

1 Introduction to the Local Plan

- 1.1 This is the Local Plan for the Cherwell District.
- 1.2 The Local Plan is the key document which will guide the changing use of land in the District and define the purpose to which it is put in the future. It has three **central themes**:
- Theme One: Securing economic development
 - Theme Two: Building communities; ~~and~~
 - Theme Three: Ensuring that all development is sustainable.
- 1.3 The Plan sets out the vision and strategy for the development of Cherwell through to 2031. It sets out why, where and how Cherwell will grow over the next 18 years.
- 1.4 It is a 'place shaping' document which defines where growth will occur and how our District will evolve, but which tightly focuses growth on our most sustainable locations.
- 1.5 It is a document that seeks to respond to a series of challenges which the District faces and to lock the key agencies into partnership for delivery over a long period of time.
- 1.6 The District faces some critical challenges over the next two decades including:
- Remaining economically competitive
 - Ensuring housing growth only takes places in appropriate locations
 - Avoiding sprawl and ensuring growth avoids adverse environmental impacts
 - Ensuring the changing ~~patterns of~~ needs of the population are properly planned for
 - Reducing the high cost of energy use
 - Ensuring that infrastructure needs are met
- 1.7 The Local Plan is ~~therefore~~ not just a response to demand, but a powerful tool to meet those challenges, to shape growth in a planned way and so ensure a set of substantial gains over the long term for the benefit of the residents of the District.
- 1.8 By identifying key development areas for ~~sequenced~~ growth and change over the short, medium and long term, the ~~P~~plan shows to residents and business the level and rate of growth and change likely in these areas over time. This will give business and residents certainty about the shape of their communities in the future.
- 1.9 The ~~P~~plan centres on ~~Bicester and Banbury Market Towns~~ as the most sustainable locations for growth. It is a plan which seeks to strengthen the role of the towns as the centre of the local economy, set within a rural hinterland.

- 1.10** Maintaining and growing a successful economy requires growth as an inevitable outcome and brings with it many benefits, such as an increased labour force, economic development, increased investment, community development and infrastructure improvements.
- 1.11** Growth is a continuous process; an outcome of natural population increase (births and people living longer), patterns of migration, economic drivers and the changing needs of our community. District growth requires an effective strategy for its management, making the most of ~~positive~~ benefits and minimising potential negative outcomes.
- 1.12** Our Local Plan seeks to secure growth that is ‘balanced’ and ‘targeted’; growth that improves our places and the wider environment. In doing so, the Plan is clear on what we will support and what we will not.
- 1.13** The ~~p~~Plan is policy driven, with a number of transformational steps proposed to secure:
- A productive, high value economy
 - An excellent transport system
 - Inclusive communities
 - One community, not separate ones
 - Quality urban, rural and natural environments
 - Good quality design and masterplanning for new business and residential developments
 - Clear limits to growth for both Banbury and Bicester.
- 1.14** The ~~P~~plan contains two sets of policies:
- Policies for development, which apply across the entire District (Section B ‘Policies for Development in Cherwell’).
 - Policies for places, which focus development on a number of strategic locations (Section C ‘Policies for Cherwell’s Places’).

The Role of the Local Plan

- 1.15** The Local Plan is the document which sets the long term strategic ‘spatial vision’ for a local authority area. It contains the strategic spatial framework and policies to help deliver that vision.
- 1.16** The Local Plan was previously referred to as the ‘Core Strategy’, the central document of a ‘Local Development Framework’ containing other local planning policy documents and guidance.
- 1.17** New legislation (the Localism (2011) Act) and regulations enable Councils to reintroduce the term ‘Local Plan’ and have changed some of the plan-making procedures including the introduction of ‘Neighbourhood Planning’. A new ‘National Planning Policy Framework’ (NPPF) has also been produced sweeping away over 1000 pages of guidance and allowing more scope for local interpretation of national policy. [New National Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\) is also being introduced.](#)

- 1.18 The Cherwell Local Plan takes into account these changes. It is a truly Local Plan which ensures that the NPPF's priorities are met but in a way that meets Cherwell's needs and challenges.
- 1.19 The Local Plan provides strategic planning policies and principles which support the wider economic priorities for Oxfordshire and the South East Midlands while also providing a foundation for local neighbourhoods to subsequently become involved in planning and shaping for their own areas should they so wish.

The Planning Context for the Local Plan

- 1.20 Although Cherwell District Council is the planning authority for Cherwell District, there is a framework of [European and national](#) legislation, national planning policy and guidance ~~within which we must operate.~~ The [Local Plan planning context for Cherwell District over the period to 2031](#) is heavily influenced by this context.
- 1.21 Until ~~25 March 2013~~ ~~very recently,~~ [the Local Plan local planning policy](#) was required to conform with a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – the now revoked South East Plan. The RSS set a broad framework of policies for the whole South East region and, like the Local Plan, was prepared based on evidence, assessment of issues and options, public involvement and independent examination. ~~Importantly, Significantly,~~ ~~it identified how much new housing should be provided within each authority from 2006 to 2026.~~ All Local Plans or Development Plan Documents within the South East region were required to conform to the RSS at the time of their preparation.
- 1.22 The South East Plan ~~was therefore has been~~ central to preparing the Local Plan ~~up until the~~ ~~as it evolved from its early stages, to Examination in Public point of revocation and then to adoption in May 2009 and subsequent implementation.~~ ~~Conforming with the South East Plan's~~ [housing requirements objectively assessed need for housing](#) was a key feature of both the Draft Core Strategy 2010 and the Proposed Submission Local Plan 2012 and the emerging South East Plan was important in shaping the Council's Options for Growth in 2008.
- 1.22a [More recently it is the NPPF \(published March 2012\) that has guided completion of the Plan. The NPPF includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, an emphasis on assessing needs locally, on working jointly with other authorities and on achieving economic growth. The Plan has been informed by the NPPF's twelve 'Core Planning Principles' including that planning be "...genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area..."](#)
- 1.22b [The influence of the NPPF and the revocation of the South East Plan can be seen in the Plan's clearer focus on delivering economic growth, in its more place specific objectives, in the identification of more strategic housing and employment sites to meet growth needs, and in the shaping of policies for a positive approach to development while protecting important local assets \(for example, through the identification of green boundaries to growth\).](#)

1.22c Nevertheless, many of the conclusions arising from the process of producing the South East Plan remain valid: the level of growth envisaged by the South East Plan (670 dwellings per annum) is broadly in line with household projections for the District; the priority for growth is at Bicester where there remains a need to maximise the benefits accruing from its location, including for high value and knowledge-based business; the Green Belt north of Oxford needs to be maintained; Banbury is a Primary Regional Centre with an important role as a market town supporting its wider hinterland; and, there is a need to meet the local needs of our rural communities for small scale affordable housing, business and service development having regard to the changes to the rural economy and the need to maintain services.

1.23 ~~Although the South East Plan was recently revoked, it is appropriate that this Local Plan, prepared to respond to regional and sub-regional objectives, be completed and implemented to deliver the growth envisaged. The South East Plan's housing requirement for the District, 670 dwellings per annum, continues to be applied in the Local Plan to provide new homes at Bicester, Banbury, Kidlington and rural areas and to provide certainty in bringing forward new strategic development sites important for the social and economic well-being of the District.~~ Although the South East Plan covered the period to 2026~~34~~, this Local Plan covers the period ~~from~~ of 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2031. This is to ensure that at least ~~a~~ 15 years of housing supply can be provided post-adoption, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework, ~~and~~ to provide flexibility in phasing the delivery of strategic development sites and to allow a longer period for infrastructure planning.

The Structure of the Local Plan

1.24 This Local Plan is structured as follows:

Section A 'Strategy for Development in Cherwell':

1.25 This section considers the district as a whole and sets the context for the rest of the document. It includes the following:-

- A vision and spatial strategy for Cherwell District up to 2031
- A series of key objectives which will set out how this vision and strategy are to be realised.

Section B 'Policies for Development in Cherwell':

1.26 This section details a series of planning policies which stem from the objectives described in Section A grouped under three themes:

- Developing a Sustainable Local Economy
- Building Sustainable Communities
- Ensuring Sustainable Development

Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places':

1.27 This section looks in detail at different parts of the district and sets out objectives and policies for these areas. It includes allocations of sites that the

Council considers to be of strategic importance to delivering our overall development strategy for the district. This section includes:

- C.1 Introduction
- C.2 Bicester
- C.3 Banbury
- C.4 Kidlington
- C.5 Our Villages and Rural Areas

Section D 'The Infrastructure Delivery Plan':

- 1.28** This section considers how the Local Plan will be delivered. It shows the key infrastructure that will be needed to support our communities over the next few years and how we can ensure that the infrastructure needed to support new development will be properly provided.

Section E 'Monitoring Delivery of the Local Plan':

- 1.29** We need to make sure that we have proper systems in place to measure our success in achieving the objectives we have set in the Local Plan. This section shows how we propose to monitor this.

How the Local Plan has been Prepared

- 1.30** Producing our Local Plan has involved various stages of preparation and consultation, beginning in 2005. A number of documents have been produced, and these, together with other technical and background reports, have been referenced in Appendix 3 'Evidence Base'.
- 1.31** The emerging strategic issues for the Local Plan to focus on, and the options regarding how to tackle them, were presented in an Issues and Options Paper published for consultation between February and April 2006.
- 1.32** Consultees listed in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, and other respondents to preliminary Plan correspondence, were invited to comment on the document. Representations received during this consultation can be viewed online.
- 1.33** We supplemented this early consultation with regular workshops held with Parish Councils, other expert organisations, and agents/developers. The regular workshops with Parish Councils introduced Parishes to the Local Plan, and provided a forum to explore potential policy approaches (initially focusing on village policy and the settlement hierarchy, and then issues such as employment and tourism, affordable housing, design, and village boundaries). Stakeholder workshops were also undertaken to inform the Sustainability Appraisal – to 'test' certain options, making use of the local knowledge of experts and organisations in environmental, social and economic fields. Workshops were also held specifically on the 'Directions of Growth' – identifying the locations for development. Separate workshops were held for Parish Councils, 'experts' and agents/developers.
- 1.34** The evidence gained through these consultation exercises was intended to inform the next 'Preferred Options' stage. However the Regulations guiding

the production of the Plans were amended in June 2008 and a specific 'Preferred Options' stage was removed.

- 1.35** The new Regulations and accompanying guidance instead focused on more continuous consultation and evidence gathering throughout the generation and consideration of options, to ensure that options pursued in the Local Plan are capable of being delivered. The Local Plan should be based on evaluation of the 'reasonable alternatives' and should be the most appropriate plan when considered against these alternatives. The new guidance emphasised the collection of a robust evidence base, which should be relevant to local characteristics and as up to date as practical.
- 1.36** Recognising the need for a thorough evidence base, and the importance of up to date stakeholder involvement, in Autumn 2008 we undertook further consultation on what at that time was termed the 'Core Strategy' and potential 'Options for Growth' for the district (consulting on broad areas around Banbury and Bicester that we considered to be 'reasonable alternatives' for growth, suitable for further investigation).
- 1.37** After this 'Options for Growth' consultation, [the](#) focus turned to gathering further evidence on a range of issues. We commissioned a number of in-depth technical studies to provide the evidence needed to ensure the Local Plan is 'justified'.
- 1.38** In April 2008, two locations in Cherwell were shortlisted for consideration as [eEco-t](#)Towns – a site near Weston-on-the-Green (known as 'Weston Otmoor') and North West Bicester. In July 2009 we received confirmation that North West Bicester had been identified as a potential eco-town location, with around 5,000 new homes to be provided over the lifetime of that development.
- 1.39** The timescale for the Local Plan has also been influenced by the preparation and adoption (in 2009) of the now revoked South East Plan.
- 1.40** In February 2010 we published the Draft Core Strategy and consulted upon it. The results of that consultation [were used have informed the to further develop ment of this](#) Local Plan.
- 1.41** Following the election of a new Government in May 2010 major reform to the Planning system was introduced, including the Localism (2011) Act, powers for the Government to revoke the RSS, and the introduction of simpler planning guidance through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which places a greater emphasis on securing sustainable growth. This plan responds to these reforms.
- 1.41a** [The Council consulted upon the Proposed Submission Local Plan in August 2012 and Proposed Changes to the Proposed Submission Local Plan in March 2013. The responses received have informed the Submission Local Plan.](#)

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.42** Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required to be undertaken in the preparation of all Development Plan Documents. An SA report [was has been](#) produced

for public consultation to accompany the Local Plan. The purpose of SA is to ensure that the Local Plan proposes sustainable development. It has informed the objectives and ~~draft~~ policies of the Local Plan.

The Local Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.43** The Local Plan is not the only document that considers the issues facing communities in Cherwell district into the future. The 'Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy' (SCS) has also been prepared as the top level guiding document for the Cherwell area. The SCS sets an overall strategic direction and long-term (until 2030) vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. It will ~~influence~~~~determine~~ future policies and plans and it will be used to influence future funding.
- 1.44** There are important differences between the Local Plan and the SCS.
- 1.45** Unlike the Local Plan, the SCS is not prepared by the District Council but by the Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership of which the Council is a member.
- 1.46** The SCS considers a wide range of issues of importance to the community, many of which are not related to land-use planning. It therefore has a wider scope than the Local Plan. But while the processes of preparing the two documents are different, public engagement is central to both.
- 1.47** We have sought to ensure that the two documents are complementary. The SCS recognises the growth and development that will take place in the district and considers the implications of this for Cherwell's communities. The Local Plan seeks to address the wider needs and aspirations of communities as expressed in the SCS.
- 1.48** The Cherwell Local Strategic Partnership published the draft SCS in July 2009, and carried out a public consultation on this document until October 2009. In November 2009, the Council adopted a revised SCS "Our District, Our Future".
- 1.49** The Council has sought to ensure that there is a strong link between the two documents, which can be seen in several ways:
- Both the proposed spatial vision for the Local Plan and its objectives draw from those prepared for the SCS
 - The level of growth and development that is anticipated in the district is fully reflected in the SCS, in particular through the "Future Challenges" section of that document
 - The four key "ambitions" within the SCS reflect the challenges posed by this growth. Within each of these are contained objectives, many of which are reflected in the policies of the Local Plan.

Duty to Cooperate

- 1.49a** The Council has a legal 'Duty to Co-operate' with other local planning authorities and other prescribed bodies when it undertakes certain activities.

including the preparation of development plan documents, activities that can reasonably be considered to prepare the way for such preparation and activities that support such preparation so far as they relate to a strategic matter. The reason is to maximise the effectiveness of those activities. The Council is required to “to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis” in respect of the activities that are subject to the Duty.

1.49b The NPPF makes clear that the Duty particularly relates to the strategic priorities of Local Plans:

- the homes and jobs needed in the area
- the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development
- the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; and
- climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.

1.49c Local planning authorities should:

- work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans
- undertake joint working on areas of common interest for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities
- work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own areas
- consider producing joint planning policies on strategic matters and informal strategies such as joint infrastructure and investment plans
- take account of different geographic areas, including travel-to-work areas, and ensure cooperation between county and district authorities on relevant issues
- work collaboratively to enable delivery of sustainable economic growth in consultation with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships
- work collaboratively with private sector bodies, utility and infrastructure providers.

1.49d On-going and constructive engagement with neighbouring authorities and relevant organisations has taken place since work on the Local Plan began. The Council benefits from possessing a series of very well developed,

interlocking relationships with neighbouring Councils and a particularly close engagement with Oxfordshire County Council and South Northamptonshire District Council. Through the various forums, regular debate and coordination takes place on strategic planning, growth strategies, transport and economic development issues facing the sub-region, county, and district, and in relation to its neighbours.

1.49e A 'Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Cooperate' supports the Local Plan. Key areas of cooperation include:

- involvement in both the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership
- joint working and collaboration through the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP) supported by the Oxfordshire Planning Policy Officers group (OPPO)
- involvement of the Local Strategic Partnership in developing the Local Plan
- development and maintenance of a county Local Investment Plan
- joint working and on-going liaison with Oxfordshire County Council on Local Plan issues and place-shaping
- joint working on Bicester and Banbury Masterplans, Gypsies and Traveller housing needs, flood risk and transport
- Parish and Town Council involvement in developing the Local Plan vision and aims
- Close working with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation
- liaison with adjoining authorities and service providers
- liaison with Bicester Vision and Chambers of Commerce
- involvement in the Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy produced by the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership

1.49f Such cooperation has helped shape the Local Plan, for example in understanding the growth needs of Bicester, the opportunities associated with strategic investment in the railways, the need for regeneration in central Banbury, strategic highway issues, the re-alignment of the national logistic needs of the military, and the environmental priorities for the future.

1.49g The Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities and others on planning issues which cross administrative boundaries.

Other Policy Links and Additional Local Policy Guidance

1.50 The Local Plan draws on a number of other documents including:

- The Cherwell Council's own -Sstrategies such as the Economic Development Strategy, Housing Strategy and Conservation and Urban Design Strategy
- Specific evidence and studies commissioned for the preparation of the Local Plan
- An [evolving](#) Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

1.51 Together with the strategy, policies and guidance for strategic development areas in the Local Plan there will be [other non-strategic policy and comprehensive guidance on the development that will be permitted in the District, what it should contain, how it should be designed, the matters that will need to be addressed and where it may be located.](#)

1.52 The additional [policy and guidance](#) ~~on particular issues and places~~ will include:

- A Development Management DPD – to [assist the preparation and consideration of planning applications](#) ~~cover Development Control matters~~
- A Local Neighbourhoods DPD – to [identify](#) ~~cover~~ smaller (non-strategic) sites in the urban and rural areas [and provide linkages to Neighbourhood Planning](#)
- Bolton Road SPD
- Canalside SPD
- ~~Spiceball Development Area SPD~~
- Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell SPD [to cover design and regulatory guidance matters](#)
- Bicester Masterplan SPD
- Banbury Masterplan SPD
- [Kidlington Framework Masterplan](#) ~~-~~

What Does the Plan Do?

1.53 The detail of the Cherwell Local Plan is set out in the following sections. In summary, it [achieves the following](#):

- Sets out clear ambitions for the District and the two towns in particular
- Provides certainty for communities and developers as to what will /can be developed and where
- Focuses growth at Bicester [and to a lesser extent at Banbury](#)
- [Seeks to strengthen Kidlington's economic role](#)
- Proposes sustainable levels of growth at the villages and has regard to the need to protect the character of our rural areas
- Ensures that the main focus of the plan is strengthening the local economy, job creation, inward investment and company growth, [as well as building cohesive](#) ~~together with what sort of~~ communities ~~we wish to build~~
- Creates a major platform to help deliver economic development in a recession
- Strengthens the ~~t~~[Town](#) ~~c~~[Centres](#) at the heart of the District
- Secures infrastructure such as new rail and road investment
- Avoids [the](#) coalescence [of towns and](#) ~~with~~ villages, by introducing new green buffers at the edges [of Bicester and Banbury](#) ~~of the towns~~
- Takes permissions and what has been constructed into account
- Emphasises high environmental standards and design quality
- Protects, enhances and realises the potential of the Oxford Canal
- Promotes area renewal and regeneration in Banbury
- Supports innovation such as Community Self Build
- Addresses planning reforms.

1.54 We consider this to be a deliverable plan and one that will secure a sustainable economy for Cherwell over the next two decades.