

North Oxfordshire Green Party Manifesto for Banbury Town Council Elections 2016

Planning and Housing Development – The District Council is responsible for planning.

The Cherwell Local Plan allows for far too much new housing in the District's villages, such as Bodicote, risking the loss of their separate identity. The plans make inadequate provision for the extra traffic that the developments will encourage. There will also be increased pressure on local services such as schools. The results of consultations in recent years have not recognized the submissions the Town and other local parishes have made, including through the village 'Neighbourhood Plans'.

Beyond the 7,000 new homes proposed for Banbury in the Cherwell Local Plan, Oxfordshire County Council aspires to a further significant increase to meet the un-met housing need of Oxford and the rest of the County, including the growing 'Science Vale'. OCC's strategy will put substantial additional pressure on Oxford's Green Belt (including Kidlington and Yarnton in Cherwell), as well as on communities such as Banbury and Bicester.

The Green Party supports Oxfordshire's 'Need not Greed Coalition' in opposing sprawling developments on greenfield sites and believes more can be done to make better use of existing empty accommodation in Banbury, including the still derelict Crown House and empty space above town centre shops. Making better use of existing buildings is more sustainable and would help to rejuvenate Banbury's town centre. The Green Party also opposes OCC's road traffic strategy for Banbury, which consists only of a plan to funnel more and more traffic through the town centre, over the Bridge Street crossroads, further severing the town and degrading its air quality.

Banbury's historic Market. A once thriving market in the centre of Banbury has been reduced to a shadow of its former self. Much of the responsibility for the decline lies with Cherwell District Council, who have a conflict of interest between their duty to manage the market and their desire to maximize car parking revenues. Their agents, Sketts, also charge the highest stall rents within a 50-mile radius. The Green Party calls for better use and promotion of the market, particularly for the sale of locally-sourced and organic produce. If elected we would support the Labour group in demanding the transfer of the market from CDC and Sketts to the Town Council.

Allotments. The Green Party believes that the increasing demand for allotments should be encouraged. We strongly oppose the deliberate running-down of the Spittal Farm allotments and any further sell offs of allotments for development.

Initiate Crime Prevention initiatives. A major problem facing our community is the extra traffic and the current speed limit of 30 mph in the town's built-up areas. We believe there should be a maximum speed limit of 20 mph in all built up areas and that this should be rigorously enforced. "20 is Plenty". Another problem in Banbury is the flouting of parking restrictions. This must be stopped by again, rigorous implementation of the law.

Parks Maintenance. The flower beds and children's play areas in our parks are generally well maintained by the Town Council, but the pathways are not. We would initiate an immediate programme of inspection and maintenance to avoid people tripping and falling.

Town Centre and Civic Events. The Town Council is to be congratulated on most of the events put on for people's enjoyment and recreation. However we would like to see a return of the Mayor's Sunday combined with the popular Hobby Horse Festival. We fully support the continuation of the Michaelmas Fair in the Town Centre. Two days disruption to normal traffic flows is a small price to pay for this very popular event.

The Gateway Shopping Centre. The Green Party opposed this development because of the disastrous effect it has had, and will continue to have, on our town centre shops. The Gateway will encourage even more car usage. The extra bus service provided is hardly used and is likely to be yet another public transport cut.

Rejuvenation of the Town Centre. Banbury has a very attractive historic town centre that consistently fails to capitalise on its enormous potential. If elected, the Green Party will work in partnership with Cherwell's Town Centre Managers, the town's shop-keepers and organisations such as the Old Town Association, the Civic Society, Banbury Presents and Visit Banbury to make Banbury the wonderful destination it should be, for locals and visitors.

New theatre. The Green Party strongly supports initiatives to bring The Grand Theatre on Broad Street (latterly Wonder Lounge) back into use as a community performance venue. We also support greater use being made of St Mary's Church as the regional concert venue it is equipped to be.

Vote for the Green Party in all local and national elections in order to have a fair, safe and equal society for all and with a sustainable economy.