

Appendix 1: Background to Cherwell's Places

- 1.1 Cherwell is situated in north Oxfordshire ~~and the northernmost point of the South East region.~~ It lies between London and Birmingham, immediately north of Oxford and south of Warwick / Leamington Spa. The district shares boundaries with Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire, Aylesbury Vale, South Northamptonshire and Stratford upon Avon districts.

Cherwell Today

- 1.2 Cherwell is predominantly a rural district. It has two towns, Banbury in the north and Bicester in the south, and a third urban centreatea at Kidlington, a very large village close to Oxford. The district has over 90 villages and hamlets.
- 1.3 **(Para' Deleted)**
- 1.4 The district's largest employment sectors are: distribution, manufacturing, office, retailing and other services, and public sector employment including in health, defence and education. administration and health.; ~~banking, finance and insurance; and manufacturing.~~ In recent times, unemployment has generally been low in Cherwell. However, it has doubled during the economic downturn.
- 1.5 Banbury is principally a manufacturing town and service centre whilst Bicester is a garrison ~~and commuter~~ town with a military logistics, storage and distribution and manufacturing base. Both towns featured d as important economic locations in the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy. Kidlington functions as a village service centre but has a larger, varied employment base benefiting from its proximity to Oxford, its location next to the strategic road network, and the location of Oxford London Airport immediately to the north. Bicester and Kidlington lie within Oxford's ~~hinterland, sub-region.~~ In rural areas, the function of villages as places to live and commute from has increased as the traditional rural economy has declined. ~~Nevertheless, although the~~ number of people employed in agriculture fell by 18% between 1990 and 2000 and between 2007 and 2008 figures continue to show a decline. ~~, it increased by 13% between 2000 and 2007.~~
- 1.6 The M40 motorway passes through Cherwell close to Banbury and Bicester. There are direct rail links from Banbury and Bicester to London, Birmingham and Oxford. The rail link from Bicester to Oxford is planned for improvement as part of wider east-west rail objectives. The district has a clear social and economic relationship with Oxford and to a lesser extent with Northamptonshire. Banbury has its own rural hinterland and housing market area which extends into South Northamptonshire and less so into West Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. London has a significant commuting influence.
- 1.7 The character of Cherwell's built environment is diverse but distinctive. Banbury and Bicester have changed as a result of post-war expansion and economic growth brought about by the M40 but retain their market town origins. The district has a few fairlynnumber of larger, well served villages and many smaller villages but no small towns, less mid-sized vill as in ages than is

~~typical for other parts~~the rest of Oxfordshire such as Chipping Norton or Wallingford. In the north of the district, the predominant traditional building material is ironstone; in the south, limestone. Many villages have retained their traditional character. Cherwell has approximately 2,300 listed buildings, an increasing number of conservation areas (presently 60), approximately 595 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and a number of registered parks and gardens and historic battlefields. In some areas the MoD's presence has influenced the built environment.

- 1.8** Cherwell's natural environment is also varied. The River Cherwell and Oxford Canal run north-south through the district. There are Ironstone Downs in the north-west (a small proportion of which is within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north west of the district), the Ploughley Limestone Plateau in the east and the Clay Vale of Otmoor in the south. Part of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation lies north of the boundary with Oxford City and the district has a large number of designated wildlife sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other designated areas of natural interest. Approximately 14% of the district lies within the Oxford Green Belt to the south which surrounds the urban area of Kidlington.
- 1.9** Development in the district has been led by waves of urban expansion to Banbury and Bicester as part of a countywide approach to focus growth on Oxford and its satellite country towns. An urban extension to the north of Banbury of over 1000 homes was completed in 2008/09. Urban extensions producing some 1600 homes at Bicester were completed in 2004/05. Average housing completions from 1996 to 2009 were 604 per annum, 38% of which were in Banbury, 31% in Bicester and 31% elsewhere. Banbury's town centre benefited from redevelopment in the 1990s and is regionally important. Improvements to Bicester town centre have been permitted to provide much needed retail, leisure and community facilities and are now largely complete. in the process of being implemented.
- 1.10** Permissions are in place for further extensions to Banbury and Bicester of 1000 and 1600 homes respectively and these are now underway. Saved development plan policy allows for a new settlement of about 1000 homes (including about 300 existing) to be constructed between the two towns at former RAF Upper Heyford to achieve environmental and heritage benefits.

Bicester Today

- 1.11** Bicester is a rapidly expanding historic market town with a long-standing military presence. It has grown substantially over the last 50 years and now has a population of approximately 30,000. This represents population -growth of 50% since 1981 and, influenced by the strategy in this Plan, further growth, of up to 30% (to approximately 40,000 people) is projected by 2026. Bicester's growth has been influenced by its location on the strategic road network close to junction 9 of the M40, where the A34 meets the A41. It is also close to junction 10 with the A43 which connects the M40 and M1. Bicester has a particularly close economic relationship with Oxford.
- 1.12** A substantial programme of continuing development in the town is in place. Planning permission has been granted for a strategic housing site of 1,585 homes at 'South West Bicester', including a health village, sports provision, employment land, a hotel, a new secondary school, a community hall and a

local centre. A new perimeter road has now been built to serve the development and to assist in removing through traffic from the town centre. The Government has identified North West Bicester as a location for an Eco-Town development. Bicester's location within the [Central Oxfordshire](#) sub-region and on the Oxford-Cambridge arc makes it well located for growth.

- 1.13** ~~A~~[Permission has also been granted for a](#) £50m redevelopment of the town centre [has now largely been completed](#) including a Sainsburys supermarket, other retail premises, a cinema, a library and a new civic building. 'Bicester Village', an internationally successful factory outlet centre at the southern edge of Bicester, has also recently expanded. The Council has granted planning permission for a new business park comprising 50,000m² of B1 employment space and a hotel to the south of Bicester Village and east of the A41. Full build out of this will be subject to improvements to junction 9 of the M40.
- 1.14** In terms of other significant infrastructure, ~~NHS Oxfordshire has now chosen its preferred bidder for new health facilities to development commenced in summer 2013 for the~~ replacement of Bicester's ~~existing~~ community hospital ~~and a planning application is expected imminently~~. In terms of rail improvements, ~~in from~~ 2013, Chiltern Railways intends to commence work to upgrade the railway between Oxford and Bicester, to significantly improve services between Oxford and London via Bicester and provide an alternative to using the M40 and A34. This will result in improved services from Bicester and the redevelopment of Bicester Town Railway Station. Furthermore, the East West Rail Link Project, which will pass through Bicester, seeks to establish a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England.
- 1.15** The town's military presence remains today. MoD Bicester to the south of the town is a major logistics site for the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency (DSDA) and has an army, other military and civilian presence. The site extends to some 630 hectares from the south of Bicester into the rural area around the villages of Ambrosden and Arncott. Logistics operations at the Graven Hill site are being rationalised and consolidated, with the development of a new 'Fulfilment Centre' at Arncott's existing 'C' site, releasing much of the land at the Graven Hill site for allocation for development in this Local Plan. The MoD wishes to retain its valued presence in Cherwell and it remains a major employer in the district. ~~RAF Bicester~~[The Former RAF Bicester](#) to the north east of the town was established as a Royal Flying Corps Aerodrome and became a Royal Air Force station. The site is now a Conservation Area and retains: "... better than any other military airbase in Britain, the layout and fabric relating to pre-1930s military aviation...". It also has "...the best-preserved bomber airfield dating from the period up to 1945..." (English Heritage). The airfield itself is now used by a gliding club.
- 1.16** Other major employers at Bicester include Bicester Village (about 1500 people), Tesco (about 400 people) and Fresh Direct (fruit and vegetable merchants employing about 350 people). Bicester does however experience high levels of out-commuting, particularly to Oxford, and this is a significant issue for the Local Plan.
- 1.17** Bicester was identified in the now revoked South East Plan as a main location for development within the Central Oxfordshire area sub-region around

Oxford to improve its self-containment. The South East Plan also stated that every opportunity should be taken to promote the town, amongst other things, as a new location for higher value and knowledge-based business. Bicester is generally less constrained than Banbury in terms of landscape sensitivity, flooding and agricultural land quality but has more designated ecological constraints. Under-provision of services and facilities is a concern. Whilst some measures, such as town centre redevelopment, are in place to address this, more needs to be done. Improving self-containment and delivering jobs, services, facilities, traffic management measures and other infrastructure to match Bicester's rapid and continuing expansion and reduce levels of deprivation are central to this strategy.

Banbury Today

- 1.18** Banbury is the largest of Cherwell's two towns and is a commercial, retail, employment and housing market centre for a large rural hinterland. It was identified as a Primary Regional Centre in the revoked South East Plan. Although still a market town, Banbury expanded rapidly in the 1960s to assist in dealing with London's housing needs. Since then, it has seen continued economic and population growth in part due to the construction of the M40 motorway.
- 1.19** Banbury's major employers are the Horton General Hospital to the south of the town centre (about 1200 people) which serves North Oxfordshire and neighbouring areas, Kraft (about 800 people) to the north of the town centre, and the District Council based in the adjoining village of Bodicote to the south (about 700 people). The main employment areas are to the north and east of the town.
- 1.20** The town has two residential areas which suffer significantly from deprivation: an area in western Banbury in and around the Bretch Hill estate, built to accommodate overspill from London; and [parts of](#) Grimsbury, originally a Victorian area to the east of the town centre which expanded with the construction of local authority housing and has experienced further development over the past 20 years. Grimsbury has relatively high numbers of people from ethnic minority groups.
- 1.21** Banbury experienced major retail redevelopment in the 1990s (Castle Quay) which has brought great benefits to the town centre but has also made it more challenging for the historic High Street area. Areas of land east and west of the railway station to the east of the town centre have been in need of regeneration for some years. The easternmost area - the former Cattle Market and adjoining land - has now been developed. The 'Canalside' industrial area to the west is more challenging as [significant parts of](#) -it [are](#)is in active use by a wide range of businesses.
- 1.22** Banbury is located on the River Cherwell / Oxford Canal corridor and its development potential is constrained by sensitive landscape and topography in most directions. This includes the Cherwell Valley, Sor Brook Valley and significant ridgelines. Banbury experienced serious flooding in 1998 and to a lesser extent in 2007. A flood alleviation scheme for the town has now been delivered. ~~The M40 is both an opportunity and constraint.~~ Junction 11 [of the M40](#) lies immediately to the north east of the town and the motorway runs close to the town's eastern perimeter. Currently traffic must pass through the

town centre or through residential areas to travel between Junction 11 and the south side of town.

Kidlington Today

- 1.23** Kidlington, in the south of the district, makes a proud claim to be Britain's largest village with a population of about 15,000-. By reason of its size, and due to its function as ~~an~~ **large** employment and service centre, it comprises the district's third urban area. Kidlington is located only 5 miles north of Oxford City and is located near a major junction connecting 3 separate A roads - the A34, A40 and A33. ~~The village centre 'healthcheck' of 2007 found that~~ Kidlington operates as a local shopping centre which primarily serves customers from the local vicinity. The village centre fulfils the role of 'top up' or convenience shopping. Within the centre there was found to be a relatively high proportion of service and office sector dominance whilst outside of the centre, there is a concentration of employment generating development to the west of the village around Langford Lane, with Langford Business Parks, Spires Business Park and the Oxford Motor Park. Oxford Airport is also situated in this area. One of the challenges at Kidlington is meeting the needs of an urban area constrained by surrounding Green Belt.

Our Villages and Rural Areas Today

- 1.24** There are over 90 villages and hamlets in Cherwell. ~~_~~Bloxham, in the north of the district, is the second largest village (after Kidlington) with a population of just over 3,000. Yarnton, to the south west of Kidlington, has a population of about 2,500. Adderbury, Deddington, Hook Norton and Bodicote, each in north Cherwell, also have populations in excess of 2000.
- 1.25** Each of Cherwell's villages has its own unique character and many have conservation areas which help to conserve and enhance their historic core. All of the villages have seen growth over the centuries, and some have grown significantly in the 20th and 21st centuries.
- 1.26** Cherwell's ~~other~~ villages can be generally characterised as having a fairly limited number and range of services and facilities, however there are significant differences between villages. The larger villages often have some or all of the following; a post office, primary school, shops, pubs, bus services, recreation areas and community halls and other community facilities. Some also have local employment opportunities.
- 1.27** The character of the rural area is varied and includes land of significant landscape and biodiversity value. A small part of the Cotswolds AONB lies within the north western part of the district and to the south lies the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation. This environment helps attract tourists to the area to destinations such as Hook Norton Brewery, the Cropredy festival and the Oxford Canal.