

### Policy PSD 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

When considering development proposals the Council will take a proactive approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council will always work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (or other part of the statutory Development Plan) will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

## Section B - Policies for Development in Cherwell

### B.1 Theme One: Policies for Developing a Sustainable Local Economy

#### Introduction

B.1 This Plan aims to support sustainable economic growth in the District. Creating a broad ranging, diverse and resilient economy is also a key ambition of the Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy.



B.2 Increasing the economic competitiveness of Cherwell District is fundamental to providing employment opportunities to reduce the level of out commuting as well as reducing traffic congestion in the District and in neighbouring Districts and so shifting to a more locally self sufficient, sustainable economy. As the cost of travel continues to increase, making commuting less viable, it will be important to provide employment opportunities within the District. A broad balance will also need to be maintained between labour supply and jobs.

B.3 However, improving Cherwell's economic future requires more than providing land and infrastructure. It also requires consideration of how we manage and reduce the environmental impact of proposed development and to ensure it is of sufficient quality and in keeping with the landscape and existing urban character of the District.

B.4 Protecting the role and function of our existing town centres and employment areas, as well as enhancing our natural and built environment, will enable Cherwell to become as business-friendly as possible in support of jobs and prosperity. Improving our town centres will also encourage tourism.

B.5 By working with our private sector partners we will take advantage of the locational advantages the District enjoys, the high economic activity level, the skills available and the clusters of specialist

activity such as advanced engineering. We will support jobs-led economic growth and commercial investment that helps move the District towards a globally-competitive, lower carbon/green economy.

B.6 As Bicester lies at the heart of the Oxford – Cambridge technology corridor, and as Banbury has a strong manufacturing base and close links to the Motorsport sector, we are looking to strengthen the District's profile with Performance Engineering and will support investment made in the District in premises for new technology innovation.

B.7 We will encourage investment in hi-tech industries at new sites in Bicester and support science and innovation at Kidlington to create a critical mass of high tech research investment in this part of the District. This will enable the resources of Oxford University's Begbroke Science Park to connect with local businesses, strengthening technology transfer to both nurture enterprise and draw investment into the District.

B.8 We will support limited new employment development in the rural areas to help strengthen the rural economy and increase employment opportunities throughout the District.

B.9 Our Economic Development Strategy (2011–2016) identified the following:

- levels of employment are relatively high but not everybody is benefiting
- we have increasingly relied upon public sector jobs which are set to reduce in number
- the skill base of the District needs to be widened
- there remain pockets of deprivation within our overall prosperity
- we have a diverse economy but often with 'lower value' activity similar to the south Midlands
- manufacturing is a particular strength but is often lower skilled locally
- the knowledge economy is growing, but not quickly enough.

B.10 Unemployment has increased in Cherwell, particularly in Banbury, since the start of the recession and employment in Cherwell grew more slowly than the national average in the same time period.

B.11 Even though unemployment is not high compared to other parts of the country, this needs to be addressed and is a focus of this Plan.

B.12 Cherwell has experienced lower growth than some surrounding areas including locations such as Milton Keynes and Warwick. This may be due to a shortage in skills in some areas. However nationally, in terms of competitiveness, it is ranked 62 out of 379 local authorities. Overall the levels of economic activity are high, with 82% of the working age population economically active.

B.13 41% of employment in the District is located in Banbury, 20% in Bicester, 14% in Kidlington and 25% in the rural areas. Upper Heyford is a former RAF base which has consent for over 1,000 dwellings (including the existing homes) but which also has just under 1,000 jobs already located within the existing buildings with more to come as part of the site's redevelopment. As such it is one of the larger employment locations within Cherwell and provides a good range of jobs and premises from engineering and scientific activities to specialist storage activities.

B.14 The population in Cherwell is highly skilled, however the levels of educational attainment are low in some areas. It will be important to ensure that the population is sufficiently skilled to attract companies and investment to Cherwell. We will support proposals to strengthen the skills base of the local economy through new facilities aiming to strengthen training and skills within the District. The planned investment in education (e.g. the University Technology College at Bicester) and skills will drive business growth, enhance the economy and improve our quality of life in the long term. Projects such as Brighter Futures and the Bretch Hill Regeneration Area identified in this Plan (Policy Banbury 10) will assist in improving skills. There will also need to be: promotion of local training providers, an improvement of the relationships between companies and schools, colleges and the Universities and continuation of initiatives such as the Council's 'Job Club'. Existing partnerships such as Bicester Vision and the M40 Investment partnership should continue to make this their priority.

B.15 Cherwell has excellent transport links with the M40 and a number of railway lines running through the District, some of which have recently been upgraded or are the subject of planned investment. Bus services are also good in most areas of the District.

B.16 Cherwell has a high proportion of employment in industrial sectors, logistics and retail and these contribute towards the local economy; but in order to be globally competitive and create a lower carbon economy more jobs are needed in the knowledge based sector. Wages are also relatively low in Cherwell and despite living costs being lower than many places in the South East, this means that there is less disposable income available for spending in the local area. An increase in jobs in the knowledge based sector will help improve this. Jobs in manufacturing are also at greatest risk from overseas competition where operating costs are much lower.

B.17 Homeworking is increasing in the District but is slightly lower than the South East average. Superfast broadband provision will be sought as a standard item within new housing and commercial development to support home working and new enterprise throughout the District, including in rural communities. We will support development proposals to enable working from home where appropriate. We will work with suppliers to encourage the provision of superfast broadband across the District. Home and flexible working reduces the need to travel, reducing travel impacts and congestion.

B.18 As with many similar areas, the age profile of Cherwell is projected to continue to become older. This is a trend that should be recognised as it may lead to a lack of labour supply. However a large proportion of the population is aged between 60 and 70. With the changes in retirement age, a reduction in pensions and the current economic climate it is likely that a significant proportion of people will continue to work into their late 60's and 70's. This group will need to be taken into account as a labour resource and it will be important that life long learning is provided so this group has the skills required to support the economic vision in this Plan.

B.19 Increasing labour supply could be achieved by allocating significantly more land for housing but this is likely to have significant and unacceptable environmental effects. Building the right type of housing, such as family housing, to maintain a working age population will however will be important.

B.20 Banbury is the most self contained settlement in Cherwell but there are over 3,000 more people leaving the District for work each day than entering it. The Council will attempt to 'reclaim'

out-commuters and provide jobs for local people by providing opportunities in a wider range of employment sectors.

B.21 To assist in achieving growth Cherwell has to increase 'capital in use' and 'total factor productivity' collectively known as labour productivity. This means developing and growing its economy by improving skills to enable an increase in productive jobs with higher wages.

B.22 The provision of a sufficient number and variety of available employment sites and the formation of planning policies which allow employment generating development to come forward in sustainable locations is critical to enabling existing companies to grow and to provide for new company formation. Employment sites are also needed in order to respond to inward investment including the planned electrification of the railway, new routes and stations in the District.

B.23 The Council belongs to two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) (which are formed by local government and businesses) which will be important for securing funding and in the implementation of projects. In the Budget of 2011 the government announced it would create Enterprise Zones across the country which provide for tax incentives for businesses and 'relaxed' planning regulations. Enterprise Zones have been awarded to, and are being driven by, Local Enterprise Partnerships. There are currently no Enterprise Zones in the District but the Plan provides sufficient employment land and flexible policies to allow business to grow.

B.24 The NPPF (2012) promotes the role of planning in achieving sustainable economic growth, in building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, and by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type, and in the right places, is available to allow growth and innovation.

B.25 In 2006 the Council prepared an Employment Land Review (ELR). This study sought to assess the quantity, quality and viability of employment land across the District. It assessed employment land that was at that time currently available and the need for further employment land within the District over the period of the Local Plan.

B.26 The ELR concluded that the District had a stock of premises and land that provides a broad range of choice for investors. It recommended that some 89 hectares of available employment land be protected to provide a continuity of supply of sites.

B.27 The forecasting and scenario exercise in the 2012 ELR shows a net additional demand for between 52.6 and 87.2 hectares of employment land across Cherwell to 2026, with the medium growth scenario (seen as the most likely to occur) predicting a net additional demand of approximately 70 ha. Extending this to 2031 results in demand for approximately 85 hectares.

B.28 A further analysis of the economy of the District and the changes it is experiencing was conducted in 2012 (Cherwell Economic Analysis Study) and updated in 2014 in an addendum. Table 33 of the Oxfordshire SHMA sets out a projected growth in jobs of 1,155 per annum and 1,142 homes per annum under the 'planned economic growth' forecast. Table 34 shows a total of 23,091 jobs generated under this scenario. The SHMA Economic Forecasting report on page 40 considers the proportion of total jobs generated (including indirect jobs) that would require B use class employment land. It is estimated that only 12,700 jobs will be located on B Use class land in Cherwell (table 6.2). The Submission Local Plan (January 2014) identified land for approximately 15,000 jobs and the consultants show at paragraph 6.6 of the SHMA Economic Forecasting Report that the

forecast growth in the Economic Forecasting Report could be accommodated on land identified for development in Cherwell's Local Plan (January 2014). The addendum takes into account the new housing numbers for Cherwell set out in the Oxfordshire SHMA, on which this Plan is based, and the 'committed economic growth scenario' they relate to. It also reflects any other significant changes that have occurred since publication of the 2012 report and informs a consistent broad alignment of policies on jobs and housing for the Local Plan including in relation to sub-areas. The 2014 Economic Analysis Study addendum identifies a need for just over 100 hectares of employment land to 2031.

B.29 A number of the strategic objectives of this Local Plan focus on supporting the local economy and fostering economic growth. These include objectives to:

- facilitate economic growth and a more diverse economy with an emphasis on attracting higher technology industries
- support the diversification of Cherwell's rural economy
- help disadvantaged areas, improve the quality of the built environment and make Cherwell more attractive to business by supporting regeneration
- improve the local skills base.

B.30 The support for business and economic development that the Local Plan has adopted is based on a strategic direction that gives focus to our efforts. We are looking to secure:

- business-friendly and well-functioning towns
- an eco-innovation hub along the Oxford – Cambridge technology corridor
- internationally connected and export driven economic growth
- investment in people to grow skills and the local workforce
- vibrant, creative and attractive market towns
- family housing
- measures to reclaim commuters where possible
- measures to increase labour productivity.

B.31 In terms of the type of employment development the District wants to attract and we will concentrate on:

- advanced manufacturing/high performance engineering
- the Green Economy
- innovation, research and development
- retailing
- consumer services.

B.32 We will support the logistics sector, recognising the jobs it provides and the good transport links that attracts this sector. However a high quality design will be expected. The significant amount of house building planned for the District will also lead to potential construction jobs (including in associated sectors) for local people.

B.33 Significant employment growth at Bicester will be encouraged and we will:

- encourage green technology and the knowledge based sectors, exploiting its position in the Oxford/Cambridge Corridor
- exploit its transport connections
- utilise the Ex-MoD land and facilitate the establishment of a modern logistics hub for the MoD
- maintain and increase the motorsport industry and other performance engineering
- create new opportunities for additional retail, leisure and cultural activities in an extended town centre
- encourage retailers and visitors to Bicester Town Centre
- continue to promote and expand Bicester Village where complementary to improving the town centre
- encourage high tech companies
- encourage higher value distribution companies
- improve its utilities infrastructure
- improve its sustainability and self sufficiency.

B.34 There will be moderate employment growth at Banbury and we will:

- build on its manufacturing base ensuring 'high end' manufacturing is encouraged
- exploit its transport connections
- maintain and increase the motorsport industry and other performance engineering
- maintain its sustainability and self sufficiency
- expand the retail heart of the town
- encourage the tourism industry around the canal and historic town centre
- encourage green technology and the knowledge based sectors
- encourage high tech companies
- encourage higher value distribution companies
- support its strong food production sector.

B.35 There will be small scale employment growth at Kidlington and we will:

- exploit its position in the Oxford/Cambridge Corridor
- allow for appropriate growth plans at Begbroke Science Park and in the vicinity of Langford Lane Industrial Estate following a small scale Green Belt review
- connect with the Oxford economy
- create new opportunities for additional retail, leisure and cultural activities, and environmental improvements, in an extended Village Centre
- secure the growth potential from the presence of London-Oxford Airport.

B.36 Employment growth in the rural areas will be limited and will involve:

- farm diversification schemes
- small scale, appropriate employment sites
- sustainable growth in tourism including recreation based tourism
- improvement of existing employment sites and reuse of existing buildings and brownfield sites (reflecting their historic or cultural significance where appropriate)

- support for working from home.

B.37 More detail is provided in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'.