

CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN – DRAFT 2040

OCTOBER 2023

Dear Neighbour

This is an **urgent call to action** about the way Cherwell will be developed over the next 15 years. The impact of what is being proposed is huge. You probably won't know about the plans that are being considered, so please read on to learn more.

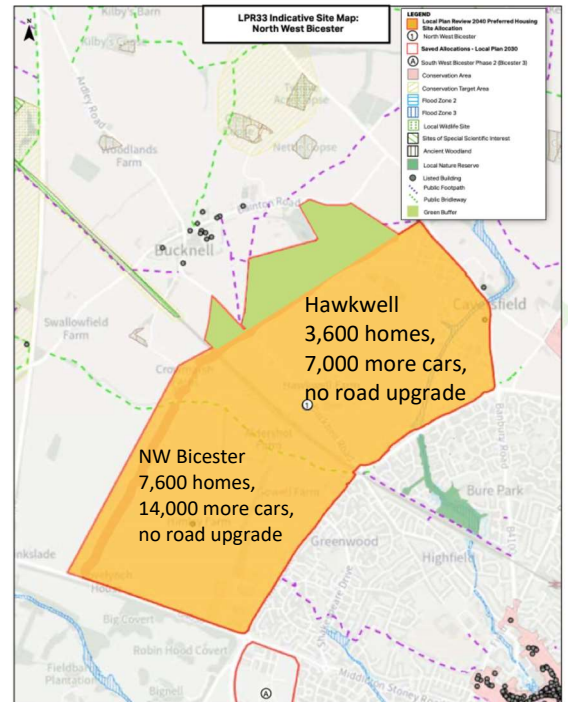


The Cherwell Local Plan Draft 2040 has recently been released and is now open for a very short period of consultation – **you only have until 3 November** to make your views known. It is unlikely that you will have the ability to influence any of the plans after this date.

One aspect of the plan is the way in which housing demands can be met. Compared to the 2014 Local Plan, the proposed volume of housing stock around the Bicester area has been increased by a further 1,000 properties.

Back in 2021, when the Hawkwell Village plans were submitted to Cherwell, over 400 objections were raised on a number of different issues. Those issues have not gone away – in fact the new draft plan seems to make things even worse.

The draft plan shows that new boundaries for development should be extended to coincidentally match those that the Hawkwell developers proposed. There is a strong case here that local views have not been listened to by anyone at Cherwell District Council.



The new plan describes 3,600 new dwellings to be built on the area known in the current planning application as Hawkwell – a significant increase over the 2,600 in the original plan. If the new plan gets approved in its current form – those additional dwellings will be a done deal.

Two major points to consider in the new Draft Plan

Affordable housing

Have you heard about Firethorn? Firethorn is a development that has recently been approved in NorthWest Bicester, despite heavy opposition from the local community. The developer appealed the application (because no decision had been made by Cherwell District Council) and it went to the Building Inspector for appeal.

The original plans and guidance indicate that developments, such as the 550 properties at Firethorn, should have at least 30% of the properties as affordable housing. At the last minute, the developer seems to have said to Cherwell that they would not make enough money by having 30% affordable housing and so asked for that to be reduced to 10%. Planners at CDC agreed to this request.

So much for affordable housing for local people.

Now is the time to say loudly and clearly that any new development must include at least 30% affordable housing – no plea bargains to be made between the Council and developers, no negotiation. It should be 30% affordable housing, or permission will be denied.

Land Grab

The extent of the boundary of NorthWest Bicester is now proposed to come right up to the edge of Bucknell village – but there will be a managed green buffer between the development and Bucknell (green on the map above)

Sounds reasonable? We don't think so.

The land between NorthWest Bicester and Bucknell in the 2014 plan was previously not a managed buffer, but open countryside. The classification as managed space means the area would no longer be countryside. The developers would 'manage' it and be able to say that the green buffer zone could be classed as part of the 40% of 'open space' that a development must have. And this is the only way they can get the increased number of houses in – by stealing more land

The buffer must stay as an unmanaged space and it must be a protected green space from any future development. Furthermore, it must not be permitted to be used by any developer as part of the calculations to show they are providing open space – open space needs to be provided within the development, not as an annex.

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NorthWest Bicester would be **HUGE**

The draft Local Plan 2040 is full of areas to be urbanised such as Chesterton, Launton, Wendlebury, and Caversfield with Bicester expanding to coalesce with neighbouring villages. In the whole plan. Bicester is being hard hit, with other areas in Cherwell getting off lightly.

All residents will be cut off from green spaces, continue to suffer from heavy traffic congestion every day of the week (still there is no money to complete the Howes Lane bypass under the railway line).

And you have to ask: Where will the schools be? Where is the healthcare provision. The NorthWest Bicester development plans have them located in the Himley Village area (Howes Lane) – but they are unlikely to be built for many years (if at all) meaning further pressure on our already stretched local resources.

Some would say – build in the best place where local services and access are already available – look at South West Bicester as an example. Close to waste water treatment facilities, close to communication routes – right next to the M40 where a new junction could be built. Surely much better than the ‘wrong’ side of the town centre.

What can you do?

Make your views known. The full details (and there are plenty documents that have material throughout them) are accessible at the Cherwell website.

You can learn more by visiting the consultation exhibitions:

Bicester on 13 October
Woodstock on 17 October
Banbury on 21 October;

call **01295 221779** for details.

Voice your thoughts:

E-mail: Planningpolicyconsultation@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Post: Planning Policy Consultation, Planning Policy Team, Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA.

Web: cherwell.citizenspace.com

Write to your councillor (find their details here: modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgFindMember.aspx) or write to your MP, Victoria Prentis: victoria.prentis.mp@parliament.uk