

# The Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031

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**Part 1**  
**Adopted 20 July 2015**

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**Cherwell**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

## C.5 Our Villages and Rural Areas

### Meeting the Challenge of Developing a Sustainable Economy in the Villages and Rural Areas

C.236 Most of rural Cherwell's economically active residents commute to their workplaces, and less than a quarter of them work within 5km of home. There are limited employment opportunities in Cherwell's villages. Kidlington is the exception to this pattern. In recent years it has developed its high technology, office and airport offerings, positioning itself to absorb the potential overflow from Oxford University's spin off businesses. Kidlington is well connected with easily accessible business premises, and is well positioned to continue to provide for overflow needs from Oxford.



C.237 The key economic issues facing the villages and rural areas are:

- Addressing the changing needs of the rural economy and the District's farming communities. Farming remains of vital importance to Cherwell's rural identity and to local food production. In order to remain viable many farms are diversifying into tourism, recreation, food retail and other types of business.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate opportunities for local rural employment and to support home working will be important; there is a lack of fast broadband in some locations.
- The need to support the vibrant visitor economy in a way which contributes to the local economy whilst also preserving the local environment.
- The need to support the economic role of Kidlington.
- Potential future demand for airport expansion at Kidlington and the potential for employment land in this location.
- Preserving the canal and its immediate surroundings whilst maintaining and realising its recreational potential.

C.238 Our vision for our rural areas is that our villages should be "lived in" as well as "slept in". To achieve this, rural areas must seek to provide appropriate opportunities for new jobs such as support for farm diversification proposals and rural employment opportunities that are sustainable and support local communities, whilst at the same time protecting the landscape and built

environment of the District. In particular we will encourage appropriate proposals that can support a vibrant tourist economy whilst also preserving the local environment.

C.239 At Kidlington, we will support the function of the Village Centre as a vibrant heart of the village and build on Kidlington's strength as a focus for employment generating development as a quality centre for office and laboratory based businesses, recognising its proximity to Oxford.

### **Meeting the Challenge of Building Sustainable Villages and Rural Areas**

C.240 Cherwell District has many attractive villages with valued built and natural environments. High house prices and an emphasis on commuting by private car mean that those of limited means, and those seeking to live, work and access services locally, can be disadvantaged. There are also pockets of deprivation in Cherwell's rural areas.

C.241 The key community issues facing the villages and rural areas are:

- A lack of affordable homes of all types. There is a lack of private rented homes, social rented housing stock and smaller homes generally. In some areas there is a lack of any new housing coming onto the market at all. House prices are more expensive in Kidlington and the rural areas compared to Banbury and Bicester, meaning that it is less likely that those born in a village will be able to purchase a house there.
- The Council's Playing Pitch and Green Space Strategy and 2011 Open Space Update have identified that there are deficiencies in open space provision in the rural areas.
- The number of permanent local services is generally declining. Public transport provision is variable across the rural areas. In smaller and more isolated villages, it can be infrequent or non-existent. There is a need to protect services and facilities and improve them wherever possible.
- A lack of school places, meaning that housing developments might require the village school to expand. An assessment of education provision will need to inform development proposals.

C.242 As our District continues to grow, a key challenge will be to steer development towards the most sustainable locations in a manner which meets the needs of our villages and rural communities as far as possible. We will aim to provide good quality, affordable rural housing and support the provision of services and facilities to meet the needs of rural communities for services where possible.

### **Meeting the Challenge of Ensuring Sustainable Development in our Villages & Rural Areas**

C.243 There is a need to manage the rural environment to create inclusive, sustainable communities and help meet the needs of those who live and work there. We wish to protect our built and natural environments and the character and appearance of our villages.

C.244 The key environmental issues facing the villages and rural areas are:

- The need to protect the biodiversity of the rural areas. The Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation, which is of European importance, is located 2km from Kidlington.

- The need to address the challenges faced by the legacy of major developments that have taken place in the rural areas. In particular, the MOD has developed significant assets across the District, and over time their needs for these will change. The former RAF base at Upper Heyford has particular challenges as it is redeveloped for new uses.
- The impact of growth and new development in the rural areas may impact upon the quality, character and landscape setting of villages.
- Any further expansion of Kidlington needs to be carefully considered in relation to the Green Belt.
- The rural areas are not congested when compared to the towns but traffic is an issue in the rural area owing to the high level of commuting to larger urban areas. Traffic congestion is an issue for Kidlington. The Sustainable Community Strategy highlights the need to address traffic management and issues resulting from the main road bisecting the village.

C.245 The major environmental challenge for our villages and rural areas is to maintain and enhance the quality of our natural, built and historic environment in the face of pressures for new development. In addressing this challenge the Local Plan aims to protect and enhance biodiversity; support a pattern of development which reduces people's need to travel, maximises opportunities to use public transport and, minimises additional levels of road traffic and pollution.

#### **Our Vision and Strategy for Our Villages and Rural Areas**

C.246 By 2031, we will have protected and, where possible, enhanced our services and facilities, landscapes and the natural and historic built environments of our villages and rural areas. We will have encouraged sustainable economic opportunities and we will have provided 5,392 (2011-2031) dwellings in total in the rural area including Kidlington and the development of a new settlement at the former RAF Upper Heyford.

C.247 We will cherish, protect and enhance the appearance and character of our villages by protecting conservation areas and by promoting high standards of design for new development. We will protect and enhance the beauty and natural diversity of the countryside for the enjoyment of all.

C.248 To secure our vision this Local Plan has a strong urban focus which seeks to direct housing towards Bicester and Banbury. However, there is a need for some development within the rural areas to meet local and Cherwell wide needs. The overall level of housing growth for our villages and rural areas is set out in Policy BSC 1: District Wide Housing Distribution.

#### **What will Happen and Where**

C.249 In identifying the strategic approach towards new development in our villages and rural areas, this Local Plan must do three things. It must:

- identify the overall level of growth to be developed within the rural areas
- identify a sustainable hierarchy of villages to set a framework for considering how proposals within villages will be determined
- identify an approach for distributing growth across the different villages within the rural areas.

C.250 Our approach to providing development in the rural areas seeks to:

- deliver a new settlement at the former RAF Upper Heyford to enable conservation and environmental improvements and to contribute in meeting Cherwell wide and local housing needs
- provide new housing for people in rural areas to meet, in particular, the needs of newly forming households
- provide affordable housing in what are generally areas of higher housing cost
- deliver housing at villages where local shops, services and job opportunities are available and accessible or where access to nearby towns would be sustainable in transport terms
- consider the relationship between ‘clusters’ of villages
- provide development to help sustain rural services and facilities, including bus routes
- avoid significant environmental harm
- support the neighbourhood planning process.

C.251 To this end, Policy Villages 1 provides a categorisation of the District’s villages to ensure that unplanned, small-scale development within villages is directed towards those villages that are best able to accommodate limited growth. The Policy establishes which villages are, in principle, appropriate for conversions and infilling (Category C) and which are suitable for accommodating minor development (Categories A and B). Policy Villages 2 provides for additional planned development to be accommodated at the most sustainable villages (Category A) to meet District housing requirements and to help meet local needs. Policy Villages 3 seeks to respond to often acute issues of affordability in rural areas and allows for affordable housing to be provided in any of Cherwell’s villages to meet locally identified needs in locations or on sites that might otherwise not be appropriate. Policy Villages 4 establishes a framework for addressing open space, sport and recreation deficiencies at the villages. Policy Villages 5 seeks to deliver the new settlement at the former RAF Upper Heyford.

C.252 We do not allocate specific sites within villages in this document. The suitability of individual sites will be considered through work on a Local Plan Part 2, where appropriate, through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans or through the determination of planning applications for planning permission. Neighbourhood Plans may provide an opportunity for local communities to propose development not identified in the Local Plan providing it is in general accordance with the Local Plan’s strategic policies and objectives. Where Neighbourhood Plans have been prepared, formally examined, and have been supported through a local referendum, they will be adopted as part of the statutory Development Plan. The Council will advise and support Parish Councils and relevant Neighbourhood Forums in preparing their Plans.

C.253 Development proposed in villages will be required to be built to exemplary design and building standards as set out in Section B3: Policies for Ensuring Sustainable Development.

### **Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation**

C.254 Policy Villages 1 provides a categorisation of villages to guide the consideration of small-scale proposals for residential development within the built-up limits of settlements. Village categorisation helps understand which villages are in principle best placed to sustain different levels of residential development. The Policy ensures that unanticipated development within the built-up

limits of a village is of an appropriate scale for that village, is supported by services and facilities and does not unnecessarily exacerbate travel patterns that are overly reliant on the private car and which incrementally have environmental consequences. Policy Villages 1 seeks to manage small scale development proposals (typically but not exclusively for less than 10 dwellings) which come forward within the built-up limits of villages. It also informs Policy Villages 2 which provides a rural allocation for sites of 10 or more dwellings at the most sustainable category A villages and which will guide preparation of both the Local Plan Part 2 and Neighbourhood Plans.



C.255 Villages have been categorised based on the following criteria:

- population size
- the number and range of services and facilities within the village (shops, schools, pubs, etc.)
- whether there are any significant known issues in a village that could be materially assisted by an increase in housing (for example to maintain pupil numbers at a primary school)
- the accessibility (travel time and distance) of the village to an urban area by private car and public transport (including an assessment of any network constraints)
- accessibility of the village in terms of walking and cycling
- local employment opportunities.

C.256 Survey work was previously undertaken to inform village categorisation and this was supplemented by 'the Cherwell Rural Areas Integrated Transport & Land Use Study' (CRAITLUS) which was produced in association with Oxfordshire County Council. The survey work was updated in 2014.

C.257 The principle of categorising villages is well established within the District, with this approach being taken in both the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan in 2004. It is considered that this approach is still appropriate.

C.258 This Local Plan has also considered the issue of village clustering. Some villages, which may not necessarily have many services and facilities of their own, are geographically close to villages which do have services and facilities. People living in the rural areas may use services and facilities in other nearby villages. Those larger villages with services and facilities (the 'service centre' villages) in combination with the smaller "satellite" villages can be considered to form a functional "cluster". Clustering will allow for:



- the support of community facilities (such as shops) in service centres, by locating new development and therefore people/customers close to as well as within service centre villages
- small sites to come forward for development in satellite villages where sites in service centres may be limited
- the reduction in length of car journeys in the rural areas (i.e. between satellite villages and service centres)
- where appropriate, the potential for developer contributions or other mechanism to support the delivery of infrastructure and services to be applied to needs in any village in a cluster.

C.259 It is not proposed that clustering forms part of the development strategy in 'Policy Villages 2: Distributing Growth Across the Rural Areas' as the services and facilities in most satellite villages are too limited to sustainably accommodate the development of larger allocated sites. However, it is considered to be a role for satellite (Category B) villages to accommodate minor development which is set out in 'Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation' below.

C.260 The following categorisation will be used to assess residential proposals that come forward within villages.

**Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation**

**Proposals for residential development within the built-up limits of villages (including Kidlington) will be considered having regard to the categorisation below. Only Category A (Service Centres) and Category B (Satellite Villages) will be considered to be suitable for minor development in addition to infilling and conversions.**

Category	Villages by Category	Type of Development
A	<b>Service Villages</b> <b>Adderbury, Ambrosden, Arccott, Begbroke, Bletchingdon (*), Bloxham, Bodicote, Chesterton, Cropredy, Deddington, Finmere, Fringford, Fritwell, Hook Norton, Kidlington, Kirtlington, Launton, Milcombe, Sibford Ferris/Sibford Gower, Steeple Aston, Weston-on-the-Green(*), Wroxton, Yarnton</b>	<b>Minor Development</b> <b>Infilling</b> <b>Conversions</b>
B	<b>Satellite Villages</b> <b>Blackthorn, Claydon, Clifton, Great Bourton, Hempton, Lower Heyford, Middle Aston, Milton, Mollington, South Newington, and Wardington.</b>	<b>Minor Development</b> <b>Infilling</b> <b>Conversions</b>
C	<b>All other villages</b>	<b>Infilling</b>

		<b>Conversions</b>
<b>(*) Denotes villages partly within and partly outside the Green Belt. In those parts that lie within the Green Belt, only infilling and conversions will be permitted.</b>		

C.261 There is a need for Cherwell’s villages to sustainably contribute towards meeting the housing requirements identified in Policy BSC1. Policy Villages 1 allows for the most sustainable villages to accommodate ‘minor development’ and all villages to accommodate infilling or conversions. The appropriate form of development will vary depending on the character of the village and development in the immediate locality. In all cases, ‘Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment’ will be applied in considering applications.

C.262 In assessing whether proposals constitute acceptable ‘minor development’, regard will be given to the following criteria:

- the size of the village and the level of service provision
- the site’s context within the existing built environment
- whether it is in keeping with the character and form of the village
- its local landscape setting
- careful consideration of the appropriate scale of development, particularly in Category B (satellite) villages.

C.263 In considering the scope of new residential development within the built-up limits of Kidlington, consideration will be given to its role as a larger service centre and its urban character, the functions that existing gaps and spaces perform and the quality of the built environment.

C.264 Infilling refers to the development of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage. Not all infill gaps will be suitable for development. Many spaces in villages’ streets are important and cannot be filled without detriment to their character. Such gaps may afford views out to the landscape or help to impart a spacious rural atmosphere to the village. This is particularly important in a loose knit village pattern where the spaces may be as important as the buildings.

C.265 Adderbury, Ambrosden, Arncott, Begbroke, Bletchington, Bloxham, Bodicote, Chesterton, Cropredy, Deddington, Finmere, Fringford, Fritwell, Hook Norton, Kidlington, Kirtlington, Launton, Milcombe, Sibford Ferris/Sibford Gower, Steeple Aston, Weston on the Green, Wroxton and Yarnton are Category A villages. The Category A villages which perform as “service centres” for the “satellite villages” (forming a “village cluster”) shown in the table at paragraph C.260 are Adderbury, Ambrosden, Bloxham, Cropredy, Deddington and Steeple Aston.

C.266 The category B villages are satellite villages associated with a larger service centre. The satellite villages are: Blackthorn, Claydon, Clifton, Great Bourton, Hempton, Lower Heyford, Middle Aston, Milton, Mollington, South Newington, and Wardington. They do not ‘score’ highly enough in their own right to be included as category A villages but are considered to be appropriate for minor development because of the benefits of access to a service centre within a village cluster. For example, Claydon, Great Bourton, Mollington and Wardington benefit from their relationship with



Cropredy. As smaller settlements, the satellite villages have been given a separate 'B' Category as they would not be suitable for larger scale development provided for by Policy Villages 2.

C.267 All other villages are classified as Category C villages.

C.268 Appropriate infilling (and minor development for affordable housing) in these "satellite villages" may help to meet needs not only within the village itself but also the larger village with which it is clustered.

C.269 Policy Villages 1 applies to all villages in the District including those that are, in whole or in part, within the Green Belt. The general extent of, and policy for, the Green Belt is set out in 'Policy ESD 14: Oxford Green Belt' and on the Policies Map (Appendix 5: Maps). The villages of Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke (all "category A" villages) are "inset" villages within the Green Belt and therefore will not be covered by Green Belt policy. All other villages within the Green Belt, however, are "washed over" by Green Belt designation and Policy ESD 14 will apply in relation to whether development maintains the Green Belt's openness and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities. Policy ESD14 will apply in the same way for those parts of Weston on the Green and Bletchingdon that lie within the Green Belt.

### **Policy SLE 3: Supporting Tourism Growth**

B.62 Given the growing role that tourism has to play in the local economy, developments in this sector will be supported, especially new attractions and new hotels at the two towns to reinforce their central role as places to visit and stay. We will support new tourism provision that can demonstrate direct benefit for the local 'visitor' economy and which will sustain the rural economy.



B.63 We will support an increase in high quality accommodation available in our towns to meet the needs of visitors and to end the current under provision. Valuable expenditure associated with overnight stays is potentially being lost, meaning that tourism has scope to play a significant wealth-creating role for the District.

B.64 Tourism can help support local services and facilities, provide employment, promote regeneration and help preserve the natural and historic environment. It can include day visits by local people through to visits from overseas. Tourism is a vital component in the make-up of the national economy. Currently tourism is worth over £300 million in Cherwell District and makes a significant contribution towards the development of a sustainable local economy. 1.2 million people live within a 30 minute drive time of the District boundary.

B.65 A tourism study was completed for the District in August 2008 in order to assist the Council in gaining a broad understanding of tourist activity and trends in Cherwell District and nearby. It highlighted that tourism was not as great a part of the local economy as for some locations, but that initiatives to further encourage tourism could be considered. The following observations and issues were identified:

- the District will not attract the level of tourists who visit surrounding destinations but should make the most of its proximity to these destinations and its good transport links
- the 58km of Oxford Canal in Cherwell is a resource that is not used to its full potential and access should be improved to promote green and sustainable leisure opportunities – using the towpath for walking and cycling as well as the water for boating
- business tourism is important to Cherwell's economy
- Cherwell's villages are attractive and distinctive and many have places of interest
- Banbury's historic town centre is somewhere to visit and also to stay if visiting popular destinations nearby such as Oxford or Stratford. It also acts as one of the main retail destinations in the area
- Bicester Village is the District's most visited tourist destination
- that Former RAF Bicester and Former RAF Upper Heyford represent potential new tourism developments
- the opportunity for a Cold War Visitor Centre at Former RAF Upper Heyford
- there are mixed trends in terms of the occupancy of tourist accommodation which is often below average but hotels are also turning away guests on other occasions
- a large new hotel was completed in Banbury, near the M40, in 2008. A new hotel has been built near Bicester and further such investment is planned. Demand for hotel and other overnight accommodation continues.

B.66 Other policies in other sections of this Local Plan will contribute towards addressing these issues and encouraging sustainable tourism development; for example by:

- the regeneration of Banbury Canalside ('Policy Banbury 1: Banbury Canalside')
- the development of the Spiceball Development Area in Banbury ('Policy Banbury 9: Spiceball Development Area')
- maintaining village services and facilities

- the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment in both towns and villages.

B.67 The Local Plan Part 2 will also support tourism by including policies encouraging new accommodation and the allocation of smaller sites for tourism related development.

B.68 There are other factors which are beyond the scope of the Local Plan which are important to drawing visitors to Cherwell's towns, villages and countryside. The Council, working with partners, already undertakes marketing, but to increase the number of visitors to Cherwell and to compete nationally, this will need to be maintained and enhanced.

### **Policy SLE 3: Supporting Tourism Growth**

**The Council will support proposals for new or improved tourist facilities in sustainable locations, where they accord with other policies in the plan, to increase overnight stays and visitor numbers within the District.**

### **Policy BSC 12: Indoor Sport, Recreation and Community Facilities**

B.168 The PPG17 Indoor Sports and Recreational Facilities Assessment (2006) indicated an under-supply of sports hall and swimming pool provision in the District but concluded that the sports centre modernisation programme would address these deficiencies.



B.169 In terms of future needs to 2026, the assessment indicated that the projected shortfall in swimming pool and sports hall provision could be met through sports centre modernisation combined with dual use agreements to allow public use of school facilities out of school hours. The use of village/community halls for sporting facilities was also highlighted and a survey of village and community halls is currently being undertaken to assess the adequacy of provision. The PPG17 assessment only covered the period to 2026 and in view of the extended plan period and increased level of growth associated with it, a review of indoor sport, recreation and community facilities provision is being undertaken. Initial indications are that there will be a deficiency in sports hall provision by 2031 with unmet demand being particularly noticeable around Bicester. There will be some unmet demand in swimming pool provision by 2031, with a capacity issue at existing facilities

and deterioration in attractiveness at the older facilities through aging. Unmet demand could be addressed by the provision of new facilities or increasing the capacity and quality of existing facilities. Further location specific information is included in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'. The findings will be used to determine whether additional facilities are needed and inform the application of Policy BSC12.

B.170 Should the additional analysis work referred to in paragraph B169 above result in amendments to the indoor sports standards, the standards will be updated in the Local Plan Part 2 and the Developer Contributions SPD. The local standards of provision developed by the PPG17 study are set out below:

<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Local Quantity Standard per 1000 Population</b>
Sports Hall	0.315 badminton courts
Swimming Pool	9.31m2 swimming water area
Squash Courts	0.059 courts
Health and Fitness	5.28 stations
Indoor Bowls	0.045 rinks
STPs	0.046 pitches
Athletics Tracks	0.0012 8 lane facility

Design and technical standard	All new build and refurbishment schemes to be designed in accordance with Sport England Guidance Notes, which provide detailed technical advice and standards for the design and development of sports facilities.
Facility operation and management standard	All leisure providers to follow industry best practice principles in relation to a) Facilities operation, b) Customer relations, c) staffing and d) Service and development review. The detail of internal systems, policies and practices underpinning implementation of these principles will correlate directly to the scale of facility, varying according to the position of the facility within the levels of the established hierarchy.

Accessibility standard	15 minutes travel time.
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B.171 Additional guidance on how the policy and the above standards will be applied is contained in the Planning Obligations Draft SPD. Development proposals will be expected to contribute towards provision commensurate with the needs generated by the development.

### **Policy BSC 12: Indoor Sport, Recreation and Community Facilities**

**The Council will encourage the provision of community facilities to enhance the sustainability of communities, and encourage partnership working to ensure that built sports provision is maintained in accordance with local standards of provision by the following means:**

- **Protecting and enhancing the quality of existing facilities**
- **Improving access to existing facilities**
- **Ensuring that development proposals contribute towards the provision of new or improved facilities where the development would generate a need for sport, recreation and community facilities which cannot be met by existing provision.**

### **Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment**

B.261 Conservation of the historic environment and securing high quality urban design are very important in protecting and enhancing the character of the District and ensuring that Cherwell is an attractive place to live and work. Cherwell District is composed of four landscape character areas, which each display distinct, settlement patterns, building materials and styles of vernacular architecture to create a rural environment that is strongly locally distinctive. Each of the three urban areas also displays its own unique character.



B.262 The following features contribute to the distinctive character, appearance and high quality environment of Cherwell District:

- over 2,200 listed buildings and many others of local architectural and historical interest.
- currently 60 conservation areas
- 36 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 5 registered Historic Parks and Gardens and a Historic Battlefield, and 6 Historic Parks and Gardens considered as non-designated heritage assets
- three urban centres: Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington – with quite distinct characters, retaining their medieval street patterns
- the Oxford Green Belt (see 'Policy ESD 14: Oxford Green Belt')
- the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north-west of the District (see 'Policy ESD 12: Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)')
- the District's waterways, in particular the River Cherwell and the Oxford Canal
- sites of ecological importance including 18 Special Areas for Conservation (see 'Policy ESD 9: Protection of the Oxford Meadows SAC') and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

B.263 We will protect our historic environment; it is a major resource contributing to the local distinctiveness of the District. Conservation Areas and other heritage assets (including both designated and undesignated assets) form part of the historic fabric of the District and contribute to the character of the area and will be maintained. We will protect our Conservation Areas and other heritage assets from harmful growth as these help to define how the area looks and feels, both in the towns and villages. The Council has a rolling programme of Conservation Area Appraisals and review. We will maintain a local register of Buildings at Risk and use Article 4 Directions to maintain the character of our historic villages and towns. A Register of non-designated heritage assets is also being compiled. Further information on these measures is contained in the Design and Conservation Strategy for Cherwell.

B.264 The Council will protect and enhance the special value of these features individually and the wider environment that they create. The strategic policy on landscape protection can be found under 'Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement'. It is also important, however, to provide a framework for considering the quality of built development and to ensure that we achieve locally distinctive design which reflects and respects the urban or rural landscape and built context within which it sits.

B.265 We will ensure that the new developments, area renewal and town centre expansions are safe places to live, work and visit through design standards by using tools such as 'secured by design', also through requiring CCTV where appropriate.

B.266 Design standards for new development whether housing or commercial development are equally important. High design standards are critical in the town and village centres where Conservation Areas exist, but more generally in ensuring development is appropriate and secures a strong sense of place and clear sense of arrival at points of entry into the towns and villages. Particular sensitivity is required where development abuts or takes place within designated Conservation Areas.

B.267 It is also important to take into account heritage assets located outside of the District which may be affected by development inside the District such as Blenheim Palace, a World Heritage Site.

## **Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment**



Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.

New development proposals should:

- Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions
- Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions
- Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity
- Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting
- Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged
- Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages
- Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette
- Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features
- Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and

integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed

- Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space
- Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation
- Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation
- Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout
- Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy)
- Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 17 Green Infrastructure ). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality
- Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.

The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Local Plan Part 2.

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. Further guidance can be found on the Council's website.

The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites. For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site.

B.268 The appearance of new development and its relationship with its surrounding built and natural environment has a significant effect on the character and appearance of an area. Securing new development that can positively contribute to the character of its local environment is therefore of key importance. This policy identifies a number of key issues that need to be addressed in the design of new development.

B.269 These issues are as relevant in urban areas as in rural locations and also in recent development as in historic areas. The policy seeks to protect, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets'. The NPPF defines these as 'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'. Heritage assets with archaeological interest will require the submission of relevant assessment. In sensitive locations severe constraints may direct the design approach, but in many cases the Council will not wish to prescribe a specific design solution. Designs need to be sensitive and complimentary to their surroundings but this does not require merely replicating existing styles and imitating architectural details; modern interpretation is possible if informed by a full contextual analysis and proposals promote and reinforce local distinctiveness.

B.270 Our urban areas will see significant growth during the period of the Local Plan, and will need to adapt and respond to these pressures both within their existing boundaries and beyond, while retaining their unique character and heritage. A balance will need to be struck between making best use of land and respecting established urban character and creating new and vibrant sustainable neighbourhoods. Applicants should also have regard to national guidance and best practice advice on design, including on public space, street design, trees in the street scene, public buildings, housing, work environments inclusive design, tall buildings and eco-towns, e.g. guidance published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment CABI (now merged with the Design Council). English Heritage has also published much guidance on integration of development into the historic environment. Applicants will also need to have regard to policies from Oxfordshire County Council, such as the Parking Policy.

B.271 Our rural areas will need to accommodate new development which reinforces the locally distinctive character by being sensitive in its location, scale, materials and design, reflecting the traditional pattern of development within the settlement, balancing making best use of land with respect for the established character and respecting open features that make a positive contribution. A large proportion of rural settlements fall within conservation areas, where the quality and special interest of the area is protected. Council publications, such as its Countryside Design Summary, which analyses settlement types, and Appraisals of the District's Conservation Areas, which analyse the special qualities and identify those features that make a positive contribution to the character of the place, will assist in understanding a settlement. National guidance includes Natural England's guidance on undertaking Village Design Statements.