

Cherwell District Council - April 2026

Planning

Planning at CDC is extraordinarily busy at the moment. There are currently 300 applications “under consultation”. There are two additional planning committee meetings arranged before the elections in May to try to prevent any non-determination decisions.

The other big change is the Streamlining infrastructure planning: implementation plan which is coming into force soon and the short version is that it will require Local Planning Authorities (CDC) to consult the Secretary of State where they are minded to refuse a scheme of 150+ dwellings.

It is not clear how this will work if the officers recommend approval and the committee votes against E.G. the recent decision against The Moors in Kidlington.

The Government have also just announced that Planning Committees will be capped at 13 members.

Local Government Reform

The first block of LGR decisions is now public. Lots of little unitaries rather than big ones.

Essex – has gone for 5 unitaries.

Norfolk – 3 unitaries (1, 2 or 3 were proposed).

Suffolk – gone for 3 unitaries (1 or 3 were proposed).

Hampshire - 5 unitaries.

Sussex – Government are not happy with any of the proposals.

Gov has provided £900k for startup costs to each which is unlike to cover the costs involved.

Devolution

The plan is still to become a Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA) as a necessary step towards establishing a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA).

Buckinghamshire is still not joining the conversations on being a part of the Thames Valley region. However, the Government expects Buckinghamshire to be a part of the spatial development strategy of Thames Valley.

Heyford Park funding

The Heyford Park bid to be a new town has not been accepted for the latest tranche.

Heyford Park remains credible and the Government have provided funding (£500k) for CDC to understand how to proceed, what will be the infrastructure requirements, roads stations etc and affordability as Heyford Park is now outside of the funding mechanisms that come with a new town.

This is especially handy because of the OxSRFI and Heyford Park 9000 house planning application which is already in with CDC.

We also now know that New Towns will contribute to Local need numbers but we don't have a new town at the moment!

What's also worth mentioning is that the Government's reasons for not proceeding with Heyford as a New Town project also apply to the existing planning application for 9000 homes on the site.

There is also a good case to continue the conversations regarding cumulative impact of all of the applications (and appeals) in the Bicester / Heyford area.

Greater Oxford Development corporation

Recently announced by the chancellor to accelerate growth across the Ox-Cam growth corridor by unblocking land, planning and infrastructure barriers.

The target sectors are high value technology, manufacturing, research etc.

Major funding uplift of £800 million, £400 for Oxford of which £120million has already been announced as the Cowley branch line.

This body will have compulsory purchase powers, planning powers and financial powers.

The Greater Cambridge Development Corporation is further along in its creation and gives an idea of what the Government has in mind.

Another new layer of local government but appointed and not elected. It is not clear what democratic oversight will CDC have over this new body.

Oxford Growth Commission interim report

This was published in December 2025 but its findings were recently cited as a potential risk to the progress of the CDC Local Plan once the main hearings get underway.

Planning Support for Parishes

I'm delighted that my Motion to Full Council has provided:

Cherwell District Council is pleased to invite you to a dedicated training session designed to support parish councils in understanding and responding effectively to large-scale and complex planning applications.

As highlighted in the recent Executive report "*Planning Support for Town and Parish Councils*", Parish Councils play an important role in shaping planning outcomes, yet often face challenges when engaging with major development proposals. This training has been developed to strengthen your ability to scrutinise applications, provide robust representations, and better support your communities.

Date: Tuesday 21 April 2026

Venue: John Paul II Centre, Bicester

Schedule:

09:30 – Arrival and coffee

10:00–12:00 – Morning training session
12:00–13:00 – Lunch break
13:00–15:30 – Afternoon training session

Due to venue capacity, each Parish Council is asked to nominate no more than two attendees.

The day will cover key areas including:

How to comment effectively on major applications

Understanding highways considerations

Section 106 obligations – what is reasonable and permissible

Practical support and guidance tailored to the large-scale proposals currently affecting Cherwell parishes

This session forms part of the Council's commitment to ensuring parish councils have the tools, confidence, and specialist understanding needed to engage meaningfully in planning processes, especially in light of the significant developments currently coming forward.

Please confirm your attendance by replying to Sam.Smith@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, including the names and roles of those who will be attending from your council.

We hope you will be able to join us for this important session and look forward to working with you to strengthen local engagement in planning.

LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference

I've been to this conference asking questions on the expansion of primary Care. It's been interesting to hear that the situation here is fairly common.

You may also have heard the Wes Streeting has taken a personal interest in the development of a health Centre in Didcot. The Western Park surgery has been in planning for a decade.

Asked Directly to Ansaf Anzar of Oxfordshire County Council:
In your intro you noted the role of public health and planning.

How are we going to get the ICB's to play their part in Local Plan development?

How are we going to get the ICB's to create a plan for the expansion of Primary Care (GP services?)

How are we going to get the ICB's to regularly request developer contributions to fund their (often no-existent) plan for primary care expansion?

How are we going to encourage the Government to encourage the ICB's to be involved in this planning role?

How are we going to get the District Valuation Service to set rents that make primary care expansion more likely?

Without solutions to these issues, we are unlikely to see a significant expansion in Primary Care services.

What is being done to ensure that the recommended new Town at Heyford Park is going to have any Primary Care services?

Local Government Association – Councillors Forum

The most recent meeting is looking at national reform across health and care.
I submitted question:

I welcome the 10-year plan for health and its vision but note that it does address the structural issues in delivering additional infrastructure. Wes Streeting has taken a personal interest in the decade long delay to the new Health Centre at Western Park in Didcot. Could you please undertake to provide a summary of the difficulties and potential remedies that will allow this project to be delivered?

I'll let you know if I get any answers to any of the above as no representative of the Department of Health actually made it to the meeting.

Oxfordshire County Council – Joint Health and Overview Committee

I had been hoping to join a working group of this committee that is looking at the future of Primary Care. Sadly, I haven't been invited to join but have been invited to contribute. I have also been talking to local GP's and have shared their thoughts on the impact that the Local Plan and the Heyford New Town will have on Primary Care which I've shared with JHOSC.

CDC – Overview and Scrutiny

A report into Developer Contributions for Primary Care was presented to this month ctte.
The salient points are:

1. Only £580,000 is currently held by the Council for healthcare infrastructure. The money is held by the Council until requested for a project by the BOB ICB.
Yet CDC is delivering roughly 1100 dwellings per year and has been for the last 10 years. This could accrue £950k of Primary Care developer contributions per annum.
2. 48% of residential section 106 agreements since 2021 included a health funding request. All but one were financial contributions; one physical health scheme was secured.
3. Across all developments, an average of £600 has been secured per dwelling since 2021 which is below the potential figure of £864 per dwelling.
4. The ICB recognise that the Primary Care estate is at capacity.
5. The ICB have made no applications to CDC for funding for Primary Care estate in Cherwell since 2019.

What's coming up in April?

April will be another busy month as we approach May's Local Elections.

I will continue door knocking with our local team, scrutinising planning applications, meeting officers, developing policy proposals and working with community leaders and business owners.

If you need my help with anything, please get in touch.

CLLr David Rogers

Cherwell District Council