

# **Wendlebury Parish Council Response to Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 Partial Review Oxford's Unmet Need**

**This response has been prepared following a special Parish  
Council meeting held on 5 January 2017**

## **1. Consultation Time frame**

Even allowing for the Christmas and New Year break, for a small Parish Council, eight weeks is an inadequate time to respond to a detailed and comprehensive document expecting comment on 24 issues. The Parish Council was told that the time-frame for the review was set by the Planning Inspectorate. The Parish Council made representation to the Inspectorate who stated "the regulations set a minimum 6 week consultation period, but it is Cherwell Council who can extend that period, it is not a matter for the Inspectorate."

*In view of this response from the Planning Inspectorate, the Parish Council must ask why the time scale has been portrayed as being inflexible?*

## **2. Duty to Co-operate between Oxfordshire Local Authorities**

Wendlebury Parish Council acknowledges the legal Duty to Co-operate and consider Cross Boundary Issues between Cherwell and the other local authorities in Oxfordshire.

There is however some concern that the mechanism for this duty rests with an unelected "Quango," the Oxfordshire Growth Board. Although the Board paved the way for the Oxfordshire Memorandum Co-operation, agreed by the leaders of the five District Councils and County Council, in late September 2016. The memorandum makes it clear that any decisions are not binding, have no legal or financial status and do not identify, propose or recommend any sites for additional housing within any district, this being a matter for each individual district through its own local plan process.

*Disagreement between authorities is not, in itself, evidence of a failure to meet the Duty to Co-operate.*

*The Parish Council would like to know why Cherwell District has decided to go ahead with proposals to meet Oxford's unmet demand when there is no legal requirement for it?*

Oxford City Council has yet to put their Local Plan through the examination process where the District Councils and any other interested parties will have the chance of commenting on the soundness of the plans.

*This is surely the appropriate mechanism for Oxford City to justify their decision not to build 15000 (out of a target of 28000) new houses. The partial review process, if established, should be at the conclusion of the process described above, not before and not as a result of discussions behind closed doors.*

### **3. Challenging the assumptions**

Cherwell's Local Plan Part 1 has identified a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land throughout the plan period and that makes provision for 22,840 new homes over the plan period with associated jobs and infrastructure requirements (Policy BSC1). The plan has established that there is adequate land available and there is no need to allocate any additional sites for housing.

The plan also recognises that it is unrealistic to have specific jobs growth targets for particular sectors of the economy, as the market is inherently more flexible and the relevant technologies change so quickly, there is no need for the plan to identify any further strategic or out of town locations for major new employment development, in order to provide a broad balance between new homes and new jobs over the plan period.

The Oxfordshire Growth Board commissioned in April 2014 the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This assessment took into account house prices, migration and commuting flows concluding that the County is in reality one strategic housing market area. All agree that forecasting new housing needs and employment is not an exact science. This is further evidenced by the DCLG 2014 household projections that have a different starting point for housing need.

Although Cherwell has identified suitable sites to meet its plan requirements, notwithstanding the primary purpose of their allocation, housing on these sites would be available just as much to people falling with the category of Oxford's need as to those of Cherwell. And in reality it would be all but impossible to determine if a potential occupier of this housing represents a Cherwell or Oxford 'housing need'.

The market will determine housing needs, not the artificial number based proposals that are causing considerable concern to this rural community.

*What would be the impact on the County as one strategic market if Cherwell failed to meet its own Local Plan requirements? We have already noted that*

*South Oxfordshire District has not supported the proposals. Paragraph B95 of the local plan makes it clear that Cherwell's needs must take precedent.*

#### **4. New Evidence**

- DGLC has announced the approval of a Garden Village near Eynsham, West Oxfordshire for housing and a science park, planning to deliver high tech jobs on a site closer to Oxford than Wendlebury.
- The Parish's Member of Parliament has informed us that DGLC will be producing a consultation paper on housing density in January 2017, which could lead to a change in the mix and density of new housing.
- The proposed opening of a new railway link between Bicester and Bedford in 2020 with new housing and business links.
- Creation of a A34 Expressway. Report currently is looking at three main options again linking Oxford to Cambridge.

The Oxford – Cambridge corridor whether by road or train will provide new opportunities for both housing and economic growth and help reduce some of the pressures on Oxford. Policy B6 states "we are looking to strengthen the Districts profile with performance engineering and will support investment made in the District in premises for new technology innovation." It would appear that West Oxfordshire have stolen a march on Cherwell with their garden village bid which will include a science park.

The Parish Council hopes that the scarce resources at Cherwell should concentrate on the employment potential this opportunity provides rather than chasing housing numbers. The Parish Council hopes this will lead to rethink and the current set of proposals being deferred or dropped.

#### **5. Specific comments on the Partial Review**

The spatial strategy for the local plan (introduction para. V1) states that growth will be managed by

- Focusing the bulk of the proposed growth in and around Bicester and Banbury
- Limiting growth in our rural areas and directing it towards larger and more sustainable villages
- Aiming to strictly control development in open countryside

Policy Villages 1 makes it clear that in Category C communities development will be restricted to infilling and conversions only.

As the Planners are aware, Wendlebury has been identified as a Category C Settlement in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan of 2015 (C254) and developments should be infill or conversions only.

As indicated in our first paragraph, it is not possible within the time limit set by Cherwell for the Parish Council to comment on all the questions set out in the Options Consultation. The Parish Council is not qualified to answer some of them but has endeavoured to respond to those that directly affect the parish and the residents within it.

*Question 1: Is the 4,400 home requirement appropriate for Cherwell in seeking to meet Oxford's unmet housing need*

No. 4,400 houses which is likely to equate to approximately 20,000 people, is too many houses for Cherwell to accommodate; Oxford should do more to accommodate within its own boundaries. Cherwell is already seeing unprecedented growth both in Banbury and Bicester and more housing within the District will damage the rural environment around the towns and put the services and infrastructure under increased strain when there is no corresponding planned improvement to these vital amenities to match housing growth.

*Question 2: Do you agree that we need to specifically meet Oxford's needs in planning for the additional housing development?*

No. Oxford should do more to accommodate its own growth. We read that Oxford requires key worker and affordable homes. One solution would be to clear the Osney Mead Industrial estate that currently has poor access and has seen better days and build the required housing mix on this site providing easy access to the town centre and station.

*Question 3: Are there any issues that need to be considered to assess the development options?*

The effects on existing settlements of this increased housing number on the infrastructure, amenities and quality of living of the existing residents within Cherwell.

*Question 4: Do you support the draft vision? Are there changes required?*

This is a vision Oxford City would support. It is not appropriate for Cherwell. Cherwell should be saying "lets develop the science parks here, create the

high level high tech jobs to prevent the daily migration to Oxford and London". As stated earlier the Oxford – Cambridge technology corridor creates that opportunity.

*Question 5: Do you support the draft Strategic Objective SO16? Are there changes required?*

Unable to respond, insufficient time to consider the issues in detail.

*Question 6: Do you support the draft Strategic Objective SO17?*

Unable to respond, insufficient time to consider the issues in detail.

*Question 7: Do you support the draft Strategic Objective SO18?*

Unable to respond, due to insufficient time to consider the issues in detail.

*Question 8: Do you support the draft Strategic Objective SO19?*

Unable to respond due to insufficient time to consider the issues in detail.

*Question 9: Do you have any comments on the area of search defined?*

The Parish Council in this response and taking into account the views of the community, question the status of the Growth Board and whether or not the publication of these sites is in direct contravention of the principles in your Local Plan Part 1. Why has the Authority done a "U" turn by encouraging landowners and speculative developers to put forward schemes by just drawing a red line on a map? This action has placed stress and concern on this community and the others affected by this process.

*Question 10: Do you agree with our minimum site size threshold of two hectares for the purpose of site identification? Do you agree that we should not be seeking to allocate sites for less than 100 homes?*

Agree

*Question 11: Do you have any comments on the sites that we have identified?*

### **SITE PR10**

Wendlebury Parish Council objects to this site proposal on the grounds that it is inappropriate development in a rural area on land that floods, is considered a BAP habitat, includes land that Cherwell DC identified as a Green Boundary Zone to separate the growth of Bicester from merging with its surrounding villages (Bicester Masterplan). The site is unsustainable it is not connected to any major settlement that can support its population either with employment or vital infrastructure which will result in increased congestion on the roads surrounding Bicester as residents have to travel to access services. Flood Zones will limit the area that could be developed reducing viability and removing the ability of the site to generate the necessary funds to provide the infrastructure to make it sustainable. In particular it is contrary to Cherwell DC Local Plan Strategic Objectives SO6, SO11, SO12 and SO15.

**It is contrary to the Policy set out in the Cherwell Local Plan in the following instances:**

- Policy BSC 11 - It will reduce or remove Wendlebury's opportunity to access easily outdoor space.
- Policy ESD - 1 Mitigating and adapting to Climate Change. The majority of the site sits on flood plain and the remainder sits on land that drains onto the flood plain. This land is frequently under water during winter months.
- Policy ESD 6 Sustainable Flood Risk Management - under this policy the site should be rejected.
- Policy ESD 10 - under no circumstances does the scheme protect or enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.
- Policy ESD 13 - it does not protect local landscape or environment and will damage the setting of scheduled ancient monument of Alchester Roman Settlement and its surrounding archaeological remains.
- Policy ESD 15 - it will remove the Green Boundary to Growth especially designed and proposed by the Local Plan to stop development.
- Policy ESD 18 - the proposal will remove the access of Wendlebury to the Green Infrastructure around it by cutting of access to the countryside.

### **SITE PR11**

The Parish Council objects to this site. It is located within the Green Belt, a protected area designated to stop development in areas that are inappropriate and to stop the spread of urban sprawl. The site is unsustainable having no existing infrastructure and no connection to an existing urban or developed area. Its location will result in a greater dependence on the motor car. The site goes against Cherwell's Strategic Objectives SO6, SO10, SO11, SO12, SO13 and SO15.

**The site is contrary to Cherwell Local Plan Policies:**

**ESD 1**  
**ESD 6**  
**ESD 10**  
**ESD 13**  
**ESD 14**

**SITE PR12**

The Parish Council objects to this site on the basis that it is unsustainable development proposed in a small village that if allowed will lead to the merging of Little Chesterton and Chesterton and to the urban sprawl of Bicester out towards the M40 and the eventual growth of the town over all the rural areas between it and the M40. The site goes against the Strategic Objectives of the Cherwell Local SO6, SO10, SO11 and SO12.

**In particular the site is contrary to policies:**

**ESD 10**  
**ESD 13**

**SITE PR97**

The Parish Council objects to this site as it represents a direct extension to the village. The village has Category C status allowing for infill development only. This proposed development would put an undue strain on the existing infrastructure within the village and its position at the top of the village would cause rain water to flow down into the existing village increasing the effects already felt by many of the residents which leads to flooding of gardens and an inability of the drainage system to adequately remove flood waters. The site has historic agricultural ridge and furrow across the majority of it and dew ponds close to the church. It sits outside the boundaries of the village's built line. With the exception of the public house the village has no services that can be utilised by the proposed site which would lead to residents having to use private motor cars to access services.

*Question 12: Do any site promoters/developers/landowners wish to provide updated or supporting information about their sites?*

**SITE PR139**

The Parish Council objects to this site proposal on the grounds that it is inappropriate development in a rural area, a Green Boundary Zone to separate the growth of Bicester from merging with its surrounding villages (Bicester Masterplan). The site is unsustainable it is not connected to any major settlement that can support its population either with employment or vital infrastructure which will result in increased congestion on the roads surrounding Bicester as residents have to travel to access services. In particular it is contrary to Cherwell DC Local Plan Strategic Objectives SO6, SO11, SO12 and SO15.

**It is contrary to the Policy set out in the Cherwell Local Plan in the following instances:**

- Policy BSC 11 - It will reduce or remove Chesterton's opportunity to access easily outdoor space
- Policy ESD - 1 Mitigating and adapting to Climate Change. The majority of the site sits on flood plain and the remainder sits on land that drains onto the flood plain. This land is frequently under water during winter months.
- Policy ESD 6 Sustainable Flood Risk Management - under this policy the site should be rejected.
- Policy ESD 10 - under no circumstances does the scheme protect or enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.
- Policy ESD 13 - it does not protect local landscape or environment.
- Policy ESD 15 - it will remove the Green Boundary to Growth especially designed and proposed by the Local Plan to stop development.

**SITE PR196**

The Parish Council objects to the inclusion of this site into the land already allocated into the Bicester Gateway employment scheme. The proposed development has not yet satisfied the Parish Council on how transport plans will deal with and mitigate increased vehicle movements generated by the development through the village of Wendlebury. Any increase in traffic movements through the village are to be avoided as there is no street lighting and no pavements making higher traffic levels encountered in morning and evenings and when there are incidents at Junction 9 of the M40 an opportunity for serious accidents. Until the developers can satisfy the Parish Council then the objection will stand.

**SITE PR77**

The Parish Council objects to the inclusion of this site into the land already allocated into the Bicester Avenue scheme. The proposed development has not yet satisfied the PC on how transport plans will deal with and mitigate increased vehicle movements generated by the development through the village of Wendlebury. As there is only one main road through the village most housing is centred along it and is directly affected by any increase in traffic volumes diminishing the attracting and vitality of the village and reducing the environmental benefits of living in a village. Any increase in traffic movements through the village are to be avoided as there is no street lighting and no pavements making higher traffic levels encountered in morning and evenings and when there are incidents at Junction 9 of the M40 an opportunity for serious accidents. Until the developers can satisfy the PC then the objection will stand.

None of these sites complies with the stated objectives within the Cherwell Local Plan that aimed to concentrate development in and around the major

urban centres within the District. They represent opportunistic attempts by landowners to secure favourable allocation within the planning system when the local authority is under pressure to find sites for housing to satisfy 5 year supply to avoid unplanned and inappropriate development.

*Question 13: Are there any potential sites that we have not identified?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time

*Question 14: Do you have any comments on the submissions that we have received so far? Do you disagree with any that we have received so far?*

As stated above in Question 11.

*Question 15: Interim Transport Assessment. Do you have any comments on the assessment and its findings?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time.

*Question 16: Selection of Options: Do you agree with all the areas of search as being reasonable?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time.

*Question 17: Do you have any comments on the Initial Sustainability Appraisal findings for areas of search?*

The criteria chosen in figure 10 does not adequately reflect the lack of public transport options for key workers who have to work unsociable hours

*Question 18: Do you agree with the initial selection of the site options for testing?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time.

*Question 19: Do you have any initial comment on the initial transport assessment and its findings?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time.

*Question 20: Do you have any comments on the Initial Sustainability Appraisal initial findings for sites?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time.

*Question 21: Do you have any comments on the evidence base? Are there other pieces of evidence that need to be considered?*

The evidence base does not adequately address the issues of flooding in relation to PR10 and PR 97. Surface water from the A41 is channelled across this site, is then culverted and discharges into Wendlebury brook. Any development on this site would not work. In PR97 the majority of the site is a category 3 flood plain for the River Ray which reduces the impact of flooding on Oxford. The Environment Agency and Oxford have been looking at major flood relief plans for Oxford. It will be critical to check if the proposed development on this site will have implications for this major scheme.

*Question 22: Is 2021 an appropriate start date to meet Oxford's housing needs over a 5 year supply?*

2021 is not a justified start date. As we have said in this response, Cherwell needs to meet its own needs first. A more appropriate start date would be 2031.

*Question 23: Do you think that phased land release will promote developer competition and assist the maintenance of the 5 year need? What are the alternatives?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time

*Question 24: What proposals do you have to ensure that the plan is delivered and that sustainable development is achieved?*

Unable to respond due to lack of time

## **Finally**

A number of questions were raised by residents at our meeting. The Parish Council was unable to reply, but agreed that these questions would be put to the Cherwell. These will be covered by separate letter, but the Parish would be grateful if the letter and your reply could be included in the response from Wendlebury Parish Council.