

### Annual Review

The year has seen progress on many of the issues that were current twelve months ago. We are still anxious for the canalside area to be regenerated. We are still working to encourage the re-opening of the swimming pool at Woodgreen and we are still concerned about the future of Stanbridge Hall. We still believe that there are many areas of infrastructure which are failing to keep pace with the expanding town.

In this newsletter we aim to bring you up to date with some of our campaigns which aim to resolve these issues.

The Civic Society has, during the year, started to provide more regular updates to members in the form of these Quarterly Newsletters. This is also e-mailed to some members. In time there will be a web site.

### Transport Infrastructure

#### Highways and Traffic

Following his first attendance of the Banbury Advisory Committee meeting last month, Henry Ormerod, a new member of the Society's management committee, made a very relevant comment. This was that he was surprised that so much of the Advisory Committee's time was spent on the detailed consideration of local roadworks rather than strategic plans affecting traffic in the Banbury area. In fact only one such strategic matter was raised at the meeting, this being the capacity of the Oxford Road to cope with the forecast increases in traffic from all the developments planned around Banbury. The matter was raised, not by a member or officer of the Highway Authority but by an outside representative to the Advisory Committee. We deal with this particular issue elsewhere in the Newsletter but Henry's comment does neatly highlight a longstanding failure of forward planning and construction of the highway infrastructure until immediate action becomes imperative. It is only because of the recent pressure by the Society and other outside bodies that the Highway Authority has begun to contemplate a south east relief road round

the town with implementation delayed for another 10 years.

These comments should not be regarded as suggesting that the Advisory Committee does not provide a useful role in helping the Highway Authority in relation to local road proposals. Members of the Civic Society may be interested to know of the following developments:

1. Parking restrictions will be effective before the end of July in parts of Horton View and Foscote Rise.
2. A roundabout is to be constructed at the junction of Middleton Road and Merton Street to cope with the traffic generated by the new development on the former Cattle Market site. The old toilet block will be demolished and there will be no access to the Causeway, the western section becoming a cul-de-sac. Presumably vehicular access to the new development shortly to take place on the former Bridge Motors site has been considered.
3. A "Gateway" incorporating a refuge and a planting box is to be placed on the Bloxham Road and this will include a sign advising drivers that they are entering Easington.
4. The proposed roundabout scheme at the Bloxham Road/Queensway junction aimed at improving traffic flow is under consideration. It is subject to agreement on funding, which may be recovered partly by developer contributions; the likely cost is expected to be more than £800,000 to be largely funded by developer contributions but still with a substantial contribution from the OCC at a time when money for capital work is very limited.
5. The Advisory Committee wanted to ensure that the route from the Bloxham Road to the Warwick Road would remain principally for local traffic and that a weight restriction should therefore be imposed.
6. An investigation is to take place regarding residents parking and a consultant with experience of towns the size of Banbury is to be appointed.

7. Off street parking in residential areas is to be extended to improve vehicle security and traffic flow and reduce unsightly parking on grass verges. *John Bell*

#### Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee

The Civic Society was represented at the June meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee by the chairman and, for the first time, by myself,

What was to me the most worrying matter raised at the meeting was the capacity of the Oxford Road and the Inner Relief Road to accommodate the increased traffic likely to be generated by the by new housing developments, the Bankside Development in particular. At present these roads are often over capacity and long delays result. The Cattle Market and Hanwell Fields developments and even the the new housing at Upper Heyford, are likely to to make traffic problems in parts of Banbury very severe. A foretaste of what could become quite normal in Banbury was provided by a diversion of vehicles off the M40 on account of an incident on the motorway on 28<sup>th</sup> April; Banbury's main traffic routes ground to a virtually complete standstill and the provision of an effective bus service became quite impossible. The Traffic Advisory Committee is asking the Oxfordshire County Council what new roads (if any) are being planned to alleviate the problems that are likely to develop. A south-east relief road linking up with the motorway interchange is going to be absolutely vital, long before another ten years has passed.

The Civic Society Management Committee considers that thought ought to be given to a regular Park and Ride system and other ways of encouraging people to use public transport to relieve congestion on the busiest roads.

*Henry Ormerod*

#### Street Clutter

We recently raised the matter of street clutter, especially, with regard to street signs, with the OCC Transport Department. We drew a comparison between parts of Banbury such

as Cherwell Street and Kensington High Street, which has recently undergone a complete makeover.



Above the recently upgraded High Street Kensington. Below a familiar corner of Banbury at Cherwell Street



The response which we received from the OCC was this:

Dear Mr Carey

Thank you for your e-mail which has been passed to me by my colleague David Clough in Transport Projects Implementation at the County Council.

I see that Louise Harrison from our Area Office has also provided an initial response to your query. I would like to echo her comments and also make a few additional points:

Although the County Council is still trialling major de-cluttering schemes such as Oxford High Street, we are actively promoting this policy of minimising street signs/furniture in all new schemes across the County. A number of schemes are planned for Banbury over the next five years, including the signalisation of the Merton Street/Middleton Road junction and the provision of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) along the Western corridor of Banbury (Ruscote Avenue to Queensway). With each of these schemes we will endeavour to minimise the amount/size of signage wherever possible, whilst adhering to safety guidance. For instance when identifying locations for the VAS signs we will be aiming to place the signs on existing lampposts rather than putting in additional posts.

In terms of reviewing the existing signage across Banbury, my colleague Naomi Saunders in Transport Planning will be working with Louise Harrison to identify any surplus signs that could be taken down with minimal cost. However there will be limitations as to how far we can go with this, as in many cases in order to reduce clutter it may be a matter of producing entirely new signs that combine as much information as possible into

one place. Unfortunately we do not currently have the funding for the production of such new signs as any expenditure has to be prioritised in accordance with the objectives of the second Local Transport Plan (further information on this document can be found on our website) and there is no budget for smaller initiatives such as this. We do, however, have the resources to undertake a brief review of the central area which will help to identify problem areas which can then be tackled if the adequate funding becomes available from other sources or as part of larger schemes.

We are aware of the high level of signage in the vicinity of the Cherwell/Windsor Street junction. However if you have any further information on particular areas of Banbury that you think need looking at then please contact Naomi Saunders who I have copied into this e-mail. Similarly if the Civic Trust has any funding that it would like to invest in de-cluttering a particular area of the town then we would be keen to work together with you on this.

Kind regards  
Alex Coley  
Transport Planner

*Finally please write to us if you would like us to raise any highway matters at the next Traffic Advisory Committee meeting due in early September. And also please write to us with any comments for our Letters section.*

## Planning and the historic environment

### Cherwell Local Development Framework 2026

Planning policy and applications for planning permission in any local authority area are currently normally determined largely on the basis of a locally drafted planning document known as the Local Plan. These are updated at regular intervals to reflect changes in local and national planning priorities.

Almost since its inception in 1998, the Banbury Civic Society has been commenting on various versions and drafts of a completely revised and updated Local Plan for the area, to be the "Cherwell Local Plan 2011". The plan includes the controversial Bankside housing development. This and other proposals would have been scrutinised at a Public Inquiry this summer and the decisions arising from that inquiry would have underpinned local planning policy until 2011.

However in 2004 it had become law that all Local Plans would eventually be replaced by a new style Local Development Framework (L.D.F.). Because Cherwell took the view that they could not complete the adoption of the

Local Plan 2011 by the deadline imposed by the new law they therefore abandoned the Public Inquiry and decided to adopt the Draft Cherwell Plan as "Supplementary Planning Guidance" using it in conjunction with the existing (statutory) Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

This means that until the new LDF is in place, planning guidance is to be based on a plan that is 10 years old supplemented by Council proposals unsanctioned by the democratic process of a Public Inquiry – hardly a satisfactory scenario particularly for those who have made thousands of objections to the proposed Bankside development.

Work is starting on the preparation of the new Local Development Framework and when completed that will become the basis for determining planning and development throughout Cherwell District until 2026.

### Consultation

A significant new initiative in the drafting of LDFs has been the Government's insistence that local authorities engage closely with their local community in the drafting of LDFs, so that local planning policy should reflect the views and aspirations of the community in their areas. As a result, the Civic Society and many other local groups have been asked to comment on a series of LDF consultation papers as they emerge from Cherwell District Council. In order to save postage and paper, consultees are required either to comment on 'hard copy' drafts viewable at Bodicote House, or to download 'digital' versions from the Cherwell's internet website.

Shortly before the deadline for comments on the last tranche of documents, it became apparent not only that many local consultees were unaware of the significance of the LDF and were not bothering to access the documents. We also suddenly became aware of the make up of the consultee list. As well as local Parish Councils, schools, health bodies, housing associations, religious, sports and nature groups, the list of consultees includes 12 regional and national development agencies and planning bodies and 82 national house-builders, property developers, property companies and planning consultants, of which only 25 are based in Oxfordshire.

So far, the consultations have been largely either by asking for comments on lengthy and often complex documents and tables, or by 'either / or' questions, several of which appeared to the committee to be potentially 'leading'. Furthermore, in a number of instances the respondents are asked to make inappropriate choices between duties each of which Councils are statutorily obliged to fulfil but excuse their failure to do so on the grounds of lack of resources.

Whilst it is unclear what relative 'weight' is to be given to the views of consultees, it is clear

that the national, corporate and commercial agencies have more time, greater financial interest, considerably better technical resources, and greater access to relevant planning expertise than any of the local groups. Because of this, this Society has been highly concerned that the agenda for the future could be far more influenced by the development agencies and by the 82 national house-builders, developers and planning consultants, than by the fewer numbers of Parish Councils and other assorted local and special interest groups consulted.

### **Raising support from fellow Consultees**

Because of the Society's concerns, in response to the last major round of consultation last April, we responded not only to Cherwell District Council directly with a detailed and reasoned response, but we also copied our comments and concerns, with a covering letter explaining about the LDF and its potential ramifications, to Parish Councils throughout the District and to relevant local and national conservation bodies. Despite the short time available for this large scale exercise the feedback was most heartening, with many respondents contacting us to say that they had strongly echoed our comments in their own responses, or simply confirmed our comments as their own. In several instances consultees stated that they would not have commented at all had it not been for our efforts to make them more aware.

The relevant documents are available in full on Cherwell DC's website, on:

<http://www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk/talktous/publications.cfm/publication/683>

<http://www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk/talktous/publications.cfm/publication/681>

<http://www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk/talktous/publications.cfm/publication/684>

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### **Other planning issues**

Two school sites will soon be sold by the County Council. Both involve locally listed buildings of great historic interest. As yet no applications have come forward. Their future is already the subject of heavy discussion and negotiation between the District and County Authorities.

#### **Stanbridge Hall**

This fine school building came under threat last year when the Oxfordshire Education Authority threatened to sell it to the Order of St. John as a care home. They planned to demolish it and replace it with one of their standard Care Home buildings. In an attempt to save as much as possible of the building the Cherwell planning department prepared Draft Development Principles for the developers. The Society was offered an

opportunity to comment on these. We remarked that the building is a typical example of a between-the-wars school building and is excellent example of a happy marriage of Art Deco and classical forms. We felt that it should be kept in full or at least the entire facade and street view.

Since then the Order of St. John, feeling unable to reconcile their own criteria for a Care Home with the stipulations of the Draft Development Principles have withdrawn and the County Council are looking at the possibility of residential development. The Society and the Banbury Built Heritage Working Party are still anxious that the facade, at least remains intact.

#### **Dashwood School**

The future of Dashwood School is in doubt. It is likely to close and move to Grimsbury in a much expanded form in a new building .



The existing Dashwood School building is Locally Listed and is described as a landmark building in the Banbury Conservation Area Appraisal. Its probable future lies in residential use. The Society is working with the Built Heritage Working Party to ensure that the development of this building sacrifices none of its historical features or character.



### **Planning Applications**

Apart from the issue of Neithrop House, which was described in the January Newsletter, there have been relatively few controversial planning applications in the last year.

#### **Canalside development**

A significant recent application relates to the Jewson site in Lower Cherwell Street. At present only half the site has been purchased. However in his application the developer indicates that he plans to purchase the entire canalside Jewson site and to redevelop it, with the co operation of the CDC planning department. The Society sees this as a very important step in the overall Canalside redevelopment. We have long been very anxious that the whole area surrounding the Oxford Canal and the river Cherwell south of Bridge Street should be developed as a whole scheme. We are concerned that this should place great stress on amenity value and provide opportunities for public use and enjoyment of the waterways. We are also concerned that the industrial heritage of the area should be cherished by retaining as many historic buildings as possible and through the sensitive and imaginative design and planning of new ones. The CDC Planning department has provided the applicant with Development Principles, a copy of which has been supplied to us.

#### **Bridge Motors**

The locally listed former Bridge Motors building will be demolished and replaced with a block of flats. The Society, while disappointed that the original building was not retained argued that any new building should reflect the characteristic architectural styles prevalent in Grimsbury, and that the building while being in fact a single large block of flats should at least have the appearance of a row

of individual houses. Some concession has been made to this and we understand that there is a revised application which includes shops and a Cafe.

### Nos. 18-20 Broad Street

The Society continues to be worried about Nos. 18-20 Broad Street. The original application to replace the garage entrance with a window and modernise the inside has been extended to include rebuilding the back wall. The planning department at Cherwell has been asked to make sure that this building does not go the same way as the buildings in North Bar.

### Unit no. 1 White Lion Walk

An application to replace two original sash windows at unit no. 1 White Lion Walk with a shop front. This building is an integral part of the White Lion and faces the High Street. The application was refused as was the retrospective application for a sign for Jenny's Cafe on the historic Vivers building in the High Street. On these two occasions the CDC backed the Society's representations.

### Marlborough Place

The Society raised a query about an application to build a small house at the south end of Marlborough Place. This is already a very cramped corner. The CDC asked the applicant to reconsider the proposal to allow some parking. The updated application which conformed in scale style and materials with the small neighbouring Victorian terrace has now been withdrawn.

## Grimsbury Survey

The Banbury Built Heritage Working Party, including members of the Civic Society continues with helping CDC to define a new Conservation Area in Grimsbury. One of our Civic Society members, Professor Brian Goodey, gave the working party an excellent description of the area, describing its national importance as a uniquely complete example of Victorian Freehold Land Society development.

*Rob Kinchin Smith and Laurence Carey*

*We would welcome input from members about specific issues and observations such as inappropriate shop signs or poor replacement windows*

### Banbury Visual Arts Centre Group

## Helping local artists

Since our last report, local artist and group member, Christine O'Sullivan has been arranging courses, seminars and other networking opportunities for local artists. Cherwell District Council's Animation Station (in the former nuclear bunker underneath the Town Hall) was the venue for the first course, led by Claire Reika Wright, aimed at giving some additional IT related skills to enable local artists to promote themselves more

effectively. It was greatly enjoyed by all those attending.

Continuing support and advice from the Arts Council has been very important both by allowing us to use the funds remaining from last years consultancy exercise as well as plugging Banbury area artists into the wider regional network of the supportive activities for their professional development. Some of these take place as far afield as Portsmouth, Bexhill or Guilford as well as those locally which Banbury artists have requested.

Responding to feedback, the next course here in Banbury will be in the early Autumn. In addition a temporary tenancy of a suitable commercial premises in Banbury centre is being explored which, if successful, would offer further marketing opportunities for local artists and their work in the run up to Christmas. *Hugh Jones*

### Allotments and the flood plain

## Banbury Flood Alleviation Proposals

Following the publication, a considerable time ago, by the Environment Agency for the construction of a 'Bund' or barrier across the flood plain of the River Cherwell to the north of Banbury to hold back water that might flood the lower parts of the town, little has been heard of progress. Enquiries have revealed the reason to be a failure by the Agency, affected landowners and both the Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire highways departments to agree to the details of the proposals. To break this deadlock, a Public Inquiry is to take place at the district council office at Bodicote during the week commencing Monday 11th September. Let us hope there is no early repeat of Easter 1998!

### Leisure Amenities

## Woodgreen Leisure Centre

Members will be aware that two reports have been prepared in recent months regarding the future of the centre and in particular the open air swimming pool – one by the Woodgreen Open Air Pool Group and one by consultants appointed by Banbury Town Council, which looked at the options available and their feasibility. This second report concluded that a hybrid facility with the pool being used for canoe polo for the majority of the year and for swimming during the summer holidays offers the most comprehensive solution.

On the face of it, little progress seems to have been made subsequently and another summer will have come and gone without this facility for the town. Because the Cherwell District Council is the owner of the site, no move can be made by anyone else without its participation yet that Council's energies seem to be entirely directed to choosing between a rebuild of the Spiceball Sports Centre either on its existing site or on the so called Island

site adjacent to the large roundabout at the southern end of Concorde Avenue. Whatever the outcome of that option, it is to be hoped that CDC realises that for Banbury people Spiceball and Woodgreen are not mutually exclusive options. The one is for all year round short period exercise indoors whilst the other is for seasonal sporting and leisure pursuits predominately in the open air. The town needs both.

### Inspire Campaign

## MP's backs the campaign

The Civic Society supports the objective of the English Heritage 'Inspire' Campaign to secure the future of historic places of worship and welcomes the efforts of our MP Tony Baldry in drawing the attention of the House of Commons to the campaign. In his speech on May 17<sup>th</sup> he highlighted the urgency of the situation and indicated the huge amount of money needed, for instance just to rewrite 'outdated list descriptions' would cost £2.52Million.

*For more details about the speech and the campaign please contact:*

*The Revd. George Fryer*

*7, Spencer Court, Britannia Road, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 5EY Tel: (262909)7*

### Horton Hospital

## Why we need it

The Society is offering its support to the current campaign to prevent any departmental closures at the Horton hospital. Given the proposed development of Banbury, the Society believes more facilities rather than less will be required to create the necessary infrastructure for the town's expansion.

*Maureen Mant*

### Your letters

Please send your letters via e-mail to [design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk](mailto:design@h-and-p.demon.co.uk) or post to:

Chairman, Banbury Civic Society  
The Manor House, Overthorpe,  
Banbury, Oxon, OX17 2AE

## Banbury Civic Society Membership

If you are not already a member, or you know of others who might be interested in joining please write to the Membership Secretary at the address below. The widest possible membership greatly increases the effectiveness of our work in Banbury.

Please write to:

The Membership Secretary  
Banbury Civic Society  
Pitts Orchard, Station Road  
BLOXHAM, Banbury  
Oxon OX15 4QG

or telephone: 01295 722925