

Bicester to grow into a Garden Town

In 2014 the Government announced Bicester was to receive Garden Town status in recognition of its plans to deliver 13,000 new homes and 18,500 new jobs in line with Cherwell District Council's Local Plan. Despite hearing the term being used, many people are still confused about what it actually means for Bicester.

What is a Garden Town?

Ebenezer Howard, founder of the Garden City movement, defined Garden Cities as places that offer "the advantages of the most energetic and active town life with all of the beauty and delight of the country secured in perfect combination". Cherwell had to demonstrate a genuine ambition for growth which would bring together homes, jobs, infrastructure and green spaces. As a Garden Town, Bicester will include trees, open spaces and high quality architecture but the area will be unique and shaped by its people, heritage and natural environment.

What does this mean for Bicester?

Garden Town status does not change the plans for Bicester's growth; it simply confirms the proposals have been done to a high standard with strong leadership and vision. Cherwell will still deliver the 13,000 homes and 18,500 jobs in the areas identified in its Local Plan, most of which will be completed by 2031.

What are the benefits?

The status brings additional Government funding and so far £1.5 million has been awarded to Cherwell to fund

feasibility studies to prepare for the town's growth. The results of these studies can then be used to support future grant bids which will be used to fund the delivery of the necessary infrastructure and transport works to support the town's growth.

What about what residents want?

Becoming a Garden Town enables Bicester's existing and future residents and traders to become more involved in the shaping of the town through increased opportunities for engagement. Cherwell will engage with residents to establish the future vision and delivery of a Garden Town. Feedback to date has shown the town's sense of community is among its most popular traits while issues around traffic and sustainable transport top locals' concerns.

Residents can continue to provide feedback on what they consider important for the town at www.ecobicester.org.uk

As explained in the article on page 7 of the Garth Gazette Cherwell will be promoting developments in Bicester and providing information for residents under the 'Growing Bicester' logo.



Bicester pips competition to Green Apple award

The organisations behind the delivery of 6,000 true zero carbon homes at North West Bicester (NW Bicester) have won an international award for their dedication to sustainability. Cherwell District Council's EcoBicester team, sustainability charity Bioregional and developers A2Dominion have jointly been awarded the Green Apple Environment award for the Built Environment category.

The awards recognised the organisations' One Shared Vision initiative to extend the sustainability concept for 6,000 true zero carbon homes at NW Bicester across the rest of the town.

Louise Caves, strategic partnership manager at A2Dominion, said:

“NW Bicester is the only true zero carbon development of this scale in the UK, generating all of its energy from low or zero carbon sources on site.”

In their award submission, the three partners highlighted the high sustainability standards being met through the new development, including the use of a combined heat and power plant to supply heat and hot water to all 6,000 homes while ensuring high eco standards. These efforts have helped the site to be awarded one of only nine One Planet Living statuses worldwide,



Catch up on Bicester expansion plans

It is only summer but 2015 has already proved to be a productive year for developments in Bicester. With three months still to go, there is still plenty of time for more milestones to be achieved including the first residents moving into North West Bicester and the completion of the Park and Ride project.

Town Centre Regeneration

March this year contractors Morgan Sindall began work on the £6.5 million second phase of the project, to create a five-story building on the site of the former Franklins Yard car park. This will house a new library and Travelodge as well as retail and office space for companies including Cherwell District Council and Brethertons. All five storeys are now in place and the project is due to be completed in spring 2016.

Elmsbrook, North West Bicester

The first homes for the Exemplar stage of the project have been completed and the sales centre is now open. Plot reservations are going well and the first homes are expected to be occupied by the end of this year. Work on the Exemplar is expected to be ongoing until 2018, running concurrent to other phases of the project. Planning permission for the Exemplar primary school has been granted and work is expected to begin on the school later this year in time for the September 2016 intake.

Graven Hill

Two successful free information events have taken place this year with approximately 900 attendees eager to find out more about the UK's largest self-build housing project. In autumn this year the first plot prices are due for release and infrastructure and clearing work will begin on site. In spring 2016 work will commence on the first



ten houses at the demonstrator site which will be filmed by Channel 4 production company Boundless as part of a new Grand Designs series hosted by Kevin McCloud.

Kingsmere, South West Bicester

Work continues on the delivery of new housing at Kingsmere. Work on the new primary school is underway and it is due to open in January 2016 whilst consultation of the secondary school on the site is due to start in September. The park and ride site opening will provide the opportunity to conveniently access fast bus services into Oxford.

Bicester Sports Village

Plans for the £3.3 million second phase of the new Bicester Sports Village, incorporating a two-storey sports pavilion, pitches and car park, are due to be decided upon in October. It is proposed the building will house a kiosk and sports club facilities on the ground floor while upstairs there will be a function room with a kitchen and bar and space to accommodate up to 150 seated guests. If approved, the project is due for completion in time for the 2016/2017 season.



Bank a salary and experience with apprenticeship opportunities

School leavers used to face the dilemma of getting a job or pursuing their education. Both had benefits; employment meant a salary and experience while education generated qualifications to increase career options. But in recent years students have been given a third option – the chance to earn while they learn with on-the-job training through an apprenticeship.

Cherwell District Council recognises the importance of investing in young people through apprenticeships. Bicester's expansion provides an ideal opportunity to promote careers in construction, where there is a current shortage of skilled workers. In 2014/2015



figures from Oxfordshire Apprenticeships showed 2,182 apprenticeships were started in the county, but only 150 were in construction. In its unique position as a

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planning authority, landowner and employer, Cherwell is working to promote apprenticeship opportunities in these and other areas by supporting the delivery of three key projects:

North West Bicester

The delivery of 6,000 zero carbon homes and associated amenities at North West Bicester provides scope for construction apprenticeships across numerous trades ranging from builders and carpenters to electricians and plumbers. To date, developer A2Dominion has already created five apprenticeships as part of the phase one Exemplar development. However, with a potential 30 year build out to complete the site, Cherwell has designed a scheme which will aim to deliver at least 300 apprenticeship opportunities during the site's construction. This will be delivered in partnership with local colleges, the Construction Industry Training Board, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Apprenticeships. To support the plan, work is under way to establish an Apprenticeship Training Agency as a not-for-profit organisation that will lead the delivery of the programme and this has been supported with a grant of £50,000 from OxLEP.

Build!

Cherwell's award-winning Build! scheme is not just transforming redundant sites into affordable housing, it is also creating opportunities for apprenticeships. A £50,000 joint funding project between Cherwell and OxLEP has created eight site carpentry apprenticeships for 16 - 23 year olds who have been hired to work exclusively on the council's Build! sites. The grant covers all of the apprentices' employment costs including salary, management and personal protective equipment as well as providing each apprentice with a full set of tools and return journeys to work. The team are led by Kidlington-based firm ABC (Oxford) Limited and by the end of this year, the team will be on course to complete their training and Level Two Carpentry apprenticeship qualification.

In-house

The growth of the district does not just equate to more homes; it also generates more residents requiring more services, including those provided by Cherwell. For the past five years the council has been running an in-house apprenticeship scheme, with opportunities available in the housing, finance and customer service departments at Bodicote House as well as supporting the vehicle fleet team at its depots. Currently there are four apprentices employed by Cherwell, with more due to be recruited over the coming months.

Learn more about Bicester's new schools

As Bicester grows so will its population, including the younger and future generations. Thousands of jobs are being created to meet the needs of the adults but before they reach the age of employment, youngsters will need an education. This is being addressed through the provision of several new schools which will take children from their very first day at school to their very last.

Bicester Technology Studio School

Also expected to open in September next year is the new Bicester Technology Studio School which will be located off Queen's Avenue. The school will provide free education for up to 310 students aged between 14 and 19, specialising in sustainable construction technologies and business logistics, alongside a core curriculum. The school will adopt a workplace environment and is expected to offer year-round opening between 8.30am and 5pm and be sponsored by Activate Learning, who already run Bicester Community College. Details at www.bicestertechstudio.org.uk

St Edburg's Primary School, Kingsmere

Although already an existing school in Bicester, St Edburg's will be the first new school to open its doors when it relocates from its existing site in Cemetery Road, Bicester, to its new location at the Kingsmere development. Work is well advanced on the building of the new premises with the first students expected to arrive in January next year. More details at www.st-edburgs.oxon.sch.uk

North West Bicester Exemplar Primary School

In total, North West Bicester will deliver four primary schools and one secondary school by the time it completes its 30-year build out. The first of these will be the Exemplar primary school which is due to open in September 2016 and will be operated by the White Horse Federation (WHF). The WHF is a multi-academy trust which already operates seven primary schools in Swindon and Wiltshire. More details at www.thewhitehorsefederation.org.uk

Kingsmere Secondary School

A new secondary school is due to open on the Kingsmere housing development in South West Bicester in September 2018 with capacity for up to 600 pupils aged between 11 and 16. Oxfordshire County Council, as the local education provider, is currently developing the specification for the new school which will be used to invite applications from potential academy providers and sponsors. The county council will then make a recommendation on its preferred applicant to the Department for Education, although the final decision will be made by the Secretary of State.

The consultation on the draft specification for Kingsmere Secondary School will begin in September; as the school adjoins the new sports village it is proposed to have a focus on sports and health education.

The consultation will run from 7 September until 18 October. To review or comment on the document visit <https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/SecSWBic/consultationHome>



Boiler scheme to return with red hot offer

£300 off a replacement boiler

Bicester residents need not sweat over the cost of replacing an old or broken boiler with the return of Cherwell District Council's £300 boiler cashback offer.

In autumn last year Cherwell launched the Boiler Cashback Scheme to homeowners, tenants and private landlords living within the Bicester Ring Road.

Those living in the vicinity with a boiler rated D or below or which was at least ten years old were invited to claim up to £300 cashback towards a boiler upgrade.

Cllr Barry Wood, leader of Cherwell District Council, said: "Last year the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board awarded Cherwell a grant to help people within the Ring Road cover the expense of replacing or upgrading their boilers. A total of 105 households took us up on the offer and as such, we have decided to repeat the promotion to give people a second opportunity to sign up.

"An energy efficient boiler can deliver hundreds of pounds of savings year on year but we understand the initial outlay to purchase and install one can prove

unaffordable to some. Therefore this autumn, at a time when people will turn their heat back on in time for winter we will be offering them the chance to save up to £300 on a new boiler to help make the purchase a lot more affordable."

Boilers can account for up to 60 per cent of annual energy bills, particularly if it is old or has a poor energy efficiency rating (D – G).

The cashback scheme is set to return from 1 October this year. It will again be limited to the area within the Bicester Ring Road and available only whilst funds last. It is delivered by the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board and administered by the National Energy Foundation. The grant is available to replace gas, LPG and oil boilers.

Residents and landlords who are interested in receiving the cashback must first register their interest and arrange a no-obligation survey with a Gas Safe registered installer. Allocations will be awarded on a first-come-first-served basis from the date the scheme relaunches.

For more information visit www.ecobicester.org.uk/boilerscheme or call **01908 256929**.

Bike it

Bicester Green's bike loan scheme is part of the town's sustainability agenda.

from **£5** a weekend



Residents can hire a bike for a weekend, week or a month - all at a very reasonable cost (a weekend is only £5). Customers can hire accessories too – like a child seat, a kid's trailer or a tail bike.

For more information email info@bicestergreen.org.uk, phone **01869 388 564** or visit www.bicestergreen.org.uk, [facebook/bicestergreen](https://www.facebook.com/bicestergreen)



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

