that may help to adapt to changes in the climate.
- Support town centres to maintain their economic viability through their shops and markets.
- Promote environmentally sensitive and innovative enterprise, supporting new initiatives that may help to adapt to changes in the climate.
- Support the cultural economy across the district with the development of theatre facilities and other leisure facilities to encourage this economy to develop locally so that people go out locally if they wish rather than in Oxford.
- Attract and retain the right sort of industries, a balance between high and lower technology industries, understanding that not everyone wants to achieve in only academic terms and that not all businesses are high-tech.
- Develop a North Oxfordshire focused inward investment strategy using the vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy to promote the area to investors.
- Fully exploit any opportunities that come from the proximity to Oxford and spin-off academic industries.

Local focus

In addition to district wide priorities we recognise that different areas across the district will have their own issues and we will identify specific actions to address them.

Banbury

- Improve the percentage of Banbury residents with skills and qualifications (in key locations).
- Fully utilise the further education resources and encourage engagement with the population and businesses.

Bicester

- Build on the accessibility of Bicester, its skilled workforce, further education opportunities, and location to attract new businesses.
- Improve the availability of business premises, build upon the strength of Bicester village but also diversify the economy beyond that.

Kidlington

- Encourage stronger links between industrial areas, the airport and local residents and the village centre.
- Position Kidlington as a unique place on account of the airport, University of Oxford Science Park, and its proximity to Oxford and explore the full commercial and recreational potential of the Canal and Airport.

Rural Areas

- Support local shops and businesses to serve their rural communities and create jobs.
- Encourage diversification of farms and other rural businesses to enable the creation of local employment and reduce commuting.
- Explore opportunities to pool resources and community facilities to provide new community and commercial opportunities.
- Ensure that broadband provision is improved to support increased home working.

3. Connected and protected – our infrastructure and environment in 2030

We aim to understand and adapt to environmental challenges as they arise and ensure that all infrastructure and other developments protect and enhance our environment and biodiversity. We want to protect our rich natural and built environment and heritage, using our resources wisely and helping people to live sustainable lifestyles. Our transport and housing need to be appropriate to our needs and will be adaptable to the changes in our communities. Cherwell will be at the forefront of exploring alternative technologies and recycling, utilising its connections to innovative industry to do so, and making real progress towards reducing carbon emissions.

The built and natural environment is an important selling point for Cherwell and one of the main reasons that communities and businesses choose to locate or remain here. People value the accessibility offered by the excellent transport connections, the diverse character of the settlements and their centres, the good access to local services and quality of the countryside.

However, socio-economic and environmental changes (such as increased commuting for employment, an ageing population and climate change) are calling into question the way our towns function into the future, the viability of our rural areas and our ability to ensure that everyone gets to share in the quality of life that we value.

Our environmental ambitions reflect the infrastructure we currently have, the way this has changed over recent years and the challenges we face in balancing our economic and housing growth aspirations with maintaining our environmental quality and the impacts of climate change and managing natural resources over the coming years.

Our Local Development Framework has to make provision to accommodate a minimum of 13,400 homes between 2006 and 2026. We recognise the challenge as well as the opportunities that the proposed housing and population growth brings and it is important we are able to protect and enhance the countryside, biodiversity and environment that we value and retain our distinctiveness.

Did you know?

- Despite being a rural district, over two-thirds of the population live in the three main urban areas of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington
- 84% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
- The District contains 32 scheduled ancient monuments and has a rich built heritage, with approximately 3000 listed buildings and 58 conservation areas.
- The house price to income ratio is 8.8 in Cherwell - higher than national and regional comparators but the lowest in Oxfordshire, except Vale of White Horse.
- Household growth is outstripping population growth due to the falling household size in the area – as a result of socio-economic trends such as increasing life expectancy, divorce and partnering later in life.

- Over 60% of people drive to work, with a further 7% travelling as a passenger in a car.
- The district produced 11.59 tonnes of CO2 emissions (2006) per capita compared to 8.03 across South East Region.
- Cherwell recycles 49% of household waste, the highest percentage in Oxfordshire and significantly higher than the UK average of 34.5%. This has increased three-fold since 2003/04.

Our infrastructure and environmental objectives for the next five years

The quality of the environment is one of the features that the people in Cherwell value most. This relates to both the natural environment and countryside and also the historic built environment that defines the character of many of our towns and villages. However, our district is facing challenges at both a global and more local level which are challenging the way we look after our environment into the future. We must get more efficient at reducing and reusing waste, recycling, reducing our above average carbon emissions and levels of water use, improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. We must also adapt our infrastructure and services for the unavoidable impacts of climate change

Most notably, people are concerned about accommodating the forecasted levels of housing growth and the impact this will have upon the community spirit of our settlements and the provision of our infrastructure and services. The objectives below reflect what you have told us needs to happen to protect our environment and accommodate growth in a sustainable way.

We will:

1. Cherish the resources that define Cherwell's character and distinctiveness including our natural environment, our built heritage and the vitality of our towns and villages.

- Support communities to prepare a town or parish plan for their area.
- Maintaining the vitality of our town and village centres – as economic cores, service centres and hubs of our community, working with villages to develop services that they need.
- Support our towns and villages to be different from each other and maintain their local distinctiveness and qualities that define their identity.
- Enable rural communities to grow and evolve appropriately to support vibrant and dynamic villages and supporting the growth in farmers markets.
- Provide and maintain a high quality environment (clean streets, reduced graffiti and link to reducing anti-social behaviour and enhancing a sense of community wellbeing).
- Link in with existing Biodiversity Action Plans and support the active encouragement of development and protection of the natural environment.

2. Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change including minimising our waste and resource use, minimising our carbon emissions, increasing energy efficiency, reducing fuel poverty and embracing new technologies.

- Reduce the overall carbon emissions for the district, aspiring to eventually becoming carbon neutral.
- Protect our environment and biodiversity by supporting farmers, land owners and volunteers.
- Develop existing and new methods of minimising, managing, recycling and reusing waste.
- Adapt the way we do things to respond to climate change embracing new technologies and applying them to our new developments and infrastructure.
- Take steps to ensure we are able to respond to the effects of climate change or extreme weather events such as floods.
- Decrease the amount of energy and water used in the district, harnessing new technologies and communication methods to encourage personal responsibility.

3. Improve accessibility and tackle congestion including a shift in transport methods from our reliance on the private car towards public transport and walking or cycling opportunities.

- Develop links with schools to integrate transport and travel to work patterns with young people to reduce congestion and increase walk to school rates.
- Improve accessibility and tackle congestion by supporting a shift from our reliance on the private car towards public transport and walking or cycling.
- Work with the county-wide stakeholders and representatives from key urban and rural areas to look at transport solutions and develop strategies to influence public transport development and the Highways Agency.

4. Ensure our social infrastructure grows at the same rate as our communities and current deficiencies in provision are addressed including affordable housing, community buildings, open spaces, cultural and leisure opportunities.

- Ensure new homes and existing housing are accessible and decent in an environment where people want to live and which can respond to their changing life circumstances.
- Address the deficiencies in community facilities (for example: open and green spaces such as sports pitches, cemeteries, plays areas and local walks).

- Deliver more affordable housing and develop planning strategies for new housing across the area which include this and consult with local people.
- Prepare a strategic infrastructure plan and use this to understand where the current deficiencies lie and how the provision of infrastructure can be effectively delivered into the future including areas such as health, crime and education in line with population and housing growth.
- Adopt the Local Development Framework which sets out how and where we will accommodate growth across the district.

Local focus

In addition to district wide priorities we recognise that different areas across the district will have their own issues and we will identify specific actions to address them.

Banbury

- Review and address the transport needs and traffic control for Banbury.
- Address the needs of all communities within Banbury to plan for appropriate, affordable and decent housing for everyone.

Bicester

- Implement the redevelopment proposals for Bicester town centre including bringing forward the environmental improvements programme for Market Square.
- Bicester to demonstrate exemplary environmental and social practice in managing growth.

Kidlington

- Address the issue of the main road bisecting the village and traffic management.
- Continue to explore the possibility of a new station.

Rural Areas

- Identify where traffic control is both desirable and beneficial.
- Invest in community-based and alternative transport solutions.
- Include rural communities in the plans for developing both housing and commercial development.
- Supporting rural land managers to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

4. Resourceful and receptive – Community leadership in 2030

Cherwell aims to be characterised by our responsiveness to our changing population. Our partnerships will take a key role in delivering services, fostering community cohesion and managing our resources, directing them to where there is most need. We want our local representatives to take an active and vibrant role in representing their communities and in bringing about local solutions to local problems.

Our public services will be open, honest and accountable with clear lines of communication between the public, private and voluntary sectors that work together to deliver what is needed. We will have exemplary consultation and communications processes, generating and sharing accurate and relevant information. This will enable an engaged and inclusive Cherwell that relishes debate and listens to different opinions and experiences.

Our consultation told us we must be clear about who is accountable for the delivery of this strategy. Our role, as the Local Strategic Partnership, is to ensure that we have the right systems in place to act upon our ambitions and assess our progress against our overall aims. We will act promptly when results are disappointing, learn from our successes, reassess our priorities regularly and communicate this effectively.

All partners need to rise to the challenges and meet their responsibilities in delivering this strategy. Democratic and partnership structures are in place and these will work best if they are embraced by local community leaders who take some of the responsibility for keeping them vibrant and relevant. It is vital that we all work together to maximise community involvement, use available resources as efficiently as possible and raise our common understanding of the problems and their potential solutions.

This strategy is one of a family of documents. It sits alongside an analysis of the issues and an evidence base, a consultation report, a partnership framework, the Local Development Framework and a delivery plan.

There are also a number of medium term strategies, the county-wide Sustainable Community Strategy and the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement (Oxfordshire 2030) that will deliver our ambitions, objectives and priorities. Together they will enable us to build effective partnerships and work alongside each other to bring about the changes and improvement that we all want to see.

Our leadership objectives for the next five years

1. Ensure fully inclusive democratic structures and processes with leaders at all levels who listen and act on what they hear.

- Deliver a programme of community events, consultation and engagement to ensure everyone understands the issues and has a chance to express their local concerns.
- Develop and support networks and links between groups, partnerships and special interest communities to share expertise and support all sectors to take an active role in district leadership.
- Examine and adapt our decision making processes to include local views and promote more local influence.

2. Support the community, voluntary and private sectors to have a more active role in local leadership.

- Hold regular forums with the voluntary, public and private sectors to develop their role in active leadership
- Support the development of the Voluntary Sector Forum and other multi-agency or sector approaches where communication across sectors will improve services and information.

3. Develop and implement effective performance management to measure and demonstrate our progress.

- Measure progress towards this strategy and publish the information in a simple format for public consumption and making this information available through at least one public consultation event and other well used mediums.
- Develop and publish lines of accountability for strategies and plans and the measurement and the monitoring processes used.

4. Communicate clearly about how we make decisions and what we have been working on and achieved.

- Develop innovative and responsive methods of communicating to ensure everyone in Cherwell understands what the issues are, what progress is being made and how to have their say.
- Increase and improve the intelligence and research we have to increase everyone's knowledge base.

IN THIS SECTION A DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW THE CHERWELL SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY LINKS INTO OTHER PLANS AT THE REGIONAL, COUNTY LEVEL AND DISTRICT LEVEL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE INCLUDED

6 Background Information

The evidence based strategy has used a wide range of information sources to inform the development of priorities and focus of activity. This evidence has included official statistics (such as those available from the Office of National Statistics) and more locally based sources (such as community surveys undertaken for Parish Plans).

A summary of the key statistics from the evidence base has been included within the Sustainable Community Strategy. The figures and indicators will change over the time period covered and new trends or issues may emerge. The Local Strategic Partnership is committed to producing an evidence base update and undertaking an annual review of the Sustainable Community Strategy to reflect new evidence that becomes available.

7 Acknowledgements

As part of the development of this strategy we have held or taken part in a number of events including councillors, rural and stakeholders' workshops, sessions with the voluntary sector and the parish liaison group, the Cherwell Skills Summit and a session with community workers in Banbury.

We would like to thank all the people, community groups, councillors, voluntary groups, local businesses and public agencies that have taken part in developing the strategy. Thanks to those who have invited us to attend their events and the many individuals who have spent time with us, showing us around their areas and telling us about their expectations and aspirations for the future of Cherwell.

A final thanks to those who responded to the draft strategy, helping us to shape the content and develop the delivery plan.