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working locally and nationally to
protect and enhance a beautiful,
thriving countryside for everyone to
value and enjoy

**THE CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 2011 - 2031 (PART 2) DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
POLICIES AND SITES ISSUES AND SCOPING CONSULTATION JANUARY 2016**

**RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF CPRE CHERWELL (NORTH) & CPRE CHERWELL (SOUTH)
DISTRICTS**

Please find attached our response to this consultation.

Despite the short turnaround time, the amount of reading material and the complexity of the issues, we have done our best to provide clear and precise answers to the questions asked.

However, we would therefore welcome the opportunity to come and discuss these matters in more detail with the Planning Policy team, particularly in relation to the need for further awareness-raising of this critical opportunity for registration of Local Green Spaces, and the proposal for a Bicester Green Belt.

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of:
CPRE Cherwell (North) District
&
CPRE Cherwell (South) District

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INTRODUCTION

Whilst recognising the need for greater detail to support the Local Plan Part 1, we reject the initial process used to produce the Local Plan Part 1, including the acceptance of the Oxfordshire SHMA without adequate independent assessment and the adoption of the Strategic Economic Plan, promoted by OxLEP, without any public consultation.

We also object to the lack of evidence the Council admits to in paragraph 1.13 of the consultation document where the statement is made that “We have to ensure that Local Plan Part 2 is based on adequate up-to-date evidence ...” but then lists some very fundamental failures to include this evidence in paragraph 1.14 and 1.15.

Paragraph 1.16 suggests this extra evidence will be used to produce future stages of the Part 2 plan process whereas we suggest many of these items are essential to enable the strategies in this consultation document to be correctly evaluated.

Starting from this failure to provide the evidence we make the following comments to the questions posed:

Question 1 - Evidence base

We suggest the following fundamental evidence based documents:-

Alan Wenban-Smith report *Unsound & Unsustainable: Why the SHMA will increase greenfield use but not meet housing needs*. A critique of GL Hearn's April 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Urban & Regional Policy, May 2014. See <http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/news/item/2369-local-authorities-must-reject-shma?highlight=WyJzaG1hliwic2htYSciLCJzaG1hJ3MiXQ==>

[In Defence of the Green Belt](#) - Dieter Helm CBE April 2015

Question 7 - Agriculture

Appropriate policy/policies should be put in place to assess the potential landscape impacts of any proposed change of use and avoid / mitigate as necessary.

Question 11 - Allocation of Non-Strategic Retail Sites

If considering non-strategic sites, care must be taken to preserve green spaces within urban areas.

Question 19 - Heavy Goods Vehicles

Yes. We endorse the policy outlined in paragraph 4.87 and would like to see this reinstated, particularly in light of the proposed number of warehouses coming forward within the District.

Question 26 - Starter Homes

Question 27 - Affordable Housing

CPRE fears that to widen the definition of affordable housing to include models which are not subject to ‘in perpetuity’ or subsidy recycling restrictions, taken in conjunction with the prospective duty on local planning authorities to promote the delivery of Starter Homes, will have the effect of crowding out the delivery of social rented housing or other housing with ‘in perpetuity’ restrictions designed to promote a wider social mix within communities. This will be felt most acutely in rural communities where the proportion of all housing currently classified as affordable tends to be much less than in urban areas.

We have urged the Government to retain the current Starter Home exception site policy and not extend it, as this gives local authorities the ability to implement the NPPF and ensure that planning applications which do not conform to it are rejected. The national policy to encourage Starter Homes should not override local decision making about what type of development is appropriate.

The Government has proposed, in effect, a presumption in favour of development on small greenfield sites immediately adjacent to settlement boundaries. We oppose this proposal which would remove the incentive for rural exception sites to come forward as landowners would be able to sell land for a much higher price.

Question 28 - Brownfield

CPRE welcomes the Government’s proposed introduction of a new statutory register of brownfield sites.

We believe local councils and the Government should make brownfield sites the first priority for site planning and any public funding to bring forward new housing, and refuse permission for greenfield sites where these would make competing demands, in relation to alternative brownfield sites.

CPRE has objected to the proposals put forward in the Government’s NPPF consultation to “strengthen” policy on small housing sites, as they fail to draw a critical distinction between greenfield and brownfield sites.

Question 29 - Windfall Development and Small Sites

CPRE has objected to the proposals put forward in the Government's NPPF consultation to "strengthen" policy on small housing sites, as they fail to draw a critical distinction between greenfield and brownfield sites.

The consultation document proposes, in effect, a presumption in favour of development on small greenfield sites immediately adjacent to settlement boundaries. Settlement boundaries and the adjacent countryside often contribute very significantly to the setting of towns and villages. They help to define the character and distinctiveness of settlements and should only be altered through local and neighbourhood plans. Conversely, rural exception sites are a very important source of affordable housing to meet locally determined need. They typically come forward within or adjacent to existing settlements on sites which, because of settlement boundary policies, would not usually get planning permission for market housing. The proposal would remove the incentive for rural exception sites to come forward as landowners would be able to sell land for a much higher price.

We believe rural communities should have the ability to decide whether small sites within or on the edge of settlements are developed for starter homes or other types of housing, depending on the needs of the area. Speculative development proposals (that is, those not included within a local or neighbourhood plan) that would lead to significant or cumulative unplanned growth of a village should be resisted. Any new policy on small sites should also not apply to areas excluded from the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Defining a small site as less than 10 units is in line with other policies, specifically the definition of "major development" being a site with 10 or more houses.

CPRE believes that the proposed new Government policy for both windfall sites and small sites should only apply to brownfield development. It should also not include a presumption in favour of developments adjacent to settlement boundaries.

Question 30 - Housing Density

Housing density in general should be increased to make most efficient use of land. Government density targets are for between 30 and 50 houses per hectare. These targets are themselves modest. Victorian terraces, amongst the most sought after types of housing, average 70 houses per hectare, and typical city infill, 100 houses per hectare. High density housing not only takes up less precious land, but it also provides less expensive houses. Lower price houses and starter homes for local people are where the real demand lies, not in yet more executive houses for commuters. High density is not inappropriate in the countryside. Most village people were accommodated in small dwellings, and most villages contain high density terrace housing. We would like to see CDC promote housing development at the highest realistic density in each location, with a yardstick target of at least 70 houses per hectare.

Question 45 - Local Green Space

CPRE is supportive of this designation, and welcomes in particular the anticipated applications for this status from Gavray Meadows CTA and Langford Community Orchard.

However, we are hugely concerned that not enough has been done to raise awareness of this critical opportunity and that many communities will not realise what steps are needed to protect their much valued local green space.

Can CDC confirm as a matter of urgency what steps it has taken to encourage and promote such sites?

For example, we believe:

- a) All town & parish councils should be contacted and invited to submit any sites they consider suitable, with an appropriate timescale.
- b) Clear and appropriate guidance should be available from CDC as to how such sites can be submitted.

Merely including notice of this opportunity on page 59 of a 180 page document is not sufficient.

See also our comment at Question 79, relating to Bicester Green Infrastructure.

CDC should also take into account that there may be sites within the Green Belt that are highly appropriate for Local Green Space designation. Whilst we would oppose their removal from the Green Belt, if the Council were to proceed with altering the boundaries then local communities must be given adequate opportunity to put forward these sites for consideration as Local Green Spaces. This is particularly relevant to the review of the Green Belt around Kidlington.

Question 46 - Management and Maintenance of Public Open Space

Space should be managed to maximise biodiversity. We believe that such sites should stay within public ownership, governed by democratic processes.

Question 47 - Development Management Issues - Open Space, sport & Recreation

CPRE supports introduction of a policy to encourage community orchards and gardens.

Question 48 - Onsite Renewable Energy Provision

No.

It is impractical to specify a proportion used in individual developments as each will have different environmental circumstances which may preclude some forms of renewable energy or low carbon energy, e.g. in or adjacent to the Green Belt.

Conversely some developments may be within the Zone in the North of the District considered suitable for wind energy, and therefore be able to be largely supported by renewables; at such times as when the wind is blowing.

For similar reasons the Council should not seek to specify particular forms of energy. It is relevant also that all renewable and low carbon energy depends entirely on subsidy, which will be the main consideration of providers.

Equally, provision of low carbon versus renewable energy will be a matter of national policy through the subsidy regime, in which the Council has little standing. The Council should confine itself, at most, to a general aim of seeking an increasing percentage of low carbon/renewable energy, recognising that this will increase the operating costs to be shouldered by all the Districts businesses, as well as consumers. In that context however, it should be noted that CPRE does not consider that the County is suitable enough for either wind or solar to override the environmental harms each cause.

Question 49 - Renewable Energy and Community Benefit

Yes, if it is very general and states unequivocally that community participation in renewable energy proposals should not override environmental reasons against them, but only go to compensate communities for loss of amenity where for all other reasons the development is acceptable. It must particularly not become an “exceptional circumstance”.

Therefore these benefits should carry NO WEIGHT in determining planning applications.

Question 50 - Wind Turbines and Site Allocations

It would be desirable to narrow the areas highlighted in the Renewable Energy and Construction Study. It is however unlikely that there will be any substantial number of wind turbine applications now that the subsidies have been discontinued, given the District’s general lack of the right kind of wind which the Study identified.

CPRE does not consider that the County is suitable enough for either wind or solar farms to override the environmental harms each cause.

Question 51 - Solar Farms

CPRE opposes greenfield ground mounted solar in principle, but approves roof mounted, including on industrial roofs, and installations on brownfield sites where they do not impact more adversely than the original or previous use.

We recommend consideration of that wording in the review of ESD 5.

Additionally ESD 5 should contain advice that use of agricultural land of any grade will not be acceptable - following Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Liz Truss's similar advice in connection with the DEFRA withdrawal of farming land subsidies for such uses - and in particular that higher grade (1-3a) land should not be used.

Question 52 - Renewable Energy and Sustainable Construction in the Historic Environment

No.

It should reflect National Policy and English Heritage advice, but also recognise the particular contribution the historic environment makes to the economy of Oxfordshire, both directly and indirectly.

Question 55-58 - Biodiversity, CTA's, Biodiversity Gain, Availability of Green Space

We welcome the description of the issues as set out by CDC. We note that the existing policy on CTAs has not been strong enough to prevent potential development at Gavray Meadows. Therefore the wording of this policy should be reviewed and strengthened.

Question 60 Tranquillity

We welcome the LP Part 1 policy on tranquillity and the inclusion of the CPRE tranquillity map for Oxfordshire.

Question 61 Light Pollution

Yes.

This should include reference to use of latest lighting technology. Please note that CPRE's National Office will be publishing new maps showing the latest situation with regards to light pollution across the country in early summer 2016. We will ensure this information is passed on as soon as it becomes available.

Question 63 - Soil

Yes.

There is a need for a policy to promote soil conservation for multiple benefits. It should seek to highlight the intrinsically close relationship between conservation of healthy soil profiles and conserving archaeological remains and wildlife.

Question 64 - Land Contamination and Unstable Land

Yes.

There is a need for a policy to promote sensible, evidence-led management of contaminated land. The policy should be updated so that it promotes a balanced approach, recognising for example that some contamination can occur on sites that are important for industrial archaeology or for unusual wildlife. This should especially highlight the need for integrated approaches to historical and archaeological desk studies and site investigations as befits the potential heritage interest of the site in question. Similar principles should apply to wildlife, both aquatic and terrestrial. The *Oxfordshire Planning Advice Note Dealing with Land Contamination During Development: A Guide for Developers* (version 2 December 2013) appears to be completely silent on these matters, and does not reflect national guidance. Policy should therefore seek to take a much more holistic approach to balancing all interests, promoting where appropriate avoidance of disturbance and non-intrusive amelioration techniques.

Question 65 - Other Development Management Issues for Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Yes.

Wherever still relevant existing policies should be retained. This should be cast within a firm policy to deal with such matters at a landscape-scale as well as site based; there needs to be a general policy for affording protection to locally valued heritage assets, historic character of the landscape, wildlife habitats and general landscape character landscape as well as nationally designated sites. This should include a strong dark skies policy especially for areas in or adjacent to the Cotswolds AONB and local observatories. There needs to be a mechanism for the public to submit suggestions for such areas and assets.

Question 66 - Oxford Green Belt boundary revisions

CPRE opposed, and opposes, both releases and heard no justification for them at the Local Plan EIP. Neither of the sites has any data to indicate their proximity to other key environmental designations which is crucial to understanding how much they contribute to key aspects of open countryside and landscape character and quality.

There remains considerable uncertainty as to what will happen in relation to any further reviews of meeting Oxford's unmet housing needs.

It is accepted however that in principle they were accepted by the Inspector.

Release 1A appears confined to the football field, which was the site considered, although we believe the boundary should be tightly drawn around it to ensure no misunderstanding.

Release 1B is too large, and again should be confined to the field to the North of the current site.

We do not consider the general call for Green Belt sites to be appropriate, or the implication that a mere wish to expand or develop might be considered an exceptional circumstance.

This is to stand Green Belt policy, which requires permanence, on its head. At the very most it should be confined to very small sites directly adjacent to the agreed releases, and insignificant in size in relation to them.

Question 67 - Development management issues relating to the Green Belt

In terms of policy, we do not see any particularly local issues relating to the Green Belt which is a National Designation and adequately covered in the NPPF and PPG guidance.

Green Belt harm arises when Councils use their discretion to override or under interpret these policies. For that reason we believe that the Council should stand on National Policy.

However, in terms of the accompanying explanatory text, the Council may wish to consider the specific role of the Green Belt in protecting the setting of Oxford as a historic city of international significance.

This includes recognising that views of, from or across the Oxford skyline to the surrounding 'green backcloth' of Green Belt countryside is integral to the setting of numerous high grade listed buildings and scheduled monuments. The character and appearance of a number of Conservation Areas therefore requires careful consideration as to whether or not development proposals would affect those settings, character or appearance, and Historic England duly consulted if they are.

Careful consideration should be given to the Historic Landscape character of the Green Belt and especially the relationship between the historic core of villages, hamlets, farms and other places and adjacent open countryside, especially where such relationships involve designated assets. These areas, even where not within sight of Oxford, are crucial to preserving the character of its rural hinterland and hence its experiential setting. Similar considerations must be given to wildlife (under section 40 of the NERC Act 2006) and especially to nationally or locally designated wildlife sites and the importance of intervening open countryside for species. This includes areas of historic and especially ancient deciduous woodland.

Q 68 - Design and views

As the NPPF indicates, good design is fundamental to good planning. As noted, existing policies are not outdated or superseded, but need to be strengthened to reflect current understanding and public perception of what contributes to people's sense of place.

In addition to retaining all the relevant existing policies, a further one should be added that will seek to encourage layouts and designs that are in keeping with the character of their historic and community surroundings. This means giving proper consideration to the layout and street form - where possible creating new through streets so that new developments are properly integrated rather than always creating uninspiring architectural and social cul de sacs; and avoiding slavish pastiche but deriving inspiration from the scale, form, materials, proportions and variety of historic designs. This should also refer to seeking to conserve historic relationships between the historic core of settlements and their surrounding countryside, especially for Conservation Areas and other places that retain a strong historic character. Policy should make reference to historic landscape characterisation (in progress for Oxfordshire) and specific design guidelines as sources of information on this, and should cross refer to policy on integrating new development in historic areas.

The saved policy on views (D12) should be retained, but needs to be strengthened in two ways:

- i) The policy should refer to protecting views of, from and across the Oxford skyline as another key example'
- ii) All such views that encompass listed buildings and/or conservation areas should be treated as contributing to the setting of the listed buildings and scheduled monuments, and the character and/or appearance of conservation areas, unless it is clearly demonstrable that their significance will NOT be affected. Where such views would be affected, the extent to which such views contribute to the significance of buildings, monuments and areas affected their protection will be given great weight, and as necessary subject to special consultation in accordance with statutory requirements of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, national Development Control guidance on notifications and NPPF policy for preserving such assets.

Q69 - Public art

Yes, there should be a policy on public art, but needs to be related to context - most likely being suited to new urban development.

Q70 - Integrating new Development in Historic Areas

Yes.

It is essential that such a policy is included - and strengthened. Such policy should NOT be restricted to designated areas or assets. We have suggested some of the elements needing to be covered in our comments on Q 68. These illustrate a couple of the key issues that typically arise. Both national and local policy are currently too vague about what this means to be very effective: clearer reference needs to be made to the multitude of factors that contribute to good integration. The policy

should seek to ensure that such integration operates through the hierarchy of decision-making, ensuring that:

- i) The numbers and locations of dwellings and character of other developments are suited to the historic character of areas including historic pattern and distribution of settlements and their relative interdependence.
- ii) Site choices and layout respect the historic character of the locality and form of settlements, farms and industrial heritage.
- iii) The scale, massing, proportions and density of new development respects historic character.
- iv) Architectural design, materials proportions and detailing respect and draw inspiration from local historic character and variety of traditional building styles, including innovative new design where appropriate, while avoiding poorly designed pastiche.
- v) Schemes that seek to regenerate redundant historic buildings find new uses that are best suited to retaining their character features and appearance and minimise loss of historic significance and legibility of their original purpose.

Policy should make reference to Landscape and Historic Landscape Characterisations, Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidelines and Historic England guidance that will assist implementation of the policy.

Q71 - Assessing the Impact of Development on Heritage Assets and their settings

Yes.

It is essential that such a policy is included. It is also important that it does not merely repeat national policy and guidance in NPPF and NPPG. The coverage in several of the Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan policies covers much of the same ground as national policy, as does the lengthy text, so it is desirable that this (and the 1996 Plan) are reconsidered. Such review should be carried out in a manner that proactively seeks to retain or replace these policies with a suite of policies and text on this issue that will complement and clarify how national policy will be applied. This should seek to achieve the following main objectives:

- i) Demonstrate in practical deliverable form how the NPPF requirement to plan positively for conservation of the historic environment will be achieved.
- ii) Ensure that the District's heritage policy fully reflects statutory as well as national planning policy requirements (especially where, as in the case of conservation areas, the wording of national policy does not fully reflect the terminology of statutory provision).

- iii) Add clarity to how the combination of statutory and regulatory requirements; national planning policy criteria; national policy guidance; and non-statutory Historic England guidance will be brought together to create a clear framework for fully informed decision-making.
- iv) Show how through its policies the District Council will secure (by its own actions and through developer contributions) the maintenance of the information resources, professional advisory services and means of securing long term public interest in the results of records and investigations arising from development - all of which are essential pre-requisites of pro-active conservation of the historic environment.

EN39 does not add anything much to national policy, but could usefully be replaced by a policy commitment that within seven years of adoption of the plan Cherwell District Council in conjunction with Historic England and local heritage interests will draw up, consult upon and adopt a Historic Environment Action Plan that will set out a proactive approach to ensuring that conservation of the historic environment makes a substantial contribution to people's quality of life, and how the District will ensure that contributions are made to supporting the District's role and County-wide services that provide the documentary archives, museum services, conservation and archaeological advice that are essential to managing the heritage for the benefit of the public.

EN40 should be retained because its wording relates directly to the statutory provisions for Conservation Areas in a manner that NPPF does not make explicit. It also indicates some of the key considerations to be taken into account, including making explicit what successive court judgments have ruled, in respect of how the surroundings of a Conservation area may contribute to its character and appearance. The accompanying text could be shortened and revised to be more locally relevant

EN41-48

These policies mostly replicate what is contained in NPPF and NPPG, but together with the text they do clarify how these national policies will be implemented. In essence they all concern making sure that decision-making is properly informed and consideration should be given to whether they could be replaced by a single policy setting out in broad terms the standards by which fully informed decisions in line with national policy will be ensured. This would be to require that all applications for listed building consent, conservation area consent or planning permission affecting designated or important non-designated assets and areas be accompanied by adequate information to make a fully informed judgment addressing all the issues established by Statutory provisions as interpreted by the courts, the criteria set out in NPPF and NPPG, and Historic England's guidance.

This is desirable to make clear the full range of requirements and guidance will be applied and how, in order to achieve this, applicants will be required to demonstrate:

- A very clear understanding of the significance of heritage assets (normally based on specialist professional expertise).

- An approach that seeks to avoid harm or minimise it where unavoidable, or that better reveals or restores historic significance.
- A clear and specific impact assessment saying as far as reasonably possible (where necessary and appropriate informed by technical survey or investigation) how significance will be altered.
- A clear statement of justification showing how public interest of allowing the proposals outweighs the weight (and in the case of designated assets considerable weight and importance) to be given to heritage conservation.
- A clear statement of what measures will be adopted to mitigate any harm through professional investigation and recording, deposition of records and finds in a public repository, and publication of any significant discoveries in a suitable format.

For the benefit of applicants it would probably be beneficial for the general policy to be backed up by a series of sub-policies or criteria, drawing on the content of the Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan but updating it to modern standards to spell out the requirements for how this will be achieved for each of the following:

- Historic buildings
- Conservation areas
- Designed landscapes, battlefields etc
- Archaeological sites
- General historic landscape character (this will need to reflect best practice in other authorities where Historic Landscape Characterisation has been completed and implementation strategies are already in place).

EN44 This policy as it stands does not add anything much to national policy, but setting is a notoriously difficult issue given the latitude inherent in legislation and policy (explicitly reliant on the opinion of the LPA) and this could usefully be recast to add clarity to how setting issues will be handled. This would state that:

- i) In exercising its statutory duty the Council will formally record its opinions as to whether or not the setting of listed buildings will be affected (giving reasons why they are or are not); that a similar approach will be taken to other designated assets.
- ii) In reaching such opinions and requiring applicants to present a fully informed assessment where settings would be affected the Council will apply the principles of the approach advocated by Historic England's guidance, followed to a level of detail commensurate with the significance of the issue for balancing the public interest in heritage conservation with other planning objectives.

EN49 With respect to Rousham, its special national significance does warrant a specific policy, but its detailed wording needs checking: the reference in part (i) of the policy to ensuring that ARE NOT VISUALLY PROMINENT FROM THE PARK introduces a criterion of 'prominent' that is out of kilter with the NPPF test of

balancing the degree of harm with the importance of the asset. In this case the very high importance of the Rousham vista and its still generally unspoilt character means that significant harm could arise from a development that is intrusive or noticeable without being 'prominent.' The policy should therefore be couched in terms of the great historical importance of Rousham, its relatively unscathed survival and therefore great sensitivity to change, and should make it clear that any noticeable intrusion is likely to be harmful and therefore subject to great weight being given to preservation of its historic significance.

Part (ii) of the policy should be updated in line with proposals for Upper Heyford.

With respect to Bicester and other areas, the position should be reviewed and policy brought up to date to focus on all specific areas in the District where important heritage assets and areas are likely to be under pressure of redevelopment or regeneration.

Local heritage assets The Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan did not have a policy on developing a 'local list' of valued heritage assets that have not been designated through statutory or national lists, but such assets are often crucial to local distinctiveness, sense of place or community values. There needs to be a policy to further develop such a list, especially through drawing on public participation to identify what is historic value to local communities.

Historic Landscape Character The Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan did not have a policy on the wider historic environment. NPPF alludes throughout to the value of the historic environment in its widest sense - as reflected in the NPPF definition. But its policies and NPPG guidance are relatively silent on how this wider aspect of conservation and its relationship to landscape, habitats, cultural associations etc can be proactively used to maintain and enhance the ways in which the wider historic environment contributes to people's quality of life. Oxfordshire is many years behind almost all other local authorities in developing a county-wide Historic Landscape Characterisation, but this is due to be completed in the next year or so and policies should be updated to reflect best practice in other authorities where such characterisation has been completed and implementation strategies are already in place.

Q72 - Heritage Assets at Risk

Yes.

A policy on heritage assets at risk should be included. The existing Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan policy EN46 is useful in principle but needs to be reviewed so it does not just replicate the principles set out in NPPF. It should in particular make reference to the additional guidance that Historic England guidance contains and should be much more explicit about the balance of harm and benefit, and in particular the complex relationship this has to issues both of setting and fabric. The ongoing case at Hampton Gay illustrates how sensitive and complex the balancing of these issues can be.

In addition, heritage assets at risk have also become part of monitoring of heritage policies, and especially where local heritage at risk is included can be useful. But

very often the use of heritage at risk as an indicator of the effectiveness of heritage policies is almost entirely irrelevant: all too often most 'at risk' assets are affected by development proposals that might help preserve them, and monitoring them only monitors the effectiveness of other mechanisms (eg statutory repair orders, compulsory purchase or agri-environment measures to secure preservation and maintenance).

It is therefore highly desirable that a monitoring regime is established that genuinely monitors the effectiveness of the various policies designed to conserve the historic environment, and that this should be part of the Heritage Plan proposed above. A good example of this for archaeological remains is Oxford City Council's Archaeology Policy, but much more work is needed to develop meaningful and readily deliverable monitoring for other aspects of the historic environment.

Q73 - Other Development Management Policies

Yes - such policies are valuable.

Question 74 - Green Infrastructure

Yes. We note that the County Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy referred to in the Introduction to this section has been in 'the early stages' for at least four years and probably longer. This situation is a disgrace. What evidence is there that the Plan is being seriously considered and will be brought forward as a matter of urgency? If the County cannot provide this evidence, what steps will Cherwell take to bring forward its own GI strategy?

Ref paragraph 4.293 - Yes, a policy on Historic Routeways would be appropriate. For example, CPRE is currently concerned about the impact on Akeman Street from proposed warehousing.

Cherwell District Council is to be commended on its recognition of the multi-faceted environmental values of both historic waterways and historic routeways. These are innovative and highly worthwhile policies that are not in themselves required by NPPF yet bring together a whole raft of other environmental and socio-economic policies that undoubtedly make a contribution to sustainable development. The Part 2 Plan should include policies on both 'blue infrastructure' and 'historic routeways.' In both cases they should cross refer to other policies covering landscape ecology and heritage conservation which will be relevant to their implementation.

Question 75 - Neighbourhood Planning

Yes. Whilst not strictly related to policy issues, we note the current situation with the Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan and urge CDC to consider whether there are any changes that could be made to avoid any repetition of this deplorable situation.

Question 76 - Bicester: Review of the Town Centre Boundary and the Primary Shopping Frontage

When defining a new town centre boundary, the character of Bicester as an agricultural market town with small frontages of retail / business premises and buildings no more than two or three storeys in height, should be respected. The new buildings recently constructed do not conform to this and are out of character and scale and have degraded the setting of the Town and the environment of the Grade I listed church. There should be policy guidance to prevent further loss of character and intrusion on the existing Conservation area.

The effect of one single large retail premise in the Town centre has been to out-compete smaller businesses which are now closing down, further contributing to the loss of the town centre's vitality. It is curious that Bicester Village's huge success depends on its small shop frontages, but this demonstrates that small premises can bring commercial success.

Specific sites that should be considered for protection from development are the green areas of Pingle Field and the adjacent sports pitches which are essential for the town centre as this is deficient in green space. They further provide open views to the Grade I listed church which defines the character of the area.

The Market Square is an area that could be enhanced visually and made into a more pleasant space for people to use.

Question 77 - Bicester: Transport Infrastructure

With reference to the County Council Local Transport Plan LTP4, we encourage the proposal for a rail freight interchange at Graven Hill. A reduction in the numbers of HGVs in and around Bicester from such a plan will reduce congestion and pollution on the already heavily congested roads.

A new motorway junction is not supported as although this might relieve pressure on the A41 to Junction 9 of the M40, it will do nothing to resolve the current, let alone future, problems of Junction 9 and the A34 route to the south coast. Junction 9 of the M40 requires a major redesign.

Promotion of cycling and walking is laudable but unless a suitable safe set of routes is planned and constructed across the town, this policy will not be fulfilled. Wherever possible, priority must be given for segregated cycle ways and pathways that do not conflict with motor vehicles or have a shared use. Middleton Stoney Road is a classic example of where this could have been achieved but the County chose to take the cheap option which does not encourage safe use by cyclists nor improve the environmental conditions of the town.

Question 78 - Retaining Local Identity and Character whilst accommodating growth

As pointed out in paragraph 5.25 “there are key views to the church” which need to be retained by ensuring any new structures do not intrude into the skyline, especially when approaching Bicester from the surrounding countryside.

RAF Bicester Conservation Area has important views from the watch tower and other preserved buildings to the open countryside beyond; these views need to be protected to “Retain the Local Identity and Character” and not lost to unsuitable tall structures in the vicinity.

It is essential to retain the views of Bicester when viewed from the surrounding countryside towards Bicester. Massive tall structures on the outskirts should be refused.

Question 79 - Bicester Green Infrastructure

We endorse the statements leading up to this question but add that working with the community in sourcing and protecting green sites should be a method of assisting in the development and location of existing and new sites. Designations of Local Green Space, as requested in Q45, should be encouraged and the opportunity to do this should be advertised. With regard to Bicester, paragraph 5.31 identifies the Council’s work on *“updating our assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities to inform the preparation of Local Plan part 2, and policies and proposals may need to be included in Local Plan Part 2 to address any identified deficiencies in provision”*. Only when this work is complete can potential sites for Local Green Space designation be brought forward.

We recognise that the call for Local Green Spaces can only be so designated *“when a plan is prepared or reviewed”* (NPPF Para 76) but recommend that such a survey of green spaces could be part of the plan preparation and still meet the requirements of the NPPF.

We would go further in paragraph 5.29 regarding an urban edge park around Bicester, now that Bicester has been identified as a Garden Town, by completing a requirement of a Garden ‘Town’ to have a “Green Belt”. Ebenezer Howard said, *“Garden cities were intended to be planned, self-contained communities surrounded by ‘Green Belts’”*.

Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states: *“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”*

The NPPF goes on to say in paragraph 82 that *“New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions”*.

Bicester has been allocated Garden “City” status by the government, has a major urban extension and the nearby villages need to be protected from future urban sprawl that the Council recognised when identifying the “buffer zones” in LP1.

The stated objectives of green belt policy are to:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

All of these objectives are defined in the text leading to Question 79.

At the EiP for the LP1 the inspector suggested that the “Green Buffers” policy which aimed to prevent the coalition of the surrounding villages was not part of the planning process and that policy ESD10 or 11 would suffice. We suggest that the ESD policy might have some control on the potential urban sprawl but it does not have the same power as a Green Belt as defined in the NPPF. If Bicester is to be a ‘Garden Town’ then it should meet with the requirements, including a Green Belt.

Whilst we support the suggested further work identified in paragraph 5.32 regarding the effects of development on biodiversity, even without the results of such work we suggest there is a need for adequate green space between any recognised wildlife or nature reserve site and any development. Mass development up to the edge of any wildlife or nature site must be detrimental to the site’s long term future because of population pressure and should be refused.

We support the principle of a new town park as defined in paragraph 5.33. Although Garth Park has been recognised as the town park in paragraph 5.29, we suggest that this was when the town had a population of around 5,000 and not the current or projected population. Whilst Garth Park has some recreation provision there is only a small area of open land. Pingle Field, and the associated BSA land, would be an area of open land more in keeping with the requirement of a town park suitable for the size of the town in 2031 and beyond.

Question 80 - Transition to a low carbon environmentally sustainable community

We suggest that every future planning application, especially for employment buildings, be judged on where they could be made more sustainable. This may be in the construction technique or the materials proposed for construction. Efficient insulation to reduce energy use for space heating should be a priority, not only for new builds but also for older properties in the town with solid rather than cavity walls.

We recommend wherever practical, that every new employment application includes PV panels across the roof. We also recommend refusal of any further use of good farm land for “Solar Farms” as generation from PV panels on new and existing

buildings is less damaging to the countryside and will have a greater area over time than any farm.

In a similar manner, consideration should be given to fitting all new car parks such as that at the new Tesco superstore or on Bicester Village with PV panels constructed above the area where cars are parked following the rows in the form of canopies, providing that this is not detrimental to the landscape.

Question 81 - Banbury: Review of the Town Centre Boundary and the Primary Shopping Frontage.

The development of the new Banbury Gateway is already affecting Castle Quay and Parsons Street, which historically formed part of the primary shopping area. Consequently we already have a large number of charity shops and numerous vacant Retail Outlets in the Town's centre. Therefore the Town centre shopping centre needs to be redefined with the new shopping frontage.

The switch to online shopping has been raised but not strategically considered and a working party is needed urgently.

The canal and river corridor has been neglected and should be prioritised to assist in regeneration of the Canalside and to assist in creating a new green corridor for recreation purposes between Cropedy and Oxford.

The principle area for employment activity should continue to be along the M40 axis restricted to the west side where the current warehousing & distribution sheds are located.

Question 82 - Banbury: Transport Infrastructure.

Banbury Town has a good rail network link to London Marylebone, Oxford, Reading, the south coast and north to Birmingham and beyond. The suggested timetable for any strategic development such as electrification of the line should be addressed in Local Plan Part 2.

The bus routes around Banbury are fighting for survival, the surrounding villages are slowly being isolated with the withdrawal of services and subsidies, and this will only get worse as council budgets are reduced further.

A new transport strategy needs to be incorporated in Local Plan Part 2 to provide essential services and to encourage more charitable support and independent operators to assist and subsidise local bus routes.

Question 83 - Banbury: Green Infrastructure.

The existing green infrastructure network has been identified and is gradually being enhanced. The single development that has been held back is the Canalside development which would provide over 700 houses or flats at an acceptable density of between 40 and 70 per hectare on effectively a brownfield site. This area has been looked at by CDC. Meanwhile more work needs to be carried out to investigate the development of the green beltway between the Oxford Canal and the River Cherwell from the town centre out towards Oxford.

Question 85 - Kidlington: Determining the Boundary of the Village Centre

Further development of employment use to the west of Oxford Road could exacerbate traffic safety and pollution issues. The existing centre would instead be the logical area for improvement and consolidation, with appropriate urban design policies. Policies relating to increasing and improving public spaces would be particularly welcome, including pedestrian routes.

Question 86 - Kidlington: Transport Infrastructure

A strong policy in relation to the availability of free parking would be helpful in maintaining the economic vibrancy of the village.

We are concerned that the canal towpath referenced as a potential cycle commuting route into Oxford is inadequate for this purpose.

We strongly support the policy in the Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan, outlined in paragraph 5.70, which states: ‘the Council will not permit any new park and ride sites in the District, to encourage commuter trips to Oxford to transfer to public transport at or close to the source of the journey.’

Question 87 - Kidlington: Intensification of Residential Use

In principle, CPRE supports an increase in density - see response to Q30 on housing density. However, local circumstances must be taken into account, including adequate provision of accessible green space.

Question 88 - Kidlington: Green Infrastructure

Paragraph 5.72 outlines Kidlington’s green infrastructure, including access to the open countryside. This is currently protected by its Green Belt status and therefore any removal of this designation risks putting this under threat. Protection, and enhancement, of the surrounding countryside is also important in relation to the general under-provision of alternative accessible green space, such as playing fields or public parks.

We also understand there are a number of local paths that would be eligible for, and benefit, from being designated as Public Rights of Way and would ask for CDC's support in this matter.

Question 92 - Villages & Rural Areas: Identifying where development would be Inappropriate

Yes. Examples include Otmoor, areas where development would bring village coalescence with nearby conurbations such as surrounding Banbury & Bicester, Ironstone and Oxford Canal areas.

We would be happy to discuss further examples.

Question 93 Villages & Rural Area; Settlement Boundaries

Yes.

Question 94 Retail Developments in the Rural Areas

Yes. The policies outlined in paragraph 5.92 would be a useful starting point.

Question 95 Infrastructure

Infrastructure first!

ENDS