

Cherwell 2040 Plan: A Green Opportunity for Kidlington?

Cherwell District Council's previous (2031) local plan gave the go-ahead for 4,400 new houses and other development in our area, despite our best efforts to get the District Council to think again. Now, the Council has embarked on an updated Cherwell 2040 Plan. There have already been two rounds of consultation on this. An Oxfordshire-wide plan is also being prepared which may propose yet more development in the Green Belt, even though Cherwell has not included this in its 2040 Plan consultations.

Cherwell's 2040 Plan may, in fact, provide an opportunity for Kidlington. Its recent consultation included the option of developing a network of linked green spaces surrounding the village in order to help preserve Kidlington's distinct identity and countryside setting. This suggestion had originally been made by Kidlington Parish Council and it was heartening to see the District Council's positive reaction to it.

In response to the latest consultation, Kidlington Development Watch (KDW) has therefore put forward several ideas for how this green network might be achieved in practice:

Firstly, although Cherwell's 2031 plan committed to so much unwanted building, it also proposed a number of new green spaces to be created as a condition of the new development. These are shaded in bright green on the accompanying map and include areas to the west of the canal (as part of site PR8), a new nature conservation area as part of site PR7b (Stratfield Farm), and a sports area south of site PR7a. These could all form part of the network.

Secondly, some areas of land around the village are already protected nature conservation sites including Rushy Meadows, Langford Meadows, Stratfield Brake and St Mary's Fields. Other areas must remain 'green' because they are in flood zones, such as the land north and east of Water Eaton Lane.

Thirdly, there remain areas of unspoilt countryside to the north and north east of the village. However, these do not have any protection or designation other than Green Belt and while this should be enough, we know that, in practice, it isn't. KDW therefore suggests that these areas are formally designated as Local Green Space. We say a bit more about this below.

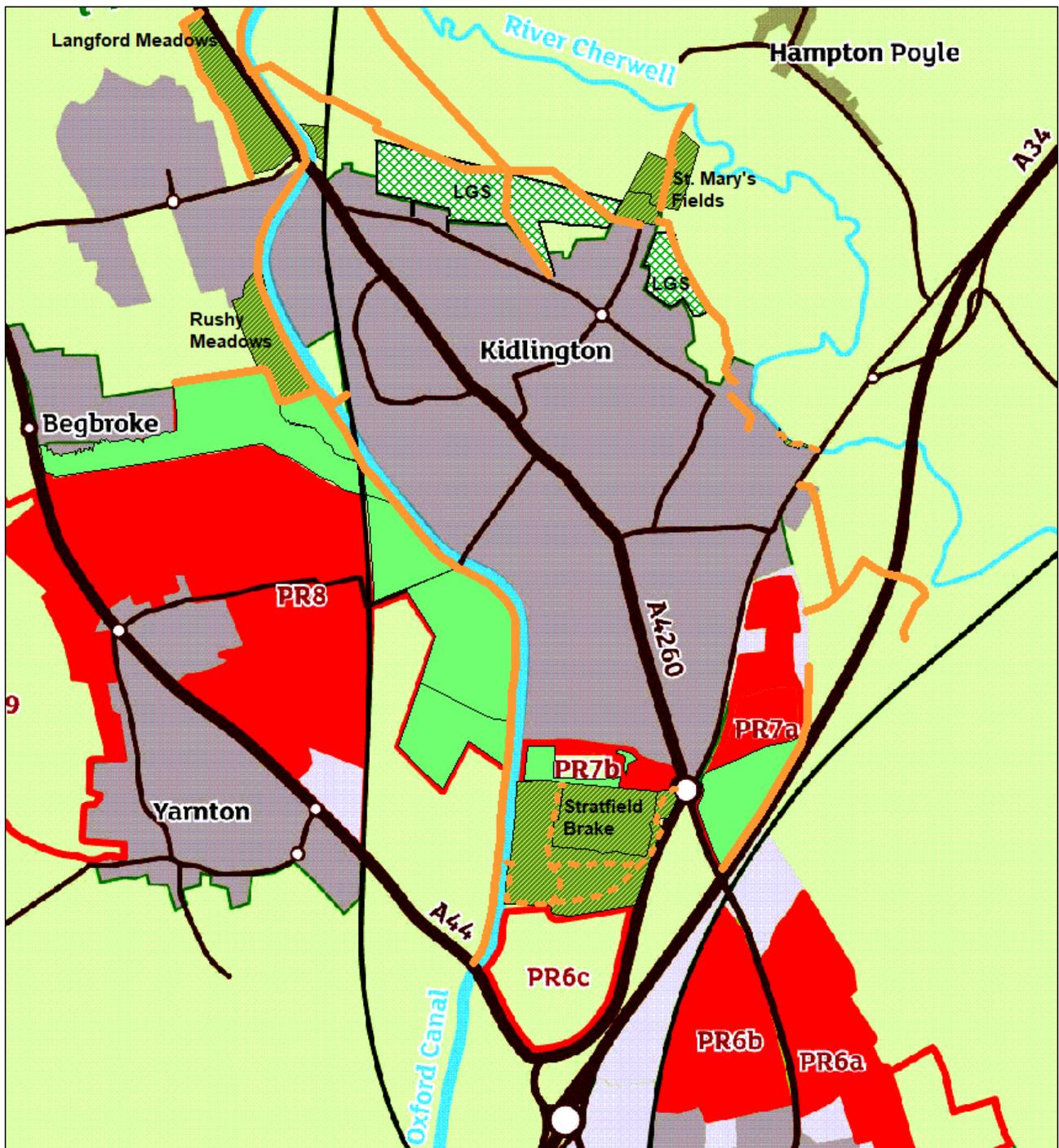
Finally, the map also shows (in orange) the existing rights of way and other public paths around Kidlington. It can be seen that, together with short stretches of road, they form an almost continuous circuit around the village connecting the various green areas. There is scope for improving the condition of these routes, including the local plan proposal to upgrade the canal towpath.

Local Green Space (LGS) is a formal planning designation which was introduced in the National Planning Policy Framework. Councils can designate land as LGS in their Local Plans if it is demonstrably special to a local community for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife. Local Green Spaces can be in private ownership and access rights remain unchanged but they are protected as green areas.

We are proposing two such Local Green Spaces in the 'unprotected' areas to the south-east and west of St Mary's as shown on the map. We trust that the many users of the rights of way and other paths in these locations will agree that these areas meet the criteria for designation as LGS.

We hope to take these ideas forward together with Kidlington Parish Council and that Cherwell District Council will include them in its final Local Plan. We'd welcome any further ideas from readers which can be sent to us via kdw@kidlingtondw.org.

Alan Lodwick. Linda Ward and Kevin Bezant, Kidlington Development Watch.



 Green spaces proposed in the 2031 plan (provided as part of PR7a, PR7b and PR8)

 Green spaces protected for nature conservation or other uses

 Areas proposed by KDW for designation as Local Green Space (LGS)

 Green Belt (Green Spaces are also in the Green Belt)

 Development sites in the 2031 plan (PR6a etc; 4,400 houses in total)

 Other land (in addition to development sites) already removed from Green Belt

 Public rights of way

 Other public paths