

22 October 2023

Dear Neighbour

Firstly, thank you. Last year, we are aware that you took the time and effort to respond to the Hawkwell planning application by Hallam Land to build 2,600 houses, as part of the NorthWest Bicester plan, on the land between Elmsbrook, Bicester and Bucknell.

Whilst a decision regarding Hawkwell has been delayed many times, we are now writing to you because there is a new, larger matter at hand. This time it is the Draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040. You may not be aware of it (in fact most people are not), but Cherwell District Council (CDC) is now consulting on its new 2040 plan.

The Draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040 proposes 1,000 additional houses to be situated in the same space currently proposed for the Hawkwell development. This will take NorthWest Bicester (including the land to the west of the railway line, backing onto Howes Lane) to 7,600 properties in total.

To put that into context – **NorthWest Bicester would be 3.5 times the size of Kingsmere.**

The points that you raised in response to the Hawkwell application are now even more relevant for the draft plan considering:

- There are still no new roads planned:
- New schools will likely not come until the end of the building of houses:
- There are no new medical services planned. Presumably existing GP surgeries, who, as we know are already struggling, are expected to absorb the addition population:
- Everyone recognises that we need affordable housing for local people and the plan suggests that it would be 30% - sounds good. Except that the reality is something different. The 30% target for affordable housing at Firethorn (550 new properties part of NorthWest Bicester, next to Elmsbrook) recently got reduced to 10%, just 55 properties, because the developer would not make enough profit. A minimum of 30% needs to be and must be obligatory; not optional, not open for negotiation:
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicates that Cherwell will need 14,840 new properties over the next 20 years. CDC is proposing 25,860 new properties over the next 16 years. We don't suggest eliminating NorthWest Bicester, but there is a strong argument to share the increase across the region more equitably:
- The original aim of NorthWest Bicester was a net zero eco town. This is dropped in the new Draft Local Plan.

If you have comments to make we need your support again. The deadline is incredibly short. It's short because the consultation is only for 6 weeks and it closes on 3 November. Now is the time to act.

Thank you in advance. We know time is short. The attached leaflets give some further information to consider and share with others as well as details on how to comment on the plans.