**Report to Parish Council on Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 Consultation**

(August/September 2020)

**(Councillors could read and comment using the Review function for ease of discussion)**

**Section One: Where this consultation sits in the framework of other Plans.**

The Local Plan Consultation attempts to bring into line Cherwell’s planning policies and decision making on the back of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 adopted in 2015, the Partial Review of the Plan to help meet Oxford’s Unmet Housing Needs. There are some policies in the Local Plan that date back to 1996. Cherwell wants to address the needs of Cherwell up to 2040, hence this Review.

The overall context of the Plan is complicated. There have been a number of plans and documents that must be considered as they are statutory and others that appear to be decided. To be clear, there is concern that some assumptions appear factual and some ‘planning’ feels arbitrary. Following is a list of Plans, papers, consultations and agreements that are in the background to the CDC Plan.

1. 2018 Oxfordshire Housing Growth Deal - six authorities have created a Joint Local Plan called the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan which includes six local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership with whom Government (HMG) has agreed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth deal, namely:
* Cherwell District Council
* Oxford City Council
* Oxfordshire County Council
* South Oxfordshire District Council
* Vale of White Horse District Council
* West Oxfordshire District Council
* Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)

This Housing Growth Deal expects to deliver 100,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 – backed up with a credible plan for delivery

1. Oxfordshire Local Plan 2050 which deals with homes, economic development and infrastructure (roads). This Plan sets out development requirements, identifies areas for growth and districts are to establish planning policies and site allocations. It is worth reading https//oxfordshireplan.org
2. OCC Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) August 2018. Key question for CDC: How can the Local Plan complement the Transport Plan
3. Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) has a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The current SEP encourages economic investment across a ‘Knowledge Spine’ which includes the Science Vale in the south of the County, Oxford and Bicester. The SEP also highlights the importance of other projects in our market towns and rural areas.
4. Cherwell’s Housing Strategy has three strategic priorities, these are:
	* Increase the supply and diversity of affordable housing to ensure the right types of housing are available in the right places
	* Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and build thriving, healthy communities.
	* Enhance opportunities for people to access suitable homes and have housing choices
5. Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) 2019 produced by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – It’s Vision Statement is: “To position Oxfordshire as one of the top three global innovation ecosystems by 2040, building on the region’s world leading science and technology clusters to be a pioneer for the UK in emerging transformative technologies and sectors.’ In my view, this is the driver for all the other initiatives. The key question is: has Cherwell joined into these projects with the consent of local people? Do Parish Councils feel represented in the process of pushing our area to one of rapid economic development so we can be world leading – has the cost been clear?
6. Cherwell Industrial Strategy 2019 onwards which will establish long-term economic vision, a ten-year economic ambition plan and an economic framework for priorities such as business retention and growth, infrastructure for business etc…

**Section Two Identification of Issues and Needs**

This section of the Local Plan Review document is helpfully organised into a series of tables of key questions on:

* Housing – pg 13
* Economy – pg 14
* Town Centres and Retail – pg 15
* Community Facilities etc. pg 17
* Transport pg 18
* Biodiversity and the Natural Environment pg 20
* Heritage pg 21

Banbury and Bicester have specific chapters related to their growth.

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\*\*The section that specifically applies to WOTG is section 2.94, Rural Areas, with Key Questions copied here for ease.

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| **Rural Areas**  |
| **Key issues**  | **How the Cherwell Local Plan Review might address these key issues**  |
| Many residents have poor access to services and facilities.  | Include policies that help protect vital local village services.  |
| Changes to the level of services and facilities in villages.  | Undertake review of village categorisation to reflectthe current provision of services and facilities and sustainability criteria more widely and explore the need for flexibility in policy to take into account future changes.  |
| The need to provide housing to meet local need and to support the rural economy.  | Allocate sufficient housing in the rural areas to meet local need.  |
| The need to sustainably support and diversify the rural economy.  | Provide policies for sustainable rural employment to meet the needs of the local population.  |
| Need to address any identified deficiencies in open space, sport and recreation provision through enhancement of existing facilities or securing new provision.  | Protect existing provision. Where appropriate secure contributions from development towards enhancement of existing provision and include positive planning policies towards new open space, sport and recreation provision. Where appropriate secure new on-site provision as part of any larger developments and determine appropriate level of provision depending on size and character of settlement  |
| Need to identify and protect important gaps and avoid coalescence of settlements.  | Review existing policy to protect important settlement gaps and avoid coalescence. Consider introducing settlement boundaries.  |
| Need to protect and enhance the natural and built environment.  | Review existing policies that seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment.  |
| Need to protect local distinctiveness and settlement pattern of villages when assessing development proposals.  | Review existing policies that seek to protect local distinctiveness and settlement patterns.  |
| Need to protect countryside from unnecessary development.  | Review existing policies that seek to protect the countryside from unnecessary development.  |
| Localised flood risk  | Ensure development helps to remove existing flood risk from all sources. Utilise natural flood alleviation measures wherever possible.  |

**The key question that we should respond to is: Do you have any observations on the rural issues we have identified? Are there others that you would like to raise?**

Suggestions:

1. Support review of village categorisation – we feel we should be a Category B.
2. Improvement of wifi signal in our area would help home working.
3. Support our Neighbourhood Plan and our vision for growth, biodiversity and design.
4. Agree with view to protect important settlement gaps and avoid coalescence.
5. Agree with view to protect the natural environment and important spaces in and around our village.
6. With an eye to the Oxford/Cambridge arc, the goal of 100,000 new homes, we should encourage protection of the countryside in and around WOTG.

Others?

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**Section Three**

The three themes that will influence and shape the future of Cherwell and are consistent with central government are:

* Maintaining and developing a sustainable local economy,
* Meeting the challenge of climate change and
* Healthy place shaping (a practical way to create healthier communities through planning – transport, housing, access to recreational space, health services)

The Parish Council should discuss these not as issues in their own right but as reflections of government policy that has been accepted – have we been represented? Where has the debate occurred on key issues such as the ‘arc’, 100,000 houses? This is evident in the list of key questions below:

**Theme One: The Economy Key Issues and Questions**

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| **Maintaining and Developing a Sustainable Local Economy**  |
| **Key issues**  | **How the Cherwell Local Plan Review might address these key issues**  |
| Meeting the challenges and opportunities posed by COVID-19, climate change, ‘Brexit’ and globalisation for the local economy, local resilience, supply chains, agriculture, jobs and trends.  | Formulating policy which understands the challenges to the local economy, including agriculture, and provides a spatial context to support sustainable, inclusive economic growth, resilience and flexibility.  |
| Understanding the importance of the Oxfordshire and Cherwell economy within the national context, linking the National Industrial Strategy with Oxfordshire and emerging Cherwell Industrial Strategies.  | Include policies which support and enhance the strengths in the local economy identified by the local industrial strategies.  |
| Implementation of Central government and the Local Enterprise Partnership’s (LEP) policies and initiatives encouraging sustainable economic growth and the raising of the value of the economy.  | Take account of policies and initiatives including their location in formulating a strategy to secure sustainable economic growth including high tech knowledge-based and low carbon sectors.  |
| Ensuring the character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services are recognised.  | Ensure the economic benefit of agricultural land, trees, woodland and other features are recognised by following an ecosystem services approach. Ensure natural capital mapping is used to inform preparation of the plan including the distribution of uses within a development site.  |
| Ensuring that the importance of preserving and enhancing the historic environment to the local economy is recognised.  | Ensure that policies recognise the importance of preserving and enhancing the District’s historic environment to the local economy.  |
| Inclusive growth and prosperity.  | Considering policy approaches that will enhance the opportunities for economic self-sufficiency by fostering education, training and skills development and local business growth.  |

\*Key Question 10: Do you have any observations of the issues we have identified for this theme? Are there others you would like to raise?

**Theme Two: Climate Change – Key Issues and Question**

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| **Meeting the Challenge of climate change**  |
| **Key issues**  | **How the Cherwell Local Plan Review might address these key issues**  |
| Risk of flooding in parts of the district and increase in flash flooding frequency and severity due to climate change.  | Ensure the latest allowances for climate change are taken in to account in considering development proposals. Seek to re-establish and enhance natural river corridors, including natural flood management. Safeguard land required, or likely to be required for current or future flood management. Encourage the reuse of ‘grey water’ by capturing rainwater for purposes other than drinking.  |
| Flooding from sewers in parts of the District.  | Ensure foul and surface water drainage systems are kept separate and that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are used wherever possible.  |
| Water supply/demand deficit in the District from 2022/23.  | Ensure policies help to achieve a water neutral position by requiring reduced water use/high water efficiency measures in new development.  |

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| **Meeting the Challenge of climate change**  |
| **Key issues**  | **How the Cherwell Local Plan Review might address these key issues**  |
| Need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport.  | Ensure policies reduce the need to travel/encourage active and healthy travel. Ensure provision of new EV infrastructure in new developments.  |
| Need to minimise essential energy demand in new developments and increase renewable generation to meet demand.  | Include policies that require sustainable construction techniques and promote the use of renewable energy including local energy systems.  |
| In 2019 the UK government adopted a legally binding target for the nation to achieve ‘net zero’ greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the Council has committed to be carbon neutral by 2030.  | Include policies that require climate change mitigation and adaption, including working towards the goal of zero carbon developments.  |
| Existing sports/ community centres and other non – residential buildings perform relatively poorly in terms of energy efficiency.  | Include policies to ensure new /refurbished buildings are constructed to high energy efficiency standards.  |
| Need to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network to help address the impacts of climate change.  | Include policies to protect and enhance existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network. Secure new provision to improve sustainable connectivity between sites and reduce the effects of development on the microclimate  |
| Need to protect and enhance strategic ecological networks and seek the enhancement of natural capital.  | Require developments to include ecological corridors as a component of green infrastructure provision to ensure habitat connectivity. Include a policy on the Nature Recovery Network including specifying what types of development are likely to be acceptable within it. Ensure developments secure biodiversity/environmental net gain.  |
| Need to ensure that new developments are designed to avoid overheating.  | Include appropriate design, orientation and landscaping policies.  |
| Need to recognise the benefits to climate change of re-using existing buildings and the use of finite resources sustainably and responsibly.  | Include policies to seek reuse of existing buildings and ensure that finite resources are used sustainably  |
| Need to preserve and enhance heritage assets when considering new development and adaptions to climate change. For example, retrofitting renewable technologies.  | Include climate change policies that recognise the need to preserve and enhance heritage assets.  |

\*Key question 11: Do you have any observations on the issues we have identified for this theme? Are there any other you would like to raise?

My view is that the problems we have and will continually have are based on our drive to develop – our heritage assets and environment will suffer. Hoping to manage this through new policies and enforcement of such is important but also part of the problem. Is the vision of our future in Cherwell and by implication Oxfordshire that we will change our landscape and unique countryside forever?

**Theme Three: Healthy Place Shaping, Key Questions and Issues**

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| **Healthy Place-shaping**  |
| **Key issues**  | **How the Cherwell Local Plan Review might address these key issues**  |
| Cherwell has an increasingly ageing population.  | Include policies which plan positively for the ageing population, including a wider housing choice for the over 65s, and the design of the public realm that recognises the needs of the elderly and infirm.  |
| Cherwell has a higher number of deaths from cancer, respiratory diseases and circulatory disease in under 75s than the rest of Oxfordshire.  | Include district-wide policies that encourage physical activity and healthier lifestyles more generally across all ages. For example, by improving existing cycling and pedestrian infrastructure; improving the food environment for both consumption and production of healthier food options. Include policies that address air pollution. Include policies that prioritise active travel in new development and the infrastructure that supports it. Include policies that promote good quality street design standards  |
| Cherwell has the highest number of serious injuries from road accidents in Oxfordshire.  |
| 63.2% of adults in Cherwell are classified as overweight or obese (2017/18). This is the worst in Oxfordshire and higher than the figures for the South East and England.  |
| Adult and child physical activity is the lowest in Oxfordshire.  |
| The proportion of adults who participate in active travel in Cherwell is lower than in Oxfordshire and England.  |
| 23% of children in Cherwell are living in poverty (2017/18).  | Include policies to support and expand local jobs and the economy, ensure the provision of good quality, affordable housing, and provide training and learning opportunities accessible to all. Ensure the provision of healthcare facilities to meet the demand from an increasing population.  |
| Data from 2003-2018 suggests that 27% of deaths in Cherwell were due to socio-economic inequality.  |
| Achieving safe and accessible high-quality public space which encourages active and continual use of public areas.  | Include quality standards for public space. Ensure green infrastructure is considered and provided as an integral part of new developments and seek to enhance existing areas of public space.  |

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| **Healthy Place-shaping**  |
| **Key issues**  | **How the Cherwell Local Plan Review might address these key issues**  |
| Need to enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well- being needs.  | Include policies to secure safe and accessible green infrastructure, access to nature and, provision for sport and recreation facilities including allotments. Ensure new developments include measures to encourage walking and cycling and include walking and running routes as part of provision in new parks and areas of open space. Secure wayfinding to support connectivity between new and existing developments.  |
| Embed green infrastructure network considerations into the planning of new development.  | Provide an overall strategy for GI provision, including: * protecting existing sites and features forming part of the GI network
* securing new GI provision through development,
* allocating new sites/footpath cycle routes
* standards for GI provision including for natural accessible green space
 |
| Lack of large areas of natural accessible green space in the district.  | Include policies that seek provision as part of new strategic developments and allocate sites for natural accessible green space.  |
| Affordability, quality, quantity, and safety of homes for all and specifically for those most vulnerable.  | Include policies to deliver housing to meet identified local need including supported housing, wheelchair accessible and adaptable dwellings. Include policies supporting provision of social housing in general and to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. Include policies supporting safe, high quality and affordable homes. Include policies to protect and improve housing quality and space standards across all housing types. Include policies to support housing to meet the needs of the local economy and key workers. Include policies to guide permitted development and conversions to residential use which protect quality and space standards. Include policies to encourage the reuse and renovation of historic buildings for housing.  |

This is perhaps the most worrying section of the paper in which the state of health of our district is discussed. Will economic development change this?

\*Key Question 12: Do you have any observations on the issues we have identified for this theme? Are there any others you would like to raise?

**Section Four: Vision and Objectives**

\*Key Question 13 – Establishing a Vision and Objectives: Do we need a new vision for the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040? What should be its key priorities?

My view is that we need to revisit the old vision and be clear that CHERWELL’S vision should not be a mouthpiece for central government objectives UNLESS we accept them.

**The Unitary Authority**

At the beginning of this paper I listed the districts involved in the Growth Deal. There is now a view that through unification all of the districts would merge into a single council which provides all services. There are huge economic pressures, many already present but certainly exaggerated by the pandemic of Covid19. There would be huge financial savings through unification (centralisation in my view) and theoretically that money would be re-directed to the most needy projects.

There is a great letter in the Sunday Times, August 23, 2020 in which Rod Craig of Kingston Isle, Oxfordshire states in response to a discussion of the Public Health England’s

re-organisation: “…a comment frequently attributed to Roman satirist Petronius about 2,000 years ago: “*We tend to meet any new situation by reorganising; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation*.”

In the words of James Mills, Conservative lead of West Oxfordshire District Council “*Local government should be local. It has to be much more than an agent for the Central Government and needs to be accountable to local residents. We need to make sure that any changes in local government benefits the people of West Oxfordshire. …. I just can’t see that being part of a mega council with 800,000 plus residents can be in the interest of residents in West Oxfordshire*”.

Similar concerns were raised by the Lib Dem leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, Sue Cooper, and Debby Hallet, the Lib Dem deputy leader of Vale of White Horse District Council.”

Cherwell’s view is more conservative and seems to feel we need to accept “the reform process that will be initiated by the white paper”. In other words, we have no choice based on central government strategies. (Oxford Times, August 27th, 2020.

We will need to take a view on this issue and represent it at the Parish Liaison Meeting which should have it on the agenda for November.

**Terminology that causes concern** and processes that are behind such language, decisions already taken:

* Unitary authority
* Knowledge arc
* Infrastructure arc (an expressway by any other name)
* Re-start, Re-Cover, Re-New
* Knowledge spine
* Duty to Cooperate
* Mitigation

Add to this list

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Part of having our voice as a Parish Council heard is to respond thoughtful in this Consultation. Hopefully our discussions will result in some key responses.

Diane Bohm

Chair

August 28th, 2020

**How to comment**

We would prefer it if you could email your comments and submissions. They can be emailed to:

PlanningPolicyConsultation@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk

If you prefer to post your comments, please address them to:

**Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 Planning Policy Team
Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Cherwell District Council**

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