

# 6.0 Theme 3: Strengthening Kidlington Village Centre

## 6.1 Summary of key issues:

- The Village Centre operates as a local service centre and has a regular market. Co-op and Tesco are anchor stores and there is a high number of A2 uses (services, banks etc.) but limited comparison retail. There are a low number of vacant units and a low number of national multiples.
- The centre is well located geographically at the centre of the village and is well served by car parking. However, for village of its size, the Village Centre is underperforming and the evening economy is weak. A lack of high quality frontage onto Oxford Road, poorly located bus stops, a lack of pedestrian crossings and limited vehicle access points limit footfall from passing trade.
- There is a mishmash of architectural styles on the High Street and architectural and public realm design quality varies considerably.
- Surface car parking occupies large areas of land to the rear of the High Street. There is concern that long stay car parks are used as an informal 'park and ride' by bus users rather than by shoppers and as a result occupancy levels do not reflect the car parking need generated by Village Centre uses.
- Village Centre expansion is identified in the Local Plan to the west of Oxford Road. However the highway continues to act as a barrier and reported demand for retail premises is low.
- Local Plan Policy Kidlington 2 supports residential development in appropriate locations in the Village Centre.

## 6.2 Objectives

**To strengthen the Village Centre, increasing its mix of uses and vitality and its attractiveness to local residents, employees and visitors as a place to shop, work and spend leisure time during the day and evening.**

## 6.3 Relevant policies

Proposals will be required to have particular regard to the following Local Plan policies:

- Policy SLE 2: Securing Dynamic Town Centres
- Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections
- Policy BSC 2: The Effective and Efficient use of Land
- Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure
- Policy Kidlington 2: Strengthening Kidlington Village Centre

The Local Plan recognises that it is important that the Village Centre is supported and strengthened to help meet the aspirations of Kidlington and to ensure that the everyday shopping needs of residents are met, avoiding the need for unnecessary journeys to Oxford, Bicester and other destinations.

*Shopping, leisure and other 'Main Town Centre Uses' will be supported within the boundary of Kidlington Village Centre. Residential development will be supported in appropriate locations in the Village Centre except where it will lead to a loss of retail or other main town centre uses. The change of use of sites used for main town centre uses in the Village Centre for residential development will normally be permitted if proposals contribute significantly to the regeneration of the Village Centre. Mixed use schemes will be encouraged.*

Paragraph C235 of the Local Plan states that it is proposed to expand the geographical area defined as Kidlington Village Centre to include land on the western side of the Oxford Road and other small areas of commercial uses. The exact boundary will be determined in Part 2 of the Local Plan. It states that the aim of the extension is to:

- Support the viability and vitality of the existing Village Centre.
- Encourage economic activity.
- Assist with the connectivity between the existing Village Centre and the civic community and green open space at the Exeter Hall area.



Figure 6.1 Food and drink- Brixton Market



Figure 6.2 Food and drink



Figure 6.3 Markets

- Contribute to and maximise the benefits of improvements to the character and appearance of the Village Centre and the public realm.
- It is appropriate therefore that this Framework supports these objectives without predetermining the identification of a precise boundary in Local Plan Part 2.

## 6.4 Opportunities

### 6.3.1 Redefine the character of Kidlington Village Centre

The Village Centre should be the focus for significant change and improvement which will bring obvious benefits to local businesses and residents and will be important in changing wider perceptions of Kidlington for the better.

In line with Local Plan Policy Kidlington 2, the designated boundary of Kidlington Village Centre should be expanded to include land to the west of Oxford Road and Exeter Close. The rear of Exeter Close, North Kidlington School, the Fire Station and Sorting Office, and historic properties on Banbury Road several of which contain retail/ office uses should be considered for inclusion within the boundary. These areas form the setting of the core Village Centre and contain or have potential to accommodate town centre and community uses.

The Framework establishes design principles for the Village Centre and identifies potential development sites which are listed below. Particular importance is placed on environmental improvements and encouragement of the evening economy. These principles should be tested and developed in a comprehensive Village Centre masterplan. This will establish detailed design guidance on the appropriate layout scale, quality and character that is expected of future development drawing from the planned District Design Guide SPD in relation to residential development. It will require further background studies to understand land ownership, site availability and develop a strategy for car parking to ensure the proposals are deliverable.

### 6.3.2 Village Centre design principles

Development within the Village Centre should be of an exemplary standard, reflecting the public role of the Village Centre and its importance in shaping perceptions of the village as a whole. The following principles should be considered in greater detail through the Village Centre masterplan in support of the proposals within the Framework, Local Plan Policy Kidlington 2 and ESD 15.

#### Townscape

- The existing character of the centre of Kidlington is mixed. There is little architectural coherence, with varied materials, heights and styles. New development on the High Street should aim to bring coherence to the street scene, responding to the height and setbacks of adjacent buildings and creating a continuous frontage to the street.
- Locally appropriate materials (limestone and local brick, slate or clay tile roofs) should be the primary materials used on elevations fronting the public realm.
- The potential expansion of Village Centre uses to the west of Oxford Road should be reflected in buildings of an appropriate character and increased scale (up to 3-4 storeys) to provide enclosure to the street.
- A hierarchy of streets should be established with High Street and Oxford Road reading as the principal streets and development on Sterling Road Approach subservient to this in scale and massing.

#### Connectivity and public realm

- Key Village Centre streets and pedestrian routes (identified on Figure 6.5) should be the focus for high quality public realm treatments. This includes the transformation of Oxford Road from a traffic dominated highway to a pleasant, people friendly street (further details are provided below) to support the proposed expansion of Village Centre uses to the west of Oxford Road. On the High Street the public realm character of the western section could be extended eastwards to reduce the dominance of the carriageway.



Figure 6.4 Example of a characterful new Village Centre at Poundbury, Dorset

- The potential for an improved network of secondary pedestrian routes is identified to increase connectivity between east and west, and provide opportunities for additional development frontage. This includes a new walking route between the Co-op and Red Lion car parks to enhance access to the shops on Oxford Road.
- Potential locations for improved public squares are identified at Watts Way Piazza, the junction of Oxford Road/High Street and the entrance to Exeter Close. Where redevelopment proposals come forward for these areas it will be expected that they assist in delivering these improvements to help achieve Policy Kidlington 2 and ESD 15 of the Local Plan. The largest space at Watts Way has the potential to become a focus for Village Centre daily life and special events. Small scale retail/residential development on the existing car park would create a new frontage to the square which would define and enlarge the public space.

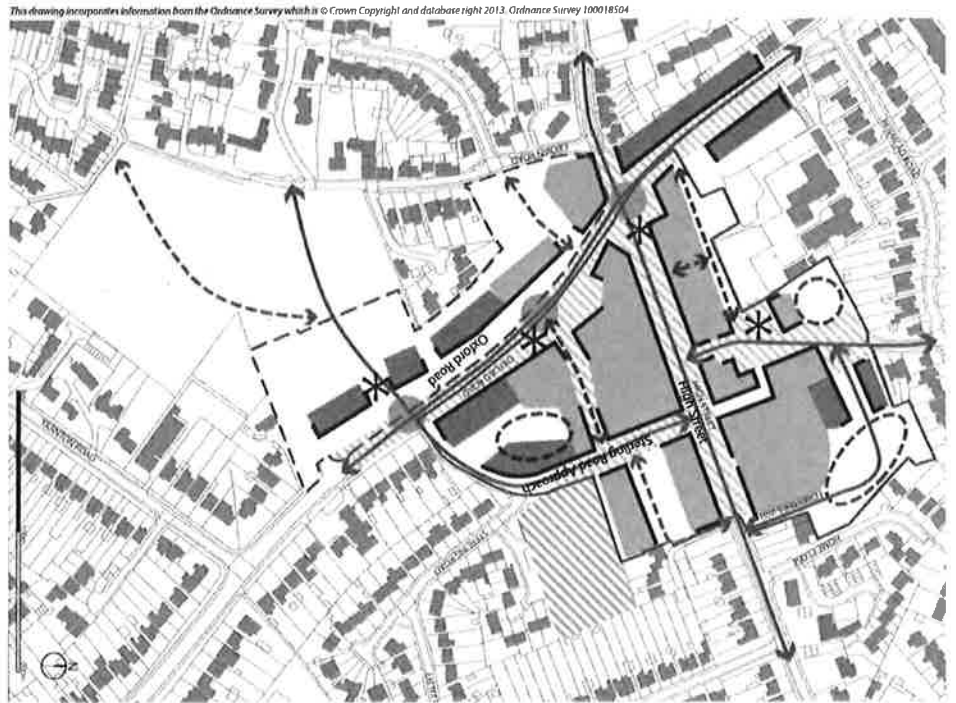
## 6.0 Theme 3: Strengthening Kidlington Village Centre

### Car parking and servicing

- Indicative locations for small scale single deck (2 level) car parks are suggested to decrease the surface area occupied by car parking and release sites for residential and retail development. A survey of car parking use and need would assist in establishing the opportunities to reconfigure car parking provision and management in the town centre, but not to the detriment of Village Centre trade.
- As a supporting action to the spatial proposals of the Framework free car parking could be managed (potentially through permits or tokens or a reduction in long stay parking) to ensure that it is used by those visiting Village Centre shops and facilities rather than purely for park and ride to Oxford.
- In considering any proposals for redevelopment, retail service areas should be reviewed to limit conflict between pedestrians/cyclists and motor vehicles.

### Development and new uses

- New development should create active ground floor frontages to the primary and secondary pedestrian routes and streets, with particular emphasis on High Street and Oxford Road.
- The following uses would be particularly conducive in strengthening the retail offer and encouraging use of the Village Centre in the evenings: retail and services, food & drink, leisure and cultural uses (e.g. gym, cinema, local museum), offices, residential, community facilities (e.g. library, healthcare, children's centre), public open space.
- The frontage to High Street and the central section of Oxford Road is the focus for primary retail/ food & drink or community uses on ground floor, but could have a broader mix of uses including residential and offices above. Opportunities to increase the range of retail premises available should be supported including identifying opportunities for larger floorplate units and premises for small businesses.



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 Figure 6.5 Indicative plan to illustrate potential extent of development [subject to options testing]

- Kidlington Village Centre boundary
- Local Plan proposed extension to Village Centre boundary
- Existing/ proposed active frontages
- Primary retail area
- Community uses, secondary retail and residential
- Potential location for small scale multi-storey car park/ decked car parks
- ▨ Potential longer term opportunity site
- Primary pedestrian route
- Potential for secondary pedestrian route
- Potential longer term opportunities for pedestrian connections
- New/ improved crossings
- ▨ Public realm improvements
- \* Public squares

- The growth of A3 uses (food & drink) and the evening economy should be supported, to provide greater choice for local residents and an attractive destination for after work leisure time and weekends. In particular evening economy and high quality food and drink establishments could be supported along Oxford Road, where a cluster has already developed.
- In line with Local Plan Policy Kidlington 2, there is potential for residential development in appropriate locations within the Village Centre. Sites could include land released through the reconfiguration of the northern car parks, Co-op car park and small scale development at Exeter Close subject to the satisfactory reconfiguration of existing uses. This will help to increase spending power and vibrancy within the Village Centre and will support the growth of retail, services and the evening economy.
- Over time, the current single storey houses to the west of Oxford Road could be replaced with 2-3 storey buildings with retail or community uses, to mirror the scale of the eastern side of the street and create a stronger sense of enclosure to denote entry to the Village Centre. Any future redevelopment should be of high quality with well landscaped public spaces and tree planting.
- To the south, the focus is on community facilities and creating a strong link to Exeter Close.
- Office uses (B1) should focus on small to medium scale premises with an emphasis on supporting local residents wishing to start up their own business.

6.3.3 Transform Oxford Road from highway to street  
Land to the west of Oxford Road is identified within the area of search for an expanded Village Centre. However, the character of Oxford Road is currently dominated by the highway, is not conducive to east-west pedestrian movement and is not an appropriate character for a Village Centre location.

Public realm improvements to Oxford Road are proposed to change the character from 'highway' to village centre 'street' signifying arrival into the Village Centre. Pedestrian priority will be increased between Exeter Close and Benmead Road, providing the right setting for high street uses to flourish and creating stronger east-west walking and cycling routes towards the Canal.

The detail of public realm proposals will need to be developed in consultation with the County Council as Highways Authority to ensure that Oxford Road's status as a priority route and any approved proposals emerging from the Local Transport Plan and its Oxford Transport Strategy can be accommodated.

Development proposals for central Kidlington should include consideration of the following in conjunction with both the County and District Councils:

- A new toucan crossing between the tower and Lyne Road to encourage greater access between east and west for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Moving the northern bus stops southwards so they are located close to the shops.
- Reconfiguring Oxford Road south of Lyne Road, by introducing on-street parking, street trees, bus stops, wider pavements and informal crossing points so that traffic is naturally slowed.
- Using the space created in front of the parade of shops for outside seating.

- Raised traffic platforms at pedestrian crossing points and junctions on Oxford Road to reinforce the 30mph speed limit.

Figure 6.6 illustrates one potential way to alter the character of Oxford Road to support the expansion of retail uses and to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity and access to bus services. Such a scheme should tie in with planned Cycle Premium Route and Bus Rapid Transit improvements along the Oxford Road corridor. The potential impacts would need to be fully tested with the County Council as Highway Authority before implementation and should not significantly increase traffic congestion or delay public transport services.

## 6.0 Theme 3: Strengthening Kidlington Village Centre

- A. Junction reconfigured to allow for additional cycle and pedestrian 'oucan' crossings and segregated on street cycle route.
- B. Space outside Black Bull and adjacent buildings decluttered and redesigned to create extension to public square.
- C. Highways markings removed to reinforce pedestrian zone character. Cycling access reintroduced within pedestrianised zone.
- D. Bus stops relocated to be closer to retail and facilities.
- E. Highway and service road reconfigured to allow for segregated cycle route, on-street parking, wide pavements outside retail units to east and west.
- F. Red Lion and Co-op car parks linked by a new pedestrian connection.
- G. Southbound bus stop relocated from eastern end of High Street.
- H. Public realm upgrade to reduce dominance of the carriageway.
- I. Potential locations for raised traffic platforms to reinforce the speed limit.

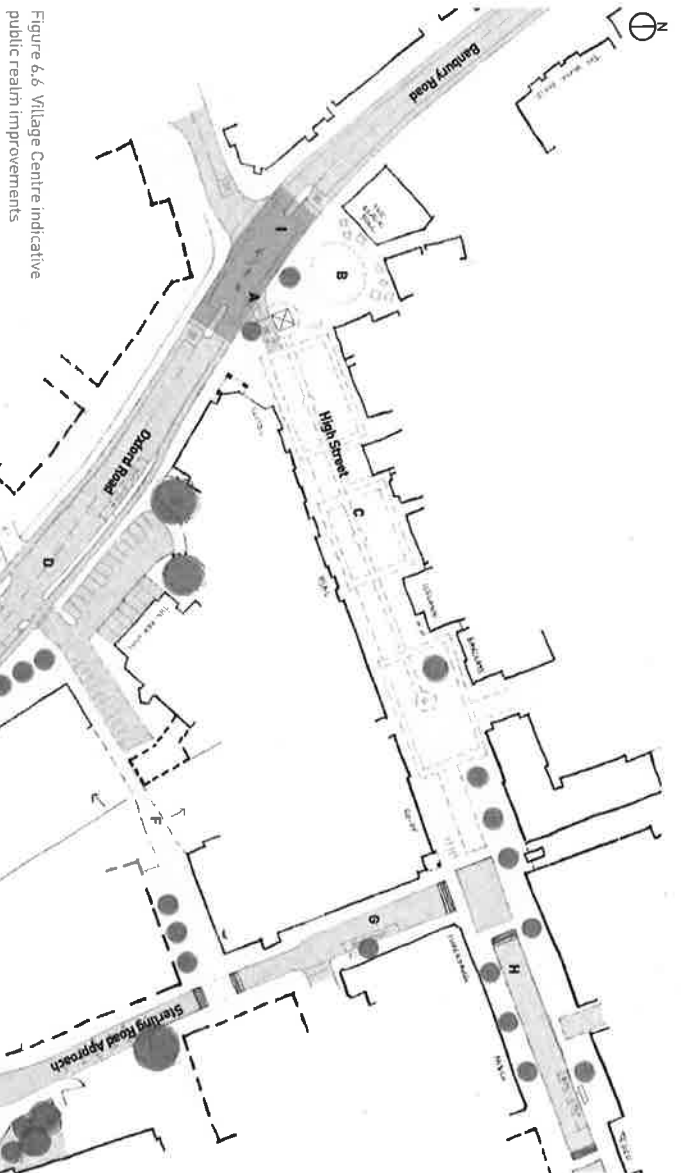
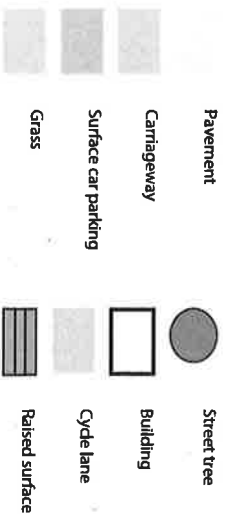


Figure 6.6 Village Centre indicative public realm improvements



Figure 6.7 Village Centre existing highway arrangements



### 6.3.4 Expand the Village Centre through new mixed use development

The following sites could be considered for redevelopment to enhance the character and mix of uses within the Village Centre (subject to assessment through Local Plan Part 2). A comprehensive approach will be required for their development:

- A. The Skoda garage is a large site (0.4ha) on a highly prominent corner site to the west of Oxford Road. The current building scale, car park forecourt and advertising banners are detrimental to the appearance of the Village Centre. The site would be ideal for a new retail anchor, community or arts facility such as a theatre providing an attractive western frontage to the square. The site could be developed in a manner which encourages links west to the Canal.
- B. Co-op car park (0.3ha). The site presents an opportunity for residential, small scale retail or office above and around a car park. A new pedestrian link from the rear Co-op entrance through to the Red Lion pub could be created, strengthening the retail 'loop' between the High Street and Oxford Road. A deck above the car park could provide residential amenity space or additional parking.
- C. Rationalisation and redevelopment of car parks to the north of the High Street could provide smaller retail units and residential. This should be designed to create an attractive frontage to the public square and a strong walking route between the remaining car parks, Curtis Road and High Street. Car park decks could be used where this provides a viable means of releasing development land while retaining parking.
- D. Exeter Close. Potential reconfiguration of the site (3.7ha) to create an enhanced community hub and flagship recreation space with new accommodation for community and health facilities currently located on the site. There may be potential for small scale residential development here. (See Chapter 7.0).

### Smaller potential development sites include:

- E. Several low rise and/or low quality properties with high street frontage have potential for redevelopment of around 3 storeys in height, to create a cohesive retail parade. Development should provide for primary retail on the ground floor, with offices or residential above.
- In the longer term the following opportunity sites could be considered for redevelopment subject to site availability:
- F. Properties to the west of Oxford Road between Lyne Road and Exeter Close are predominantly residential and presumably in multiple ownerships. Site assembly would be necessary to deliver a comprehensive and coherent scheme. The focus should be on providing a strong, continuous frontage of retail/ community uses onto the street with residential or office uses above.
  - G. Fire station and post office sorting office site, if surplus to future operational requirements.

### Development quantum

Assuming all sites are available for development in the longer-term and subject to an assessment through Local Plan Part 2 an initial estimate suggests:

- Between 200 and 300 new residential dwellings could be provided in the Village Centre, accommodating a mix of tenures but assuming a high proportion of apartments.
- An additional 10,000 sq. m of retail space and 1,800 sq. m of office space could be provided (subject to evidence for the Local Plan Part 2 process).

The development capacity, mix of uses (particularly the split between upper floor office and residential) and development viability should be assessed in detail as part of a Village Centre masterplan.

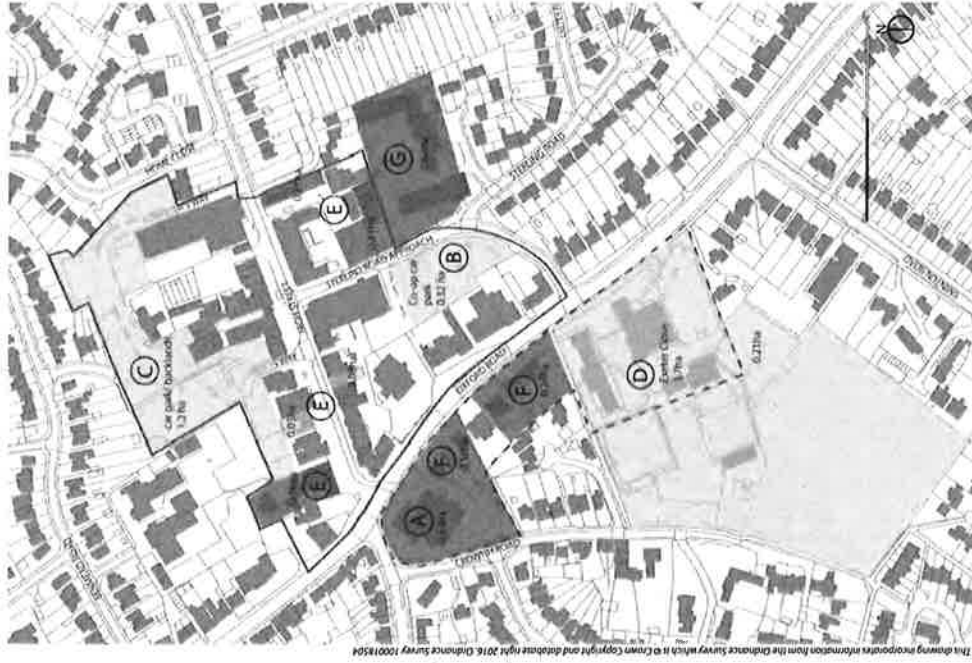


Figure 6.8 Potential Village Centre sites

- Potential short term development opportunity sites (subject to availability and relocation of existing uses)
- Potential longer-term development opportunities (subject to availability and relocation of existing uses)
- Kidlington Village Centre boundary
- Local Plan proposed extension to village centre boundary

## 6.0 Theme 3: Strengthening Kidlington Village Centre

### 6.3.5 Early project opportunities

In addition to the above land use possibilities, ancillary projects, marketing and management arrangements could be used to help strengthen the Village Centre. While these are not objectives that can be secured through this Supplementary Planning Document they are included in the Action Plan and highlighted below as important elements in improving central Kidlington as a place to visit and to work and live in.

Prior to significant development the following opportunities could be explored:

- Shop front improvements such as introducing canopies to shops around the Oxford Road square to create an appealing and consistent appearance.
- Extended events programme e.g. themed Sunday or evening markets, arts or craft events or outdoor music.
- Development of niche food offer.
- Projects to incentivise local spending.
- Potential to establish a business organisation and designate a Business Improvement District.

- Supporting the growth of the weekly market and increasing the range of specialist markets. This could include expansion of the market into the Oxford Road square to give it greater prominence to passing trade.

- Improving the Watts Way square by introducing small retail kiosks on the southern side of the square to bring activity.

- Setting up a working group with retailers / landowners at the western end / north side of the High Street to investigate opportunities for land assembly to enable a new rear access route, rationalisation of parking and retail servicing and provision of affordable commercial premises to the rear of the high street.

CDC and KPC may wish to re-establish the Village Centre management board linked with local business organisation 'Kidlington Voice' or create a formal Business Improvement District (BID)<sup>1</sup> to manage these projects.

<sup>1</sup> A BID is a business led partnership with a 5 year remit, created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses. It operates within a defined area in which a levy is charged on all business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects which will benefit business in the local, in addition to the services provided by local authorities. For further information refer to: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/business-improvement-districts>

