

# MID-CHERWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2018-2031

'MADE MA' 2019



MidCherwell  
Neighbourhood Plan

## **POLICY PD4: PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT VIEWS AND VISTAS**

Development proposals within the plan area must demonstrate sensitivity to the important views and vistas described in Table 4 and illustrated by photographs in the documents referred to in that Table, by including an assessment of the significance of the views and the effect of the proposed development on them. Proposals which cause significant harm to any of these views will only be acceptable where the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh any harm.

Development proposals must also be designed such that there is no adverse impact on the sensitive skylines identified in Fig. 8 and referenced in Table 4.

Applicants for development in or adjacent to a Conservation Area must demonstrate in a Heritage Impact Assessment that they have taken account of the appropriate Conservation Area Appraisal, and of the Heritage and Character Assessment at Appendix K, and demonstrated that the proposal causes as little harm to an identified view as possible and that any harm is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal. The development should not harm the Conservation Area and its setting, other heritage assets, or historic street and village views and longer distance vistas.

### **Rationale for Protection of Important Views and Vistas policy**

- 3.2.21 Local Plan Policy ESD15<sup>6</sup> states that development will not be permitted if it causes “undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.” CDC’s Countryside Design Summary 1998 also refers to vistas in relevant character areas, as does the draft Cherwell Design Guide SPD (2017).
- 3.2.22 The underlying landform, historic landscape elements, and notable landmarks within the landscape make views an important characteristic within the Mid-Cherwell area. The Cherwell Valley provides opportunities for far-reaching and panoramic views from along the valley sides, and more intimate views from within the base of the valley. Along the Cherwell Valley the strong rural characteristics of the landscape are apparent, including the small-scale isolated settlements dispersed along the valley, most notable in views as a result of their churches standing tall above surrounding woodland. Views within the Cherwell Valley are more open from the eastern side of the valley than the west, which is more wooded and has slightly greater enclosure. Fig.8 on p 51, shows the contours and highlights the sensitive skylines of high ground on each side of the Cherwell Valley that are to be protected.
- 3.2.23 There are important views recognised in Cherwell District Council’s Conservation Area Appraisals for many of the villages, which are referenced in Table 4 on p.34. Some of the land nominated as Local Green Spaces (policy PD7) plays a significant role in important views that are listed. Across the area the most prominent recurring landmarks are the churches at the many small villages within Mid-Cherwell, and the historic water tower (currently due for demolition) and other structures at the former RAF Upper Heyford. The churches are often framed within the landscape by surrounding vegetation, and are often the first indicator of the location of a settlement. The views between church towers along the Cherwell Valley, and the setting of these views, are a particularly characteristic feature. The neighbourhood plan Forum together with AECOM has identified a number of views and vistas within the neighbourhood plan area which are of particular importance to its history and character. These views and vistas have been used as a reference point in producing the Heritage and Character Assessment (Appendix K), and are referenced in Table 4 on p.34.

3.2.24 In the experience of the parish councils involved in this neighbourhood plan, applicants often do the minimum necessary to demonstrate that there will not be harm to Conservation Areas and other heritage assets. Local Plan policy makes no mention of the value of Heritage Impact Assessments in this context. Policy PD4 requires that such a document must be prepared and submitted by applicants in cases where harm could be done (a judgement that will have to be made by Cherwell District Council in responding to the application). It is believed that such a document, properly prepared, will bring to the surface issues (for example through the inclusion of accurate montages of the likely impact of a proposal) that might otherwise not be recognised. Where potential harm is apparent, applicants will be expected to show whether mitigation could be achieved in order to allow approval to be considered.

**TABLE 4: IMPORTANT VIEWS AND VISTAS TO BE PROTECTED**

- A) Views of all church towers in the MCNP area, as seen from numerous viewpoints including those shown in photos referred to in c) below, and as shown in Fig.8 on p.51.
  
- B) All the vistas and views referred to in the following CDC Conservation Area Appraisals, or in updated versions of these documents:
  - Ardley 2005: para 4.12 and Table p.11-12; church views on p.27
  - Fewcott 2008: para 6.11 and Fig.7
  - Duns Tew 2005: Table 1 and Fig.8
  - Fritwell 2008: Paras. 6.11, 7.11, 8.7, 9.10 and 10.11 and Figs. 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16
  - Kirtlington 2011: p.33-34, and Fig.13
  - North Aston 2015: Para 12.2 and Fig.12
  - RAF Upper Heyford 2006: Para 6.4 and Figs 9,10 and 11
  - Steeple Aston 2014: Paras. 8.1.3, 8.1.4, 8.2.1 and 8.3.3, p.26 and Fig.14
  - Rousham 1996 (in course of being updated)
  - Somerton 1996 (to be updated)
  - Oxford Canal 2012: para 6.69 - 6.76
  
- C) With reference to Appendix K (AECOM Heritage and Character Assessment), all the vistas and views referred to on p.22, 23, 76 and 90, and those referred to below, together with the relevant photos on those pages:
  - Fritwell: p.35; Kirtlington: p.43; Lower Heyford: p.51; Middle Aston: p.57;
  - Steeple Aston: p.65, and Upper Heyford: p.72

NOTE: Part 2 of APPENDIX K covers only Category A and B villages and Upper Heyford; other Category C villages were excluded from AECOM's study because of funding limitations affecting the scope of the work.