

| This report is public | |
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| Public Realm Strategy Frameworks | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 December 2024 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | Leader, Councillor Hingley, agreed on behalf of Portfolio Holder, 21 November 2024 |
| Report of | Assistant Director Growth and Economy, Robert Jolley |

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington by Executive for inclusion within the evidence base for the Local Plan and as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Frameworks are presented as high level policy documents. The Frameworks' suggested public realm interventions are therefore aspirational at this stage and do not have funding allocated to them, with the exception of the three projects which are currently being developed for (i) Bicester Market Place; (ii) Bicester Bure Place and (iii) Kidlington High Street.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the inclusion of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups.
- 1.2 To agree delegated authority for the Assistant Director for Growth and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, to arrange the final presentation of the Plan and make any necessary minor amendments to it, including any typographic or formatting errors prior to publication.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington were commissioned in order to fulfil a recommendation made by the Town Centre and Retail Study (September 2021), a report which forms part of the economic evidence base for the Local Plan Review.
- 2.2 With Executive approval on 4 November 2024 for the adoption of an area-based approach (see Executive report "Establishing Area Oversight Groups"), the Strategy Frameworks will also serve as reference in the work developing new Area Plans for

Banbury, Bicester and the Four Parishes area (Kidlington, Water Eaton, Begbroke and Yarnton). The Area Plans will develop a medium to long term vision for each area, setting out the ambition for the area, the areas of planned growth, critical infrastructure to be delivered and needed, as well as an investment framework.

2.3 Executive approval of the Strategy Frameworks is sought:

- (i) to enable the Frameworks to be published as Council guidance and as part of the evidence base for the draft Local Plan 2042. The Frameworks clearly identify a range of opportunities for public realm improvements.
- (ii) to enable the Frameworks to be used as guidance by the Area Oversight Groups in order that their suggested interventions be considered for further development and inclusion in the future Area Plans for Banbury, Bicester and the Four Parishes area (Kidlington, Water Eaton, Begbroke and Yarnton).

Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | Commentary | | | |
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| Finance | <p>There is a capital budget of £4.25m within the Capital Programme to fund the Bicester Market Square project.</p> <p>Capital funding from the Government’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund initiative has been allocated to both the Bicester Bure Place and Kidlington High Street public realm improvements projects. Funding has not been allocated to any other project proposals outlined within the Frameworks and a Framework proposal would, therefore, need to be scoped and costed in order that a funding bid could be submitted.</p> <p>Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 08 November 2024</p> | | | |
| Legal | <p>There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.</p> <p>Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, 08 November 2024</p> | | | |
| Risk Management | <p>A risk register will be created at the point of initiation for the three projects currently being planned (Bicester Market Square; Bicester Bure Place; and Kidlington High Street), and for any further projects subsequently determined.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 08 November 2024</p> | | | |
| Impact Assessments | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
| Equality Impact | | | | [Insert commentary or not applicable] |
| A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality? | | x | | <p>There are no equality implications arising directly as a consequence of this report. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for each project at the point of initiation.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 08 November 2024</p> |

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| B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? | | x | | Not applicable |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | x | | | The Frameworks' suggested interventions of increased greening would indicate a positive climate and environmental impact, but the full impact of any project would need to be considered as part of the development of the detailed design plans. Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 11 November 2024 |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | | | Not applicable |
| Data Impact | | | | Not applicable |
| Procurement & subsidy | | x | | Procurement processes have been, or will be, undertaken as required in line with the Council's policy for the three projects which are already being planned. If further projects are to be developed and delivered to implement any of the Frameworks' other suggested interventions, the Council's procurement processes would again need to be followed. Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, 08 November 2024 |
| Council Priorities | The Frameworks' suggested interventions align with the Business Plan priority "Enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres" whilst the project to redevelop Bicester Market Square forms a key part of the Annual Delivery Plan priority EEV3, "To develop a plan for Reimagining Bicester and ensure existing and new communities benefit from short and long-term measures of the Garden Town principles." | | | |
| Human Resources | Not applicable | | | |
| Property | Growth and Economy officers are liaising as necessary with regard to the two Bicester projects (Bicester Market Square and Bure Place) currently being planned. It will be important that early engagement and consultation with Property continues, particularly where Cherwell District Council owned property may be or will be impacted by the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks. Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property, 04 November 2024. | | | |
| Consultation & Engagement | Officers in several of the Council's departments were engaged in this workstream from an early stage, particularly Planning Policy with regard to the draft Local Plan 2042's policies which make reference to the public realm and opportunities to improve it. The consultation undertaken included a Members' seminar for Cherwell District councillors; meetings with Banbury Town Council; | | | |

Bicester Town Council; and Kidlington Parish Council, as well as engagement with Oxfordshire County Council (via the Locality Groups' memberships). Consultation also took place with a number of key stakeholder groups, including:

- Age Friendly Banbury
- Banbury Business Improvement District (Banbury BID)
- Banbury Civic Society
- Banbury & District Chamber of Commerce
- Banbury Quays Consortium
- Bicester Town Centre Task Group
- Bicester Vision

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Revenue funding from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme enabled the Council to fulfil a recommendation made in the Town Centre and Retail Study (2021), which is a part of the economic evidence for the Local Plan Review.
- 3.2 The Town Centre and Retail Study had advocated that each of the main centres within Cherwell (Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington) could benefit from a Public Realm Strategy.
- 3.3 Whilst the available funding did not run to the cost of developing full Public Realm Strategies as such, the decision was taken to commission Strategy Frameworks for each of the three urban centres in order that these would provide the following:
- (i) a baseline site analysis;
 - (ii) a summary of the analysis findings;
 - (iii) an understanding of the constraints and opportunities; and
 - (iv) a number of suggestions for key public realm interventions.
- 3.4 It was planned that whilst the Strategy Frameworks would not be developed as Supplementary Planning Guidance, approval of the Frameworks by Executive should be sought in order to:
- (i) enable the Frameworks to be published as Council guidance and as part of the evidence base for the draft Local Plan 2042; and
 - (ii) enable the Frameworks to be used as guidance by the Area Oversight Groups so that their suggested interventions be considered for further development and inclusion in the future Area Plans.
- 3.5 After following the required procurement processes, the contract for provision of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks was awarded to consultants Broadway Malyan in spring 2023.

4. Details

- 4.1 Each Framework provides a baseline analysis of the urban centre studied and summarises the analysis findings, identifying constraints and opportunities. Amongst other characteristics, the site analysis for each centre looks at pedestrian/cyclist/vehicle movement; culture and heritage; green infrastructure; microclimate; public realm furniture; and public realm comfort and safety.
- 4.2 For each urban centre, its Framework concludes by making a number of key recommendations for public realm improvements. The suggested projects are outlined at high level rather than in detail and they do not constitute an action plan. With the exception of the projects listed under paragraph 4.4, the projects are proposals which have not yet been worked up in any detail and to which no funding has as yet been allocated. The proposals stand, therefore, in readiness to be developed and costed as required for future bids for funding by the Council, and/or by the relevant local authority partners/other stakeholder partners.
- 4.3 It should also be noted that the interventions proposed do not preclude consideration of any other public realm project proposals which may be put forward for sites either within, or outside, the boundaries of each Framework's study area (but within the confines of the parish involved).
- 4.4 As referenced earlier in this report under Finance and Risk Management Implications, the Strategy Frameworks propose three projects which are already being planned:
- (i) **Bicester, Market Square** – with capital funding approved by Council in February 2023.
 - (ii) **Bicester, Bure Place** – UKSPF capital funded project which will include new lighting, seating and planters and be delivered by end March 2025.
 - (iii) **Kidlington, High Street** – UKSPF capital funded project which will include new seating and planters and be delivered by end March 2025.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: The Council could decide not to approve the Frameworks for use as guidance. If this option is chosen, the Frameworks would not be approved as Executive guidance and added to the evidence base for the Local Plan Review, nor would the Frameworks be used as guidance by the Area Oversight Groups.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington (urban centres) identify the constraints and opportunities facing Cherwell's three urban centres and propose a number of key public realm interventions for each urban centre.

6.2 Executive’s approval of the Strategy Frameworks will enable the Frameworks to sit as guidance within the evidence base for the draft Local Plan 2042 and act as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups, with the Frameworks’ suggested interventions for public realm improvements to be considered for inclusion in the development of the future Area Plans for Banbury; Bicester; and the Four Parishes area (Kidlington, Water Eaton, Begbroke and Yarnton).

Decision Information

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| Key Decision | Yes |
| Subject to Call in | Yes |
| If not, why not subject to call in | Not applicable |
| Ward(s) Affected | All |

Document Information

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| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1 | Public Realm Strategy Framework, Banbury |
| Appendix 2 | Public Realm Strategy Framework, Bicester |
| Appendix 3 | Public Realm Strategy Framework, Kidlington |
| Background Papers | None |
| Reference Papers | (i) Town Centre and Retail Study (2021) (ii) Executive report of 04 November 2024 – “Establishing Area Oversight Groups” |
| Report Author | Assistant Director Growth and Economy, Robert Jolley |
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| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | Ian Boll, Corporate Director – Communities, 20 November 2024 |