

Bloxham Parish Council
Response to the Draft Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040
Consultation

Question 61: Do you have any views on our aspirations for rural areas?

1. Any village development should meet the needs of existing village residents and not adversely affect them. This requires a mix of housing sizes enabling those who bought starter homes in the village to upsize within the village and those residents wishing to move to suitably sized single level dwellings, can do so. This will free up properties within the village.
 - a. A positive tilt can be applied to a development to ensure the village housing need is met and not be driven by arbitrary government targets for social/affordable housing. Single level dwellings would be more appealing to a developer if this could offset some of the social/affordable housing %.
 - b. During CDC pre-app discussions with developers, they should be made aware of shortfalls in village amenities and how a developer can support these shortfalls.
 - i. Category “A”/Larger Villages should be encouraged to provide a community needs list, detailing shortfalls in the categories that are at, or beyond capacity.
 - ii. Utility companies should be transparent about limitations in the service they provide, as opposed to just wanting the additional revenue from more homes. This is particularly relevant for Thames Water regarding water supply and sewage network. (Many villages have old and overburdened networks).
 - c. A pepper pot approach is seen favourably for integrating social housing into an estate. Why not apply the same approach for developments, possibly building two/three smaller developments around a village.
2. The majority of village developments are now on the edge or outside original built up lines.
 - a. Where proposed town developments are within an easy walk to a Category “A” /Larger Village, this should count towards meeting any development needs for that village, particularly where the proposed village development would “creep” closer to the town.
3. Councils should be mindful that villages are “villages” and should not be urbanised for convenience to a level by which they lose their character and become mini towns.
 - a. A clearly defined need for large development housing in a village should exist and an appropriate case put forward.
 - i. Development should be “need based”, not be driven by landowners making land available for building or a Developers drive for profit.

- b. Why not spread development across multiple smaller villages with some facilities, perhaps 5/6 houses. This would give small local builders an opportunity, rather than pandering to large national builders who purely seek profit, with little or no regard for character in a village. Typically, small developments are of a better quality. Also contrary to belief, some people want to live in a “village” with only some amenities.
 - c. Each large development in a Category “A”/Larger Village, with its cut and paste approach to design from national developers erodes more and more of a villages’ character. More emphasis should be on smaller developments. Development size should not be driven by the numbers of social houses it will provide.
4. With regard to Category “A”/Larger Villages and their sustainability to take a percentage of the 500 rural homes requirement. CDC should explicitly acknowledge where villages are struggling and define what actions should take place to ease strains on local services to make additional developments viable.
 - a. Review each Category “A”/Larger Village and reference in the Local Plan, providing clarity on sustainability.
 - b. The last village category update was undertaken in 2014. Since that date many of these villages have undergone large developments with little or no infrastructure improvements, typically road networks and doctors surgeries are overburdened and public transport reduced and not in close proximity to the developments. Bloxham has expanded by over 30% since the 2011 census, with an additional 220 houses.
 - c. Simply categorizing a village as “A”/Larger because it has the required amenities is no longer sufficient justification to allow developers to build. Each of the amenities used to define a Category “A”/Larger Village need to be accessed for its sustainability, particularly as many have undergone significant growth in recent years. One option would be to create a RAG report (red, amber, green) for each amenity. A similar approach was used in 2016 to define suitable development land. *See appendix for Bloxham RAG report.*
 - d. Cherwell District Council should work with Parish Councils to understand sustainability needs for specific Category “A”/Larger Villages. These sustainability needs can then be included in any pre-app discussions a developer may have with CDC Planning Officers. Typical areas to be included:
 - i. Footpath and cycleways to be in place to access local amenities and schools, not just in the area of the development. Hard wired in to planning decisions.
 - ii. Distance to local amenities, can PRow be improved to make access shorter. Ensure parking for vehicles using local amenities is available. Lack of parking results in pavement and dangerous parking with little regard for pedestrians. Hard wired in to planning decisions.

- iii. Improved drainage and sewers in areas at risk of flooding, not limited only to Suds. Hard wired into planning decisions.
 - iv. Funding to improve medical services, where already available but unable to meet additional needs resulting from further development.
 - v. Public transport routes and bus stops in the vicinity of the development.
 - vi. S106 monies agreed with developers for health care and education need to be spent in the local area, not across other areas of the Health/Education provider's patch. Hard wired into planning decisions.
 - vii. Ensure existing residents are not materially affected by proposed developments, particularly regarding access to all level of schooling and health care, where the service exists within a village and under strain.
- e. Where additional housing developments are already approved and within safe walking distance of a village, this should be considered as meeting any perceived housing need for that village location. Example would be Wykham Park, Banbury, proximity to Bloxham.
- f. Ensure future housing requirements for existing residents are met, particularly regarding single level living and downsizing options to free up housing for growing families already within the village.

Conclusion and Request to Cherwell District Council

Over the last 15 years, Bloxham has grown considerably and has outgrown many of the amenities which make it an attractive location for speculative developers. The new SEN school, though very welcome will add significantly to peak time traffic at the A361 junction with Ells Lane/Bloxham Grove Road. Currently during morning rush hours (7am -9am), over 1000 vehicles have been recorded by our VAS entering Bloxham, then we have a similar number transiting through and exiting the village.

Bloxham Parish Council believes that Bloxham must be protected in the short term from additional major developments in the new Plan period.

There should be a period of time during which a roadmap plan can be developed in conjunction with CDC and OCC to address the shortfall in amenities and infrastructure, which have come under increasing pressure following multiple large developments in recent years, without any significant investment to bring facilities in line.

Taking this approach would be a precursor to any future development, detailing needs to be met by potential developers and forming a framework for use of S106 monies to make further development sustainable for the future. This may be something Cherwell Council considers for other villages that have seen a lot of development recently, but at least as far

as Bloxham is concerned, we would like to see an explicit acknowledgement that villages are no longer able to support new housing developments.

Bloxham will revise our Neighbourhood Plan, where practicable aligning with current thinking and would of course still allow for small numbers of in-fill within the village. We are asking for Cherwell's support in keeping Bloxham sustainable with no further developments until a roadmap is in place to address shortfalls in infrastructure and amenities.

Appendix Bloxham RAG (example)

Category	Green	Amber	Red	Weighting factor scale (1-5 where 5 is highest)	Comments
Childrens nurseries				4	Bloxham Preschool:24 spaces, 33 children on books. Manageable at present due to not all full time. However, will not cope with plans to introduce 30 hours free in 2025. Rainbow Nursery, always fully subscribed, no vacancies from January 2024.
Primary Schools				4	Near to capacity, with some spaces. Planning application approved to create additional classroom.
Secondary Schools				4	At capacity. Parents comment on lack of time for children to have lunch due to numbers of pupils.
Retail/Services/Businesses				3	Barbers, Petrol station, Beauticians, Estate Agents, Bespoke kitchens, Garden Nursery and Tea Room.
Retail outlets (food)				3	Co-op is small in comparison with other "A" villages in the area, with only three narrow aisles, Chip shop,
Post Office				3	Post office/Newsagents.
Public Houses				2	Three Public Houses, Café, Tea Room.
Recreational facilities				4	Dewey sport centre, Warriner School, Jubilee Park, Dave Tyrell Recreation Ground.
Community facilities				4	Three Community Halls.
Doctors/Health Care				5	Broader catchment than just Bloxham. At capacity as confirmed by Berks, Oxon and Bucks NHS, with no

					expansion opportunities. Any monies made available via S106 need to be used in the village to improve health facilities.
Dentist				4	List closed to new NHS patients, taking private patients only.
Infrastructure (services and highways)				5	Old, over capacity sewage and surface water systems. Severe parking issues in village centre where retail amenities are situated. A361 heavily congested, often with stationary traffic outside the shops caused by "on street" parking and narrowness of road.
Infrastructure (village connectivity)					Many footpaths in the village are narrow and in poor condition making use by disabled users and parents with pushchairs challenging and dangerous in places. The A361 has particularly narrow paths opposite Goose Walk and the Red Lion area. The Old railway bridge on the Barford Road is also very narrow with residents having been clipped by lorry wing mirrors. These are particularly relevant where developments are on the edge of the village, resulting in a reluctance to walk to village amenities. No bus stop/service close to existing new developments, or majority of potential development sites.