



How many houses do we need?

Cherwell District Council have made plan-after-plan for housing in Banbury, none of which has happened. How did they get these ideas?

In the bad old days there was a central government Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which specified the number of new houses that local authorities should build. For us this was called the South East Plan (SE Plan) and gave a number of 13,400 to be built 2006-2026.

Cherwell district council has proposed plans to build houses from 2006 right out to 2031 which at the same rate means 16,750 houses. They then had a panic as they could not see where to build more houses round Banbury to meet these targets, so they named sites called BAN1 to BAN5. But they made a fundamental mistake of assuming that sites had to be named based on the forecast of houses developers would actually build, not taking into account the sites already approved, which means Bankside 1 for 1092 houses, as none had been built. This meant a huge overallocation of new sites.

Sir Tony Baldry advised them that they must take into account approved sites, thus they already had “enough approvals for at least the next 5 years”. They ignored this advice from the government.

Lately they have published that 1376 houses were built in Banbury up to 2012, approvals have already been given for 1378 more, plus allocations (sites named) for new housing have been defined as 3333, giving a total of 6087 out to 2031! A huge rate of over 240/year.

In the current financial climate no one believes this is a valid projection.

Enter the NPPF, exit the RSS

Last year the new coalition government changed everything. They published a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), replacing thousands of old planning laws. And they revoked the RSS and SE Plan, saying that local authorities had to make an evidence based market forecast of local housing demand.

No evidence has been prepared, and Cherwell continues to use the revoked SE Plan numbers. So now we have a proposed Local Plan 2013 which demands huge amounts of housing to be built, on huge amounts of green field sites, with no evidence base.

So how many houses do we need to build?

The new NPPF says annually updated plans must be made for deliverable sites for 5 years housing demand, then identify suitable locations for years 6-10 and, if possible, broad locations for years 11-15. The amount of land identified for housing must be the market forecast taking into account population growth, finance, land etc, plus 5%.






We all know that the major blockage to house building today is money, banks don't loan, builders don't build and people don't buy. But the population keeps growing.

So finance this aside, how many houses should we build based on the population increase?

The population of Cherwell was 137,100 in 2006 and is forecasted by Cherwell District Council to rise to 169,900 by 2031. Or a growth of 32,500. Taking a figure for the number of people/household (from the ONS) of 2.5, this means that 13,000 houses are needed in Cherwell. Banbury plans call for 36% to be built here, or 4680 houses 2006-31. We have already built 1376 so there remain 3304 to build out to 2031. With me so far?

The figure of 3304 out to 2031 means 174 per year (well below the 240 per year above). So to meet the requirements of the NPPF (+5% remember) we need to build 913 in 5 years, 913 in years 6-10 and 913 in years 11-15. A total of 2749 houses in the next 15 years. A total very much smaller than Cherwell's figures of 6087.

Where should they be built?

NPPF	5yr	yr 6-10	yr 11-15	TOTAL
		350	570	920
BAN1 CS				
BAN2 SR				
BAN3 WBH				
			200	200
BAN4 BS2				
BAN5 NH				
WR				
	570	400	80	1050
BS1				
	210	42		252
OTHER				
	135	122	70	327
WINDFALL				

The site of Bankside 1 has been approved already for 1092 houses, the forecast for Other sites (<10 houses) and Windfalls is 210 & 135, so we need to build just 570 at Bankside to meet the 913 needed for population growth. In years 6-10 another 400 houses can be built at Bankside 1 and 350 (of the 950 total planned) at the new town centre site at Canalside, which together with forecasts of Others and Windfalls will cover the 913 needed. Then looking out to years 11-15 we can complete Canalside with 570 houses, add more at Bankside 1 with 80, then add 200 (of 400 proposed) at the extension at Bankside 2. This still leaves us with a margin for expansion should the financial situation improve and people start buying again.

These are the allocations that CDC is proposing which would be enough to more than cover the NPPF requirement and the population growth:

- Bankside 1 - 1092, approved
- Canalside - 950, next
- Bankside 2 - 400, after that

Some sites are plain wrong

None of the proposed housing sites at Southam Road, West Bretch Hill, Warwick Road or North Hanwell named by the Council are needed at all. These are all green field sites which should be left as the green boundary round Banbury.

Reports on the Sustainability of sites and the Landscape and Capacity of sites have been published which also back up the cancellation of these sites, and the removal of others from the Local Plan.

So let's remove them from the plan and stop our communities worrying about their future.

The CDC reports can be found at www.cherwell.gov.uk/LocalPlan 2013.

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