

Cherwell District Council - September 2025

Cherwell Local Plan

The Local Plan has now been approved by Full council and has been submitted for inspection. The hearings are anticipated later this year and a decision early next year.

Planning

The 31st July Planning meeting was the first since the submission of the Local Plan. However, as the submission has only just happened, members were advised that it still carries little weight. There was an application for 50 dwellings in Milcombe which was agreed despite some spirited argument and a proposal of refusal.

The 14th August planning meeting was solely to determine the Oxford United stadium application. It was a particularly interesting meeting to be a part of and to have TV camera, a live stream and representatives of two factions in the chamber did demonstrate the importance of the matter. There will not doubt be an appeal and a referral to the Secretary of State.

With the Heyford Park application, the rail freight interchange, Puy du Fou and the fourth Baynard Green warehouse are all active and will have and significant impact on the area.

Gareth Epps has arranged a forum on these issues. It is to take place from 2pm on Wednesday 24 September at Upper Heyford Village Hall, Somerton Road, Upper Heyford, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX25 5LB. The session will finish at 4:30pm.

I have spoken to the senior planning officers at Cherwell and I hope that one of the team will be able to attend.

Business Rates Reset

One of the ways that District Councils are funded is by collecting business rates on behalf of the Exchequer. The Council is set a target and is allowed to keep a percentage above that threshold. Cherwell has been particularly good at this and has successfully promoted growth at its business parks, retail parks, science park (at Begbroke) and at Bicester Village increasing its income from Business Rates and reducing the Council Tax burden.

The government has announced a full business rates reset.

The impact of these changes is expected to reduce the council's funding significantly.

Primary Care expansion

At the July Full Council meeting I proposed a motion regarding Primary Care expansion:

This Council considers that more needs to be done to expand and improve Primary Care facilities across North Oxfordshire.

Following a productive cross-party meeting between members and representatives of the Integrated Care Board (ICB), together with a careful review of representations from local stakeholders in recent weeks, this Council resolves to request that the Executive facilitates the expansion of Primary Care provision via any reasonable means, which may include, where appropriate and reasonable, the following:

- i. issuing standing advice on planning matters to the ICB to assist it in its place and facilities planning;*
- ii. producing evidence to the ICB to support the well understood assertion that Primary Care is now at capacity across this district;*
- iii. supporting the ICB to create a plan for the delivery of new and expanded primary care facilities across North Oxfordshire;*
- iv. requesting that the ICB estates team better supports its 'drive to digital' by encouraging developer contributions into, inter alia, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) projects; and*
- v. review, in conjunction with the ICB, why the proposed facilities at Longford Park, Hanwell Fields and Graven Hill have proven unsuccessful in recent years to avoid failures in new developments elsewhere.*
- vi. consider Primary Care needs as widely as reasonably possible in future supplementary planning documents to encourage a greater number of capital projects coming forward and encouraging the ICB to request developer contributions on all applications of 10+ homes without limiting such bids to bricks-and-mortar projects alone.*

The recently published 10-year plan for the future of the NHS includes major changes to the provision of primary care.

For the indeterminate future, developer contributions remain the principal source of funding for expansion. The NHS capital fund will continue to be hypothecated away to maintain existing services not deliver growth.

- This pivot will see some of the workload from Hospitals moved to Primary Care.
- The emphasis will not be on treatment but prevention.
- The drive for digital is here, a move 'from bricks to clicks'

And, buried away on page 139, the role of public private partnerships and the use of private financing.

In light of all this, I offered my motion with three main themes:

- 1.) To understand what has gone wrong before, ensure that officers and members understand why small branch surgeries are promised but do not deliver any GP services.
- 2.) To give this council the best chance to support the officers in the Thames Valley ICB deliver Primary Care expansion using Section 106 monies across our area and
- 3.) To encourage officers to be as broad as possible so that as this new reality for our GP's is delivered, we can support them in the widest range of projects that they may need and not limit the use of developer contributions to bricks-and-mortar projects.

Lawrence Nurses providing hospice care in your home

Lawrence Nurses was established in 1999 to support the local community and in memory of Dr. Martin Lawrence a Chipping Norton GP.

Following the diagnosis of a terminal illness, home nursing enabled him to spend his final weeks at home with his family. It was his wish that anyone else who wanted to live their last days at home should be supported to do so. His wish was made a reality through the work of district nurse, Jane Phillips MBE.

At Lawrence Nurses, we provide palliative and end of life care completely free of charge to people living with life-limiting and non-curative illnesses. Our dedicated team of 16 registered nurses offers compassionate, patient centred care in the last months of life ensuring comfort, dignity and support for both patients and their families.

We care for patients across our catchment area, serving the following GP practices in North and West Oxfordshire:

Bloxham/Hook Norton Surgery, Chipping Norton Medical Centre, The Charlbury Medical Centre, Deddington Health Centre and the Wychwood Surgery

Our nurses provide hands-on care and offer essential respite support to relieve carers, and provide bereavement care to families navigating loss.

With a deep commitment to compassionate nursing, we help people live well for as long as possible and support them and their loved ones every step of the way.

For more information please visit our website www.lawrencenurses.org or telephone: 01608 641549

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