Kidlington Parish Council: CDC Local Plan 2040

As reported to the last Council meeting, the Chairs have been having discussions with Andrew Maxted, a senior planning officer at Cherwell, about Kidlington input into the Cherwell 2040 Local Plan, on which he is leading.

The present Kidlington Masterplan was developed in 2016 before last and was formally adopted by Cherwell, but has not had much in the way of practical consequences. It needs updating, though most of its main recommendations are still things we would support.

We have discussed with Andrew the Masterplan priorities that were identified by Council back in 2019, mainly concerning the redefinition and enhancement of the Village centre. Andrew proposes that these should be turned into a concrete set of planning and design aims for the Village Centre and, after further discussion with Cherwell, attached in due course as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the new 2040 Plan; the latter would include high-level points referring to the SPD. The SPD itself would establish a more specific framework for the determination of planning applications within which individual applications would be assessed, but not as an absolute constraint.

The alternative would be to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. This would have more force that the SPD, but would have to be done by the Council and involve a great deal of work and expense. The SPD would be a less onerous undertaking done jointly with Cherwell and possibly with some financial contribution from them. Council can in due course reconsider, if it wishes, the choice between Neighbourhood Plan and SPD.

The Chairs have agreed to set up a work group which would start from the existing Masterplan to formulate a set of planning and design aims for the Village centre including ideas for the redevelopment of specific sites. The work group can also draft the Council's response to the draft Cherwell 2040 Local Plan relating to Kidlington: the consultation opens on 14 December and closes on 8 February.

I also propose that we ask the consultants Community First to attend a meeting of the work group (at no charge unless we decide in due course to employ them). Among other things, they can help us decide whether to go for a Neighbourhood Plan.

Depending on how the work proceeds, we can in due course consider whether or not to employ a technical consultant. We could also have discussions with the owners of particular sites.

The following is the list of priorities that we discussed with Andrew. These are a digested version of the priorities discussed by Council in 2019.

A. Village Centre

Our top priorities mainly concern the Village Centre. As recommended in the Masterplan, this should be understood to include not only the High Street and its hinterland up to Foresters Way, but also the Oxford Road between Yarnton Road and Benmead Road (due to be subject to a 20-mph speed limit).

We therefore strongly support the following Masterplan objectives:

- To establish an attractive Kidlington townscape character through the high quality design of new buildings and public spaces.
- To strengthen the Village Centre, increasing its mix of uses and visitors as a place to shop, work and spend leisure time during the day and evening.

This should include the following.

1. Redefine the character of and expand Kidlington Village Centre through mixed use development, including opportunities to the rear of the NW side of the High Street.
2. Public square improvements (Watts Way, Oxford Road/High Street junction/entrance to Exeter Close) to created scope for an expanded market and events programme.
3. Transform Oxford Road from highway to street: public realm improvements on Oxford Road.
4. Shop front improvements.
5. A multi-functional community hub on the Exeter Close site remains a key aim of the Council. This could include retail, but not housing because of restrictive covenants.
6. Public realm improvement/public art/welcome signage at Northern gateway.

B. Housing

Maintenance of the Green Belt Ring around the Village is a very high priority, and we are therefore not proposing any Green Belt exception sites. At the same time, we see a real need for adequate provision of affordable housing.

1. There is considerable scope for mixed use re-development to provide flats over retail in the Village Centre, and we strongly support this: the empty Barclays Bank building would be one opportunity
2. There is scope for new houses on the OCC Glebe House site in Mill Street.
3. Unused land next to the BT Exchange off Yarnton Road is also suitable for new houses.
4. In the longer term the possibility of Thames Valley Police vacating its present site off the Oxford Road would create substantial housing development opportunities.
5. Similarly, if the Home Office detention facility off Langford Lane is closed this would create substantial housing development opportunities linked to the new site at Begbroke. (However, at the moment it is about to be reopened.)
6. There may be scope for building flats above (not on) the car parks immediately North of the High Street.
7. High design standards need to be secured, including where business/retail units are converted to housing.

C. Healthy Placemaking

1. We strongly support the introduction of a 20-mph limit on all residential roads in the Village and on the central stretch of the Oxford Road as detailed above.
2. We also strongly support the proposed introduction of a LCWIP in the Village.
3. Establishing a green corridor to the west of the canal, including upgrading the canal towpath from Langford Lane to the edge of Oxford for cycling and walking.
4. Potential canal-side leisure developments.
5. Improve extent, access and quality of sports pitches, parks and amenity spaces.
6. Oxford Road transformation including integration of planned Oxford Transport Strategy proposals.
7. Improved cycle and walking routes to Langford Lane, Begbroke Science Park and Yarnton.

D. Business

1. Improve physical and social links between Langford Lane and the Kidlington centre.
2. Establish drop-in office space in village centre, possibly Exeter Close.

E. Education

We realize this is not a District Council matter, but two concern may have some consequences for the Local Plan.

1. We would strongly support integration, in one way or another, between Gosford Hill School and the planned secondary school in the new Begbroke housing site. This would be a major development opportunity for Gosford Hill. Transport links between the two schools would be an issue if Sandy Lane is closed.
2. We are concerned at the significant decline in community education facilities in and around Kidlington.

DAVID ROBEY
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