URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES
BANBURY • BICESTER • KIDLINGTON
Cherwell District Council
ROGER EVANS ASSOCIATES
HILLIER PARKER
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1.1 This study was commissioned by Cherwell District Council in September 1995 to assist the developing Central Area strategies for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. The aim of the strategies can be stated as:

"To strengthen the role of the central areas of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington as a focus for commercial, social and administrative activity during the trading day and in the evening."

The strategies bring together the Council's many functions that impact on the centres, and seek to achieve efficient allocation of resources in as far as they relate to new developments, environmental improvements and the promotion of events and activities.

This is the first study in what could become a periodic update to monitor viability and review urban design strategies for the centres. The study has therefore concentrated on what might be called structural issues; that is those issues which will determine the long term shape and character of each centre. Other issues have consequently been considered in lesser detail, eg streetscape outside the key urban design areas, street furniture, shopfront policy, colour and materials, or lighting. This is not to say that they are of lesser importance, simply that their design needs to be informed by the structural recommendations that are here set out for the Council's review.

The Council's rolling programme of improvements to its centres can thus be carried out within a long term strategy which is periodically up-dated.

The study seeks to:
- Produce a robust, long term urban design strategy for the form, function and character of each centre;
- Deliver a 'vision' for problem areas which will excite and mobilise action;
- Develop urban design concepts for the key development sites in each centre;
- Devise a public realm strategy for key streets and spaces;
- Improve trading conditions and hence business profitability and land values;
- Identify opportunities for increasing the residential component in each centre.

It should be recognised that many of the strategies proposed in the report are already supported by Council policies and contained in the Local Plan. This study has simply provided an opportunity for these policies to be developed in three-dimensional form, and at a greater level of detail.

To assist the preparation of these strategies, urban design workshops were held in each of the three centres. The workshops were attended by local interest groups and individuals, the business community and Council officers. Each workshop undertook an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the town or village centre, and went on to table a wide range of ideas for consideration. These analyses and ideas were collated and a questionnaire prepared which enabled the workshop participants to prioritise and comment further on the outcome of each workshop. This participatory exercise proved most worthwhile to all concerned, and is an approach which could be usefully repeated as the strategies evolve.
1.2 The terms of reference for the study which were set out by the Council included a check-list of five criteria against which the future success of the centres could be judged. Their relevance has been confirmed by this study, and they are worth keeping in mind when evaluating the report’s recommendations:

**Vitality**
The liveliness of activities and qualities of appearance which attract residents and visitors into the town;

**Viability**
The ability of traders and local people to compete with other towns and retail centres to sustain and improve the economic viability of the central area;

**Accessibility**
Ensuring that the central area is accessible to all, developing logical patterns of movement and choice of transport;

**Safety**
Designing out opportunities for crime and resolving traffic dangers;

**Partnerships**
Preparing a strategy with the participation of other councils, public organisations, local groups and Chambers of Commerce.

The Council has done much in recent years to improve all three centres, and the high street improvements, for example, have generally been very successful. The study has sought to develop strategies which address remaining weaknesses and to provide a ‘cutting edge’ to Council policies for the centres. There is a growing awareness of the contribution urban design can make, and this is the first stage of an evolutionary process.

1.3 Study Team
The ‘health check’ and assessment of levels of retail demand for each centre was undertaken by Hillier Parker, Roger Evans Associates undertook an urban design analysis of each centre. Development of the strategies has been an iterative process, and this report reflects the joint recommendations of both Roger Evans Associates and Hillier Parker.

The study team comprised:

**Roger Evans Associates:**
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Advice on traffic and highway issues has been provided by Simon Webb at Tucker Parry Knowles.

We would like to thank officers at Cherwell District Council for their support and advice throughout this study, and in particular for the help given by Alan Jones and Stuart Yeatman.
Banbury was founded, like so many settlements in the early Middle Ages, to support the garrison of its Norman castle. The pattern of the town's streets and spaces slowly evolved to meet the changing needs of local traders. The town grew as the market centre for agricultural communities in a wide surrounding area, covering the countryside on the borders of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Northamptonshire. By the end of the nineteenth century the present street pattern was largely complete.

Victorian maps record the importance of this agricultural market function, with many streets and spaces described by the kind of livestock which were marketed: Sheep Street (now the western half of High Street), Bull Bar Street (West Bar Street), Corn Market (Cornhill), Cow Fair, Sheep Fair, and of course Horse Fair. The area required for these activities is preserved in the generous scale of spaces such as Bridge Street and Horse Fair. The town centre was defined by distinct entrances at North, South, East and West Bar, and the Cherwell Bridge.

Widespread demolition of buildings occurred throughout the 1950s and '60s and was brought to a halt in 1968 by a County Council conservation study. This resulted in the designation of a conservation area which included all of the historic centre. The study suggested that although Banbury had few buildings of outstanding architectural or historical quality, it retained a remarkable network of urban streets and spaces. The study recommended that, whatever happened to the buildings, the shape and character of these spaces should be protected. It suggested that this be done by restricting the amount of demolition in any one scheme to a minimum of buildings fronting these spaces. Since this policy was adopted, the principal streets have remained largely intact although the large redevelopment projects of the '70s required site assembly and road closures. The shopping floor space has doubled over the last 25 years, much of it in the Castle Centre, and is set to grow further with the Raglan project.
2.1 Commercial Overview
With a town population of 41,000, Banbury now also functions as a regional shopping centre for a population of about 140,000. It is, however, overshadowed by, and competes with, the retail offer available in Oxford.

The town's prime retail area is concentrated along the pedestrianised section of High Street and within the Castle Centre. The majority of the national multiple traders in the town are located here and offer mainly comparison goods. The remainder of the town is characterised by local traders, with a large concentration along the un-pedestrianised Parsons Street. The majority of service uses are located along the un-pedestrianised section of High Street, around Banbury Cross and along South Bar.

The bustling atmosphere associated with market towns can be found in the narrow 'lanes' of Church Lane, Church Walk and White Lion Walk, which provide an interesting contrast to the other retail areas.

The main town centre car parks are as follows:
- Bolton Road, multi-storey car park - pay and display, 630 spaces
- Calthorpe Street, former Sainsbury surface car park - NCP pay on exit, 279 spaces
- Castle Gardens, surface car park, 486 spaces

Less significant car parking is provided at Spiceball (229 spaces) Market Place (52 spaces), George Street (44 spaces), Bridge Street (53 spaces), Calthorpe Street (130 spaces), South Bar Street (123 spaces), Horse Fair (58 spaces) and North Bar Street (74 spaces). In total there are approximately 2,158 public car parking spaces in the town.

2.2 Town Centre Assets
The main assets of the town can be summarised as follows:

2.2a The legacy of the historic street structure forms a highly attractive urban environment for commercial, residential and leisure uses.

2.2b Urban spaces of exceptional quality to be conserved and enhanced include:
- South Bar
- Horse Fair
- High Street (including the former Sheep Street)
- Market Place
- Cornhill
- Parsons Street
- Bridge Street (formerly Cow Fair)
- West Bar (formerly Bull Bar Street)

2.2c The town is easily accessible from the main road network and the M40, and is provided with an efficient rail service.

2.2d The town centre car parks are accessible and well sign-posted.

2.2e The location of the bus station to the east of the Castle Centre delivers consumers directly into the prime retail area. This central location will be retained within the Raglan scheme.

2.2f The wide range of national multiple traders and the excellent market make the town a highly attractive shopping centre.

2.2g The pedestrianised part of the High Street provides a safe and pleasant environment for shoppers.

2.2h There is a low level of shop vacancy and sufficient retail demand to support an expansion of the existing retail provision.

2.2i Signage within the town is clear and assists in creating a strong pedestrian flow around the town.
2.3 Key Issues
Key issues which need to be addressed by the study are as follows:

2.3a ‘Holes’ in the town
The major problem sites in the town today are chiefly the result of large developments built over the last twenty years: the Bolton Road area, the Sainsbury site and the old brewery site. Sites were assembled and roads sometimes closed to make way for large buildings and associated parking requirements. With the closure of these businesses, ‘holes’ have appeared in the fabric of the town which now need to be mended.

2.3b Polarisation of retail sites
There is no strong retail draw at the western end of town following the relocation of the Sainsbury store. The Raglan development will accelerate this polarisation and satisfy latent demand for retail premises. New retail development on the western side of town should be welcomed as it would create a limited ‘dumbbell’ effect along the High Street. In the absence of such development, care must be taken to assist the attractiveness of retail sites which are at a distance from the Castle Centre/Raglan scheme.

2.3c New retail impact on the High Street
The retail survey shows that investors and some retailers are concerned that the proposals for an extension to the Castle Centre might weaken the High Street. It is therefore important to support the traditional retail areas, particularly at the town’s western end.

2.3d Department store magnet
The town does not currently have a quality department store, although one is planned as part of the Raglan development.

2.3e Railway station welcome
There is a conflict between pedestrians and traffic for those consumers arriving at the railway station. In addition, the route out of the station area into the town is unattractive and does not make a welcoming entrance into the town.

2.3f Opportunity to integrate rail and bus transport
Rail and bus travel are not closely integrated in Banbury, and the need to find a long term home for the bus station offers an opportunity to improve the integration of public transport.

2.3g Crossroads lost
Road improvements and inward-facing developments such as Smith’s Do-It-All have greatly weakened the legibility of crossroads in the town, notably at North Bar/Castle Street, and at Bridge Street/Concord Avenue. These junctions are now dominated by several lanes of traffic and corner sites which once accommodated important landmark buildings are now typically low value car lots or blank walls. Some of the ‘green’ approaches to the town have been lost and crossroads are all that remain of the old system of ‘bars’ at town entrances.

2.3h Regional shopping centre or tourism?
Banbury is at the heart of a wide tourist area and yet fails to attract significant numbers of visitors into the town. The historic streets and market spaces are the attraction to be marketed, and the smaller shops are probably of greater interest to tourists than national multiples. Care must be taken to ensure that Banbury’s image is not just that of a large indoor shopping centre, but of a unique market town with a range of interesting shops.
Fig. 2.3 Banbury - Key Views and Urban Spaces
2.4 Urban Design Strategy

An integrated strategy comprising nine key components is proposed:

2.4a Mending the 'holes'

These problem sites exist because street patterns have been distorted to suit the requirements of particular developments, which when amortised over a relatively short time period, have then been abandoned in favour of greener pastures, leaving an unattractive and inflexible development behind.

On the large, vacant sites at Calthorpe Street, Bolton Road and George Street, we propose that site briefs be prepared which will establish attractive and robust street patterns suited to a wide range of land uses. The streets which we treasure today have a life span of centuries rather than a couple of decades, and we must seek to achieve the same when developing new areas of the town.

The site briefs should:

- develop new streets and public rights of way which establish a more 'permeable' street pattern and create development parcels between streets of dimension 50m - 80m; if block sizes exceed these guiding dimensions inward facing developments are likely to occur and accessibility will be reduced;

- define perimeter blocks on each land parcel which will have a clear distinction between public frontages and private or service internal courts;

- promote a mix of uses within each block wherever possible;

- enable development to take place over time in an incremental manner, and so be more responsive to the needs of the town over a much longer time period than is needed simply to amortise a single development.

Examples of how these sites may be redeveloped follows under 'Development opportunities':

Fig. 2.4 Bolton Road & Warwick Road sites
Computer model of proposed perimeter block development along inter-connecting streets

Fig. 2.5 Parsons Street & Bolton Road
Model of proposed infill development around public spaces which connect to Parsons Street
2.4b Re-instating the cross-roads

The design of cross-roads at North Bar/Castle Street and Bridge Street/Concord Avenue should be reviewed to reduce the width of the carriageways, make crossing the road easier for pedestrians and improve turning movements for cyclists. A high priority should be placed on achieving high quality landmark buildings which address the public realm for all corner sites.

2.4c Castle Street - avenue

Castle Street is a modern, unremarkable addition to Banbury, and is in danger of becoming an unattractive access route lined by the backs of buildings. It will, however, become an important road into the town and we propose treating it as a 'boulevard' commensurate with its standing in the emerging road hierarchy. This would require street trees to be planted down each side of the road, and new development to address the street.

2.4d North Bar/Warwick Road

Avenue planting along Warwick Road and appropriate architectural responses from new development are needed to establish a calm, confident, institutional quality at this end of town. The new magistrates' court will confirm the desired civic character of the street.

The back-lands behind North Bar are ideally suited to town housing. Site briefs should encourage:
- housing designed along pedestrian streets and intimate squares or mews;
- the maximum links between People's Park and the town centre to increase permeability;

Fig. 2.6 Castle Street/Bolton Road urban design strategy
Street trees to be planted down each side of the road, and new development to address the street.

Fig. 2.7 North Bar/Warwick Road urban design strategy
The new magistrates' court will confirm the desired civic character of the street.
2.4e Calthorpe Street
Buildings along both sides of the street have been lost and the gaping expanses of parking are highly visible from the street. It is recommended that the edges to the street be re-formed by a mix of infill housing/retail and the planting of street trees where possible.

2.4f Cherwell Street - a new 'East Bar'
Cherwell Street is taking on the character of a typical inner relief road, yet the potential exists to transform it into a handsome tree-lined 'boulevard' serving commercial and residential development which adheres to a consistent building line at the back of generous pedestrian pavements. This concept could be extended to include the whole approach along Concord Avenue from Hennef Way. There is no longer an 'East Bar' in Banbury, and it is suggested that Cherwell Street take on that name to convey the character which we propose and is so well characterised at South Bar.

A long term site for the bus station could be considered on the former brewery site behind frontage development onto 'East Bar', which offers a central location and could be screened by perimeter block development.

2.4g George Street and Station Square
The town railway station is conveniently located yet has an inconvenient and unattractive approach over the canal bridge. George Street (formerly Meadow Lane) used to extend almost to the canal, and we propose that this alignment be re-established where it would terminate in a new square in front of the

Fig. 2.8 Calthorpe Street urban design strategy
It is recommended that the edges to the street be re-formed by infill housing and the planting of street trees where possible.

Fig. 2.9 Calthorpe Street
Computer massing model showing new development defining streets and public spaces.

Fig. 2.10 'East Bar' proposals
The potential exists to transform Cherwell Street into a handsome tree-lined 'boulevard'.

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A scheme for a pedestrian priority square in front of Church House with a crossing table across Horse Fair to St Mary's as well.
station. We have called this extension 'Station Rise' for reference. Re-modelling of the station would define the square on three sides and create opportunities for convenience shops on the square. The new frontages created along Station Rise would be expected to raise land values and so finance the necessary infrastructure and property purchases. Station Square would also connect to Tramway road to the south.

2.4h Canalside business quarter

Land east of Cherwell Street (or 'East Bar') and particularly land east of the canal is of low value despite its proximity to the town centre. It is proposed that all the land contained by 'East Bar' and Bridge Street be designated as a new Business Quarter where with excellent road links, rail services and bus services it could grow to become a high quality employment area. The canal and river are both neglected assets, yet cleaned and fronted by new streets and buildings would provide a superb location with pleasant walks northwards towards the Castle Centre and Spiceball Park. The quarter would be subdivided by new streets at suitable intervals (see notes on 'mending the holes' at the beginning of this section) while retaining buildings of local interest along the canal-side.

2.4f Council Presence in Town Centre

The Council has a low profile in the town centre. It is suggested that a town centre manager with a permanent office in the town centre would be a way of redressing this situation.

2.4j Transportation

All new development should take into consideration the emerging integrated land use and transportation
2.5 Development Opportunities

2.5a Bolton Road

Bolton Road runs to the south of the multi-storey car park and provides access to this and the former Do It All unit situated on the corner of Castle Street and North Bar Street. This is a prominent site forming one corner of the crossroads at the northern end of North Bar Street.

There is limited scope for retail development between Castle Street and Parsons Street, particularly if the Raglan scheme progresses. It is not as important a site in retailing terms as the former Sainsbury site due to its ‘isolation’ from the retail areas. We propose residential and mixed uses be promoted around four street blocks formed by two new pedestrian streets which cross to form a small residential square at the centre. The site brief should promote:

- a new residential block can be created at the rear of Parsons Street and North Bar;
- a new mixed use block on the former DIY site with a commercial frontage to North Bar-the frontage onto Castle Street provides an opportunity to address this proposed avenue with frontage development;
- a new residential square in the centre of the block;
- environmental improvements to the multi-storey car park - new lifts and reception areas;
- the creation of ‘Castle House Square’ with new buildings closing off Bolton Road to the west;
- a replacement entrance to the multi-storey car park at the west end which will enable
Improvements to the pedestrian environment to be made along the south side of the car park:
- Improved accesses to Parsons Street eg Flying Horse passage, Reindeer Yard etc.;
- An improved pedestrian environment along Parsons Street with wider pavements, clearer parking arrangements, local narrowing of the carriageway.

2.5b Calthorpe Street
This site is centred around the former Sainsbury's unit. It is an important area within the town centre due to its proximity to Banbury Cross and the potential that exists to strengthen retailing in this area of the town. It would provide an appropriate site for retailing although this potential will be severely limited if Raglan's proposals for an extension to the Castle Centre progress. In that case, both this site and development west of Calthorpe Street facing South Bar might build on tourist attractions such as Banbury Cross and Museum to encourage leisure orientated uses along the retail frontage, eg cafes and restaurants.

The site brief should promote:
- Infill housing and tree planting to improve the definition of the street;
- Calthorpe 'pocket park' near the junction with South Bar;
- Retained service and office parking within the Calthorpe/South Bar/High Street block;
- Potential linkage through the United Reform Church site to South Bar, and the expansion of pavement areas on corners opposite the Cross by reducing kerb radii;
- Rationalisation of the junction at Calthorpe Street/Marlborough Road with the High Street to create a new public space;
- Marlborough Road development which creates a frontage visible from the High Street;
- New development at the northern end of Sainsbury's car park to provide for mixed uses/leisure with limited retail attractions at ground floor level;
- The reduction of surface parking at the Sainsbury site if converted to non-food activities;
- Treatment of the remaining car park as a garden.

Fig. 2.16 Calthorpe Street proposal - bird's eye view
A possible location for retail, cafes and restaurants

Fig. 2.17 'Castle House Square'
New buildings close off Bolton Road to the west and a replacement entrance to the multi-storey car park will improve the pedestrian environment

Fig. 2.18 Calthorpe Street proposal
Infill housing and tree planting to improve the definition of the street
2.5c Extension to Castle Centre

The Raglan proposals to extend The Castle Shopping Centre show a scheme of approximately 18,580 sq m (200,000 sq ft) net lettable retail accommodation with a department store anchor, a large store user and a range of unit shops. The existing bus station will be relocated with the scheme.

Whilst we recognise that Banbury probably has the capacity to support a scheme of this size, and that a department store will strengthen the town’s retail base, we consider that the scheme could be further improved in a number of aspects:

- The location of the scheme is likely to alter retailing patterns in the town drawing trade to the eastern end to the detriment of the western end of High Street and the Banbury Cross area of the town.
- A number of existing retailers may be attracted into the scheme, including national multiples. Measures should therefore be taken to retain retail and services in the traditional trading streets.
- The uncertainty surrounding the scheme and the perceived impact on High Street retailing has already been perceived as a problem by investors and is reflected in current yields.

With regard to the physical form of the Raglan development, the following improvements to the scheme are desirable:

- Pedestrian access between the Market Place and the canal should be direct and generous; ideally this route should remain in public ownership through adoption.
- The existing shop frontages to Bridge Street are exactly the kind of small scale local uses which give the town its interest and character. Small scale shops should be retained at this location.
- The scheme would greatly benefit by the introduction of non-retail uses including institutional and leisure.
- The approach from Concord Avenue over the canal is likely to present a panorama over a sea of parking and some remedial measures may be necessary.
- A service yard is proposed at the eastern end of Castle Street, which if implemented, could produce a bleak vista at the end of the Castle Street avenue.

2.5d Other development opportunities

Development of the former brewery site on East Bar and of the Station Rise and the Station Square are discussed in the previous section.

2.5e Increase residential opportunities

Living Over The Shop (LOTS) proposals should be supported by the Council to encourage people to live in the town centre and to make more efficient use of under-utilised accommodation, for example, the upper floors or retail units. We understand that interest for such a scheme has been expressed and that Parsons Street has been identified as an appropriate location.

2.5f Confidence

Greater confidence in the town could be achieved by evolving an overall strategy for the town centre to inform the public, retailers and investors of future plans. The Council needs to be able to demonstrate its commitment to achieving this comprehensive town centre strategy by being prepared to utilise its CPO powers as has already been demonstrated in
respect of the Castle Centre scheme. The strategy should demonstrate measures to assist in securing appropriate tenants for units that might become vacant due to relocations into the proposed Castle Centre extension.
Bicester is a fine market town with a population of 25,000. It has evolved from a small settlement at the Causeway to become in the nineteenth century an agricultural market centre for the surrounding farming communities. Like Banbury, the shape and scale of the major public spaces were determined by their market function, as was the case with Sheep Street. The markets generated custom for many inns and workshops and some of these buildings survive today.

With agricultural markets no longer being held in the town (the cattle market is no longer held on a regular basis) retail and service trades have become more important. The pedestrianisation of Sheep Street has sought to improve the town as a shopping environment, and the arrival of the nearby Bicester Village retail centre has brought the name of the town to the attention of a much wider public since its opening.

For many years Bicester became regarded as a 'garrison town' due to the presence of the local military bases. The residential population has grown considerably with the construction of new estates. Many of these have not enhanced Bicester's reputation, and today perceptions of the town are split between that of a market town with historical interest or an interesting core encircled by modern estates and host to a discount shopping centre. The town appears in search of a role and an identity, and of the three Cherwell Centres presents some of the most complex issues in preparing a coherent urban design strategy.
3.1 Commercial Overview

Bicester town centre is primarily a convenience shopping centre serving its immediate catchment area. It has retained much of its market town character and an opportunity now exists to exploit this image of the town to attract consumers from the Bicester Village scheme.

The town's prime retail area is located along the pedestrianised section of Sheep Street, between its junction with Bell Lane and Market Place. National multiple traders located here include Tesco, Iceland, Boots, Lloyds Chemist, Clinton Cards, Dorothy Perkins and Woolworth.

The Crown Walk shopping area at the southern end of Sheep Street links it to Market Square and provides some weather protection for shoppers. This scheme has attracted a number of national multiple traders including WH Smith, Thomas Cook, Adams, Carpenters and Boots optician.

Market Square is currently a secondary retail pitch, although the northern frontage is stronger than the southern. There is a high proportion of service businesses located in this area including Midland Bank, National Westminster Bank, Sketchley and a number of estate agents and insurance brokers. The street market is held within Market Square on Fridays and Saturdays, which strengthens the draw to this end of the town at these times.

Evans Yard, Wesley Lane and Deans Court are specialist shopping areas which add character and interest to the town centre retail offer and attract mainly local independent traders.

The town's main parking areas are located to the rear of Tesco and provide 302 surface parking spaces on a pay and display basis. In addition, there is a 175 space surface car park to the rear of the Solo supermarket, 34 short term spaces in Market Square (these are not available on market days), approximately 25 spaces along Victoria Road, 86 at Franklin's Yard, 34 at Chapel Brook and 14 in Chapel Street. All are operated on a pay and display basis. In total there are therefore 656 car parking spaces within the town centre.
3.2 Town Centre Assets

The main assets of the town can be summarised as follows:

3.2a The town has a very fine high street (Sheep Street), Market Square and interesting lanes.

3.2b There is a large resource of attractive, vacant buildings, some of which are listed, although many are in need of repair.

3.2c The town centre is of a size and character that could be highly attractive for people wanting to live in a town.

3.2d There are large, existing residential areas close to the town centre.

3.2e The town is easily accessible from the main road network including the M40 and rail stations at Bicester North and Bicester Town.

3.2f The development of the Bicester Village factory outlet centre has raised the profile of the town nationwide.

3.2g The main town centre car park behind Tesco is easily accessible and convenient.

3.2h The Sheep Street pedestrianisation scheme is popular with shoppers.

3.2i There is a low level of shop vacancies, particularly within the prime pitch.

3.2j The mix and extent of retail outlets is appropriate for the town.

3.2k The retail base of the town is strengthened by a good proportion of quality national multiple traders.
3.3 Key Issues

Key issues to be addressed are as follows:

3.3a Market Square under-valued
The Market Square is currently an under-valued asset. There are conflicts between traffic and pedestrians and the existing arrangements for the street market create an 'untidy' impression not in keeping with the desired market town image. This has led to a number of properties on the southern side of Market Square becoming run-down or vacant.

3.3b Sheep Street
Some existing retailers in the town have expressed concern at the loss of passing trade following the pedestrianisation of Sheep Street. The pedestrianisation scheme is, however, popular with shoppers.

3.3c Causeway traffic
Causeway, the origin of the town, has become dominated by traffic. The narrowness of the street has necessitated a one-way system, which speeds traffic and makes crossing the road hazardous for pedestrians. Traffic moving from the Market Square to Manorsfield Road causes problems of severance also making it difficult for pedestrians to cross. The railings outside the bank on the north west corner encourage a free-flow traffic system and obstruct pedestrian movement. Despite its origins, and convenient location, the dominance of traffic has resulted in most of the properties in this area becoming run down or derelict.

3.3d Manorsfield Road 'racetrack'
Manorsfield road is an efficient but characterless road which encourages fast moving traffic. It is not an attractive location for development, and creates a barrier separating residential development from the town centre.
3.3e Street pattern and town form

The figure-ground drawing reveals a surprisingly low density of development at the centre of the town - within the triangle formed by Sheep Street, A421 Oxford Road and Kings End/Church Street.

3.3f Limited scope for new retail development

There is limited scope for new retail development in the town due to the low level of demand from potential retailers, the proximity of the town to Oxford and the size of the town's catchment population. There is little further scope for fashion retail in the town centre due to the opening of Bicester Village.

3.3g Bicester Village - a Jekyll and Hyde impact

Bicester Village has the potential to attract shoppers into Bicester, and also to take them away from the town centre if it were not to adhere strictly to factory outlet retailing. The town has not yet devised ways to attract Bicester Village visitors into the town.

3.3h Crown Walk

The entrance to Crown Walk from Market Square is not prominent and could be improved.

3.3i A need for parks

The provision of new parks and improvements to existing facilities such as the Garth would be welcomed. Some measure of traffic calming on Launton Road, to address the problem of severence, is a pre-requisite to making better use of the Garth gardens.

3.3j Residential estates not integrated into the town

The form of the surrounding estates are not consistent with a market town, and while not part of the town centre, they do confer an alien image through association.

3.3k Lack of cultural or civic focus

Bicester has thriving drama, choral and operatic societies but lacks a concert or performance venue. Without a civic centre or centrally located town hall, there is little cultural or civic focus to the town.
3.4 Urban Design Strategy

A ten point strategy is proposed:

3.4a New Route to shoppers’ car park

A more direct route to the town centre Tesco car park is needed for motorists arriving from the south other than via Causeway. Two options are proposed:
- St John’s Street could be redesigned to accommodate two-way traffic;
- A new road could possibly be built between Kings End and Manorsfield Road.

Further traffic management measures would be required in Causeway, for either option, to ensure that vehicles used the new route.

3.4b Calm returns to Causeway

With most traffic diverted away from Causeway, this street could be subject to traffic calming measures between Church Lane (which will lead via Old Place Yard and a footpath to Bicester Village) and Markel Square.

St Edburg’s church is re-established as a pivotal landmark with the Market Square to the east and Church Lane to the south. Pedestrian crossing tables at the junction with Church Lane and the cross-roads at Manorsfield Road/Chapel Street/Market Square will improve access to shoppers. One of the oldest buildings in the town is the timber framed 8 Causeway. While many of the other buildings on Causeway are of no special architectural interest, they form an attractive group and merit sympathetic renovation (see 3.5c).
3.4c Market Square reclaimed for pedestrians

The bustle of traffic can be a necessary ingredient of a successful square, yet the balance between pedestrian and traffic has here moved to traffic dominance.

Businesses around the square are predominantly services and leisure, although there is little nighttime activity—a situation not helped by poor lighting. It is proposed that traffic be managed by traffic calming with pedestrian tables between Crown Walk and the southern side of the square, and also at Sheep Street.

General two-way traffic would pass along the southern edge of the square. This carriageway is wide enough for two-way flows, and we consider this preferable to one-way solutions which have a tendency to carve the town up into large traffic islands and increase vehicle speeds.

Along the northern edge of the square, the carriageway would be restricted to access vehicles with a ten minute waiting restriction, taxis and public transport. This carriageway would be made narrower and moved to create a much wider pedestrian pavement to businesses on the north side. The ‘pedestrian friendly’ zone would thus extend from Sheep Street and Crown Walk into the Market Square and on to link Causeway and Bicester Village.

Where Sheep Street passes east of the Square, the road surface would be redesigned to reduce the impact of vehicles, and the existing taxi rank retained and improved. A special bus stop to serve Bicester Village (see 3.4c) would be provided at the head of the Square.

The market would be retained with new paving and improvements to both layout and stalls. These
Improvements to the market are seen as essential if the draw to the Market Square end of town is to be strengthened. On non-market days parking would be retained in the Square as this generates trade for the surrounding retailers.

The raison d'être of the Market Square derives partly from the 'Y' pattern of streets which converge to provide a striking vista down Causeway to the tower of St Edburg's Church. While our proposal would direct general traffic along the southern side of the square, we feel it important to retain the 'Y' street pattern and so retain the logic of the space. No tree planting is proposed in the Square, which should be kept as uncluttered as possible with a simple, high quality paving scheme stretching wall to wall.

3.4d Manorsfield Avenue
Manorsfield road forms a 'barrier' rather than a 'seam' and has no town frontage. There is a confusion between fronts and backs to development along this road. It is proposed to turn the road into a real avenue more appropriate to Bicester; Kings End is a fine example to follow.

Formal tree planting along each side of the carriageway would reduce the perceived width of the corridor. Behind generous pavements on either side, new development would be required to be built up to the back of pavement line and address the street.

3.4e Exploiting Bicester Village
The impact of Bicester Village on town centre retailing must be carefully monitored (task for town centre manager) and further out of town development (food and non-food) restricted to protect the town centre's role.

It is proposed that a shuttle bus service be provided between the town centre and Bicester Village. It would be important that this be a dedicated service that stops only at Bicester Village, the town centre (and possibly Bicester North rail station) and provide a continuous service throughout the day. The information centre at Bicester Village is excellent and would be able to provide visitors with information on retailers and other attractions in the town centre. The bus would stop and turn round in the Market Square.

There are two possible routes for the shuttle bus which require further investigation: via Chapel Street or along London Road via the British Rail Station.

The Council's current plan for a pedestrian route between Bicester Village and the centre via Church Lane is welcomed.

3.4f A strategy for parks
It is proposed that a policy be adopted to improve, extend and link together all forms of park in the town. This would include:
• Developing park-related amenities at the Pingle;
• Linking the institutional parkland and grounds west of the A421 via the Hunt Close development into the centre;
• Providing attractions at the Garth to make fuller use of the grounds;
• Establishing a network of green paths through the centre of the town to link the three parklands described above.

3.4g Approaches into the town
Although outside the central study area, we suggest that consideration be given to structural landscape planting along the main approaches into the town, ie from M40 junction 9, Aylesbury, Buckingham, Banbury and Middleton Stoney. This could be done at low cost using ‘whips’ of suitable species which would be a long term investment for the future.

In addition, arrival points at the town proper could be marked by planting or hard landscape schemes at appropriate junctions, eg the roundabouts serving Tesco/Bicester Village and the A421/Churchill Road.

3.4h Design framework for future residential development
It is recommended that any future residential development, whether in or outside the town centre, be first subject to the preparation of an urban design framework which establishes the physical form of development to the satisfaction of the Council.

3.4i A concert venue for Bicester
Opportunities are restricted for much new development in Bicester, yet the town needs a
flagship project. It also needs a good, permanent venue for the performing arts and a civic focus. It is proposed that a site be designated within the town centre, possibly at Franklin's Yard, along Manorsfield Road or within the grounds of the Garth, for a concert hall.

3.4] Lighting

Improvements to lighting in the town centre could be achieved by new lighting of pedestrian priority areas and illuminating the exterior of a number of prominent buildings. A lighting strategy is ideally required. This would assist in promoting a safe atmosphere and thus encourage people into the town after trading hours.
3.5 Development Opportunities
Although prospects for large scale town centre development are limited, this should not be
discounted in the longer term or on a smaller scale in the short-term, according to demand. It is too
early to draw any firm conclusions regarding the impact of Bicester Village on the prospects for
further town centre development and this is an aspect that requires continual monitoring.

The main development need in Bicester is not
for new buildings but to repair and bring into
productive use its remarkable stock of older
buildings.

The following development or improvement
opportunities are noted:

3.5a Market Square
Many properties along the southern side of the
square are in need of refurbishment and the
opportunity exists to intensify their usage. Shop
front guidance will be an important component in
raising the quality of the Market Square. The
establishment of a more pedestrian friendly Square
will provide an incentive for cafes and restaurants
to open in this location, creating a more lively
area.

3.5b Causeway
With a reduction in traffic and improvements to
Causeway, the viability of commercial development
will improve. The scale of the existing assembly of
buildings along the south of Causeway is
appropriate to the scale of the space and it is
recommended that they be largely retained and
renovated. The sensitive replacement of one or
two of the buildings would be acceptable. Rear
servicing of all these properties is possible and
should be a requirement of any planning
application.

3.5c Redevelopment between London Road and
Chapel Street
The vacant strip of land between London Road and
Chapel Street is currently inaccessible, bounded on
the south by housing and service yards/hotel parking
on the north. There is a small group of charming, but
poorly maintained and partly vacant, buildings
adjacent to the east side of the site on London Road.
The site is contained along Chapel Street by an
attractive stone wall and a collection of unsightly
buildings, including public conveniences which
have been closed. Priory Close runs towards the
centre of the site from the south, but is closed by a
masonry wall, to form a cul-de-sac. The main
issues are:
Fig. 3.15. London Rd/Chapel St site planning
The potential exists to create a mixed development to provide a new street between London Road and Chapel Street.

- failure to exploit town centre land;
- unattractive and neglected buildings on London Road;
- unsightly public conveniences on Chapel Street;
- road surface of Priory Close in poor condition;
- large block lacking permeability.

The potential exists to create a mixed development including residential and offices and also to provide a new street between London Road and Chapel Street. Existing buildings on London Road could be refurbished to create new apartments. Priory Road should be re-surfaced.

Our preference would be to maintain two way traffic in the Market Square, and reduce traffic speeds in the new street through ‘calming’ measures.

3.5d Franklin’s Yard

Franklin’s Yard currently functions as surface parking for up to approximately 100 cars. Existing buildings on the site are fragmented, leaving behind a confusion between fronts and backs and no coherent edge to the block structure. The effects of this fragmented urban form spread to the nearby retail street, Wesley Lane. Development considerations for Franklin’s Yard should therefore extend to include Wesley Lane. The main issues are:

- small businesses on north side of St. John’s Street are isolated by traffic flows;
- the old gymnasium (now a bakery) is isolated;
- no town frontage to Manorsfield Road;
- confusion between fronts and backs of property;
- Wesley Lane fails to take real advantage of potential pedestrian links from Bure Place car park to the south, and presents no frontage which would promote the use of Wesley Lane.

Fig. 3.16. Franklin’s Yard - existing
Existing buildings on the site are fragmented, leaving a confusion between fronts and backs and no coherent edge to the block structure.

Fig. 3.17. Franklin’s Yard - option 1

Fig. 3.18. Franklin’s Yard - option 2
It would be possible to create a new frontage to Wesley Lane which would address Bure Place car park, improving links to the car park and the image of Wesley Lane.

A frontage would be formed to Manorsfield Road. New development might include higher-density residential/mixed development overlooking parkland.

3.5e Cattle Market
The Cattle Market occupies an attractive position close to the centre of the town. Situated within a block of primarily residential development, it offers the opportunity for a ‘mews’ style development with access off Victoria Road.

A feasibility study shows that 40 two-bedroom flats with 100% car parking is possible. Flats would be positioned around a mews court and the existing attractive brick walls, piers, iron gates and brick/stone office would be retained.

3.5f Concert venue
A hall providing a permanent venue for the performing arts as well as an exhibition space for commercial use is proposed. Bicester Choral and Operatic Society and the Bicester Drama Society would be important local benefactors, and the town’s accessibility of the M40 could make the venue attractive to professional companies and a wider audience as well as businesses. The Akeman Project (having charity status) was formed to promote such a venue and should be involved in future consultations. The funding of such a hall could be the subject of a bid to the Millennium Commission.

3.5g Former Post Office
It is vital that as public or institutional buildings become vacant efforts are made to find new public uses for them. The vacant post office is a key building on Sheep Street and should have a public use. It could make an excellent site for the library which is currently located away from the centre, and the County Council should be invited to comment.

An alternative option would be to acquire the former post office building for conversion into a town hall, leaving the Garth to provide ancillary accommodation for a new concert hall.
Kidlington has a population of 14,000 but still has the legal status of a village. It is conveniently located north of Oxford City, although sitting within Cherwell’s boundaries. The proximity of Oxford has always restricted its potential as a retail centre, and it effectively functions as a district centre rather than as an independent market town as is the case with both Banbury and Bicester.

It is a convenient and attractive residential and commercial location and has some limited potential to build on the existing base. One fundamental issue to be revisited is whether it is in the best interests of Kidlington for it to be considered a ‘village’. In terms of population and general appearance the centre has the feel of a small town, and any quaint attraction in being considered ‘the largest village in England’ - there are several other claimants - is, we feel, outweighed by the need to develop a centre which has the scale, choice and ‘critical mass’ appropriate to a small town.

4.1 Commercial overview

Nationally, it is the district centres which have lost food stores to edge of town superstores, and yet Kidlington has retained Tesco and the Co-op despite the arrival nearby of a Sainsbury superstore.

The survival of many district centres, such as Kidlington, has been assisted by the growth in service business such as personal and professional services, financial services, and also by an increasing number of restaurants, cafes and hot food takeaways. Such service businesses are important to the vitality and viability of smaller centres by acting as a draw to the immediate catchment area, and also because of their attraction to passing trade. It is therefore vital in centres such as Kidlington that opportunities for attracting passing trade are maximised to ensure their long-term vitality and viability.

There is a relatively high proportion of national multiples represented, including Tesco, Co-op, Iceland, Lloyds Chemist, Victoria Wine and Blockbuster video rental, in addition to the four major banks. The survival of Kidlington can be largely attributed to its fulfilling the role of district centre by providing such service and convenience facilities.
4.2 Village Centre Assets

The main assets of Kidlington centre can be summarised as follows:

4.2a The recent streetscape scheme has created a pleasant High Street which is well used. There are two reservations: a lack of clarity as to whether pedestrians or vehicles have priority, and a tendency towards a village quaintness. Proposals follow (5.4d) which seek to modify a small part of the scheme.

4.2b The Oxford-Banbury road (A423) brings a large volume of traffic past the western end of the High Street.

4.2c Convenient and free parking is available in the village centre. In addition to some on-street parking in the High Street, there are 100 spaces behind the Co-op and 235 spaces behind Tesco.

4.2d There is an existing retail base with a low level of vacancy that is well suited to Kidlington's role as a district centre.

4.2e There is a popular existing street market held on Fridays and Saturdays, although the site is unexceptional.

4.2f The village is well served by public transport with a bus stop outside Tesco which brings people directly into the centre.

4.2g There is a large residential catchment area.
4.3 Key Issues

4.3a The village does not encourage the significant amount of passing trade using the A421 into the main retail area. The entrance to the High Street is via the 'back door' of the awkwardly named Sterling Road Approach, while direct access off the Oxford Road is unclear and no longer possible as it has become an exit for service vehicles.

4.3b The A423 Oxford Road causes problems of severance. The Exeter Hall community facilities and businesses along the western side of the A423 are isolated by a barrier of cars and heavy vehicles for much of the day.

4.3c Businesses located along Oxford Road feel isolated from the centre.

4.3d The former cross-roads at High Street/Oxford Road has been designed-out by road changes and has lost its clarity. The street corners are weak with the exception of the Clock Tower development.

4.3e There is a general confusion about the High Street regarding parking, servicing and vehicular/pedestrian priorities.

4.3f The northern side of the High Street at the Oxford Road end does not have a strong frontage with units being set back and lacking prominence.

4.3g The village centre lacks any real focus or heart; there is just one short street and little to attract people to explore behind the main frontages.

4.3h The village lacks a 'critical mass' of shops which would make the centre more attractive for non-food shopping.

4.3i The entrance to the Kiddington Centre is poor, being restricted by the lift shaft which discourages pedestrians to enter from the High Street. The Centre does not maximise the benefit of its rear entrance from the car park and pedestrians leaving the car park tend to enter the village via Watts Way.

4.3j The proximity of Oxford will always be a major attractor for comparison shopping.

4.3k The term 'village' sends a confusing message to visitors. Central Kiddington has neither the feel of a village nor quite the choice and diversity - in both retailing and environmental terms - to be the active commercial centre which its attractive setting and convenient location suggest it has the potential to become.
Fig. 4.4
Kidlington - Key Views and Urban Spaces
4.4 Urban Design Strategy

A nine-point urban design strategy is proposed. Some of these measures would be long term and only realised over a period of perhaps 10 - 20 years through control of development pressures. The implementation of other measures could begin immediately, starting with the preparation of detailed site design briefs and discussions with the County Council on highways.

4.4a Oxford Road 'avenue'

The existing character of the A423 Oxford-Banbury Road is that of a barrier which divides the centre. It is possible to re-design this road where it passes through the centre such that it acts as a 'seam' rather than as a barrier. This can be done without reducing the capacity of the road or the volume of traffic passing through Kidlington. It will, however, make clear to through traffic that they are passing through a pleasant commercial centre and make it easier for motorists to stop and shop.

Gateways

At the southern boundary of Exeter Hall and at Benmead Road would be gateways which communicate to motorists that they are about to enter a central area. The gateways could be created by the beginning of formal avenue planting which narrows the perceived width of the road.

Avenue planting

An avenue would be established between these two gateways by planting a single species such as London plane, maple or lime each side of the road, where possible, at 7m centres. Trees should be semi-mature for initial impact, and planted with a uniform leading edge against the road to minimise the effect of gaps which will be inevitable due to utilities and access points.

Traffic calming

Along this avenue the design speed for traffic should be reduced to 20mph by both physical means and visual cues to motorists:

- the main carriageway can be reduced in width giving more space to pedestrians and cyclists;
- pedestrian crossing tables could be provided at Exeter Hall, in front of Adkins, at the cross-roads and at Benmead Road;
- the surface treatment of the pavements and carriageway would be changed, possibly using a light coloured rolled aggregate on the carriageway and brick paving to pedestrian pavements and crossings;
- a build-to line for new development is identified along the avenue such that over time, redevelopment could take place with a consistent building frontage addressing the avenue. Three storey mixed development would be preferable to the existing suburban forms. The car showrooms at the traffic lights is a particularly inappropriate use, and it is hoped that the enhanced land values engendered by the above measures would encourage the re-location of the showrooms and the development of a suitable corner building on this important site.

The avenue treatment of the Oxford Road corridor would have the effect of embracing businesses and facilities currently isolated from the centre.

4.4b New access to northern car-parks

A new access to the northern car-parks is proposed across the Black Horse public house car park. This access road would pass adjacent to the North...
Fig. 4.7 Proposals for Oxford/Banbury Road - bird's eye from above Exeter Hall

It is possible to re-design the Oxford Road where it passes through the centre such that it acts as a 'seam' rather than a barrier.

Fig. 4.8 Oxford Road 'avenue' proposals
Kidlington primary school boundary. This would provide for more convenient parking, rear servicing to the north side of the High Street, balance the existing dependence on Sterling Road Approach and reduce vehicular crossing movements on the High Street.

The new junction with Oxford Road would probably require a traffic signal layout. It would be only 40m from the cross-roads and will probably need to be linked to the existing signals. The proposed junction will need to be modelled to ensure that minimum queues occur in the space between the two junctions.

4.4c Re-instate cross-roads
The centre of Kidlington has grown around the cross-roads formed by High Street-Oxford Road. Cross-roads are memorable places and structure our 'mental maps' of towns and villages. More recently the cross-roads have been eliminated by road 'improvements', and this has had the effect of removing the main visual entrance into the High Street. Whether the High Street becomes pedestrianised or not, it is important that the visual form of the cross-roads be reinstated and that some of the clutter masking the entrance into the High Street be removed.

4.4d High Street opened for business
The proposed new access road for service and car parking north of the High Street creates new opportunities for the High Street itself. The High Street could become completely pedestrianised or it could be re-opened for access off Oxford Road. The decision would be one of traffic management and controlled by removable signs rather than being permanently built-in to the floorscape.
Our strong recommendation is that the High Street be opened to traffic and some short-term parking spaces - say 30 minutes waiting - be provided and charged. This could be done with minor changes to the existing scheme. Service lorries - which currently have access - would be prohibited. Most motorists would wish to take advantage of free parking and would use the car park entrances.

We acknowledge local concerns for road safety but believe that this can be achieved without pedestrianisation which we feel is inappropriate to a High Street of this size. Access by car is particularly important for the types of retailers located in Kidlington who rely on passing trade for their success.

Shops would benefit from the passing trade attracted directly into the High Street, and the whole centre would benefit from the hustle that is essential to a thriving high street. The current danger to pedestrians derives not from vehicles per se but from user perceptions as to whether motorists or pedestrians have priority. The recent removal of kerbs means that pedestrian pavements would be defined by bollards, and crossing points clearly marked.

4.4e Redevelopment of northern Side of High Street

The northern side of the High Street would benefit from the redevelopment of those sites based on suburban housing into more substantial development along a consistent build-to-line. The western end of the High Street should be reserved for a building of sufficient stature to function as a landmark when viewed by northbound traffic on Oxford Road.

4.4f The Kidlington Centre

The front and rear entrances to the Kidlington Centre should be made more prominent. The lifts could be relocated to provide a wider, more inviting entrance from the High Street. The entrance from the car park should be enhanced and consideration given to measures that could filter the flow from the car park through the Centre rather than via Watts Way.

4.4g New Market Square

A new and permanent home for the market is proposed, defined on two sides by new development on land currently owned by the Post Office and the MoD. The square would establish a heart at the centre of Kidlington, and provide a focus for life in the community. The High Street would thus terminate in a civic space rather than just peter out as it does at present. New development would be three or four storey with commercial uses at ground floor. Residential use in part of the scheme would be welcomed as a means of increasing the numbers of people living in the centre and enabling some self-policing of the square.

The building should form a landmark when viewed from the cross-roads, and a southern extension could also form a marker point visible from the Red Lion (see Red Lion Walks). The prospect from the Kidlington Centre development, currently part vacant, would be greatly improved.

4.4h Red Lion Walks

The block formed by Sterling Road Approach, Oxford Road and the High Street is much too large not to allow through movement of pedestrians. Two new rights of way are proposed. From Oxford Road
opposite the crossing table at Adkins a new path would lead to the southern entrance into the Co-op. This potential route can be seen from Sterling Road Approach, and could be signalled from the Oxford Road by a southern extension to the Market Square development as illustrated.

A second new path is proposed from the High Street, through no. 20 and the Red Lion grounds to meet the first path.

4.4i Lighting

Improvements to lighting in the village after dark would assist in promoting a safe atmosphere. The old street lights have been retained in the High Street as a matter of expediency but are not suited to pedestrian friendly areas in design or colour of light.

Fig. 4.12 'Red Lion Walks' proposals

Two new pedestrian rights of way are proposed through the block formed by Sterling Road Approach, Oxford Road and the High Street.
4.5 Development Opportunities
Four development opportunities emerge:

4.5a High Street
There are two potential re-development sites on the northern side of the High Street. These developments would have the benefit of a return frontage to the new access road from which they could also be serviced to minimise disturbance on the High Street.

4.5b Market Square
It is an appropriate site for the market operation and consideration could be given to extending the days on which the market operates.

It has been noted that Kidlington suffers from a lack of comparison shopping, and as such is of limited interest to retailers. It is a 'chicken and egg' situation which could be solved by undertaking the improvements set out above combined with a concise design brief for the market square development.

On three floors the gross floor area could be up to 3,000m². We understand that land would probably be available from the Post Office and MoD. The space taken by the square does not reduce the developable floor space which would otherwise front High Street and Sterling Road Approach. However, because the development creates its own setting, the letting prospects and hence viability are considerably improved. The actual size of any scheme would need to be established at the appropriate time and tested for viability.

4.5c No. 20 High Street
This site could be easily re-developed to provide three storey accommodation on the same building line as the Co-op, with pedestrian frontages on two sides as described. The rear boundary should be considered in conjunction with the Red Lion site.

4.5d Red Lion sites
A sea of open space surrounds the Red Lion public house. The presentation of the Red Lion could be enhanced by development to the north which would close off the service yard of the Clock Tower development with which it would create a perimeter block. To the east, a new development on part of the Co-op service yard could provide a frontage to the new pedestrian routes, and accommodate a retail frontage adjacent to the southern Co-op entrance. It would be necessary to extend the Co-op service yard north using land currently occupied by no. 20 High Street.

4.5e Oxford Road
It could be expected that with the creation of the Oxford Road avenue, pressures for incremental mixed development would arise to replace housing and the car showrooms. This should take place in accordance with design briefs and along a consistent building line as discussed.
5.4 Tourism strategy
Strategies to increase tourism in Banbury and Bicester should be integrated with town centre planning strategies; the fabric of the town should itself be the main tourist attraction rather than isolated events or buildings within the town.

5.5 Parking
Parking policies to assist smaller shops could include:
- breaking car parking into smaller areas which could be located closer to smaller shops; large car parks tend to serve the larger retailers;
- a parking refund scheme could be made to operate amongst the smaller shops, just as schemes at present favour the larger operators such as supermarkets.

5.6 Lighting
The quality of lighting for pedestrians is poor in all three centres. This should be improved as a means of:
- promoting personal safety;
- adding night-time interest to each town;
- providing colour correct lighting of planting schemes;
- illuminating key (public) buildings;
- reducing light pollution.

As previously noted, a lighting strategy is really required for each town.

5.7 Signage
The quality of signage is variable, good in Banbury but could be increased in Bicester to encourage stronger pedestrian flows around the town.

It is suggested that each centre display a sign board indicating the presence and location of shops
and services throughout the town. These maps are updated annually (Kidlington every second year) by commercial companies and can be purchased in colour for display in purpose built display cases.

5.8 Colour
Towns have unique colour palettes according to local building materials, local colour preferences, soil types etc. It is proposed that a colour survey be undertaken with a view to preparing colour palettes for floorscape, elevations and paintwork in each town centre. These palettes would be applied through development control and through the streetworks of the district and county Councils.

5.9 Site design briefs
All the development sites identified in the report require site design briefs which set out the preferred form of development in advance of development interest. The briefs must use techniques such as build-to lines, building envelopes etc. to govern the three dimensional form of the development and thus the character of the public realm.

5.10 Gap funding for key projects
Some of the development opportunities identified could be viable in their own right, others may require gap funding to become viable. There are a number of funding sources to which applications could be made to secure gap funding eg Millennium Fund, EU fund to compensate for losses in military employment. This is an activity with which the Council could assist, the first step being to assess the viability of each development and establish the level of gap funding required.

5.11 Partnerships
The final recommendation is for a continuation of the dialogue established by the workshops that were held in each centre. The concerns and aspirations of each local community must be articulated to develop the vision for the centre of each community, and the vision will have little chance of success unless its ownership is shared by all.
National Trends in Retailing and the Implications for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington

Retail Market Overview

A.1 The 1980s saw a substantial growth in personal credit, due to the liberalisation of financial markets and an increase in the sources of credit. This was a major influence in the substantial growth in consumer expenditure during that period. This period of high consumer spending was in part responsible for an increase in retail investment activity which resulted in the development of numerous out of town and town centre retail facilities.

A.2 The onset of recession at the end of the 1980s was the result of a number of factors. In particular, high interest rates had an adverse effect on consumer expenditure and business investment; and the end of the housing boom left many householders, particularly in the South East, in a position of negative equity, adding to recessionary pressures.

A.3 As a result of the recession, retail sales overall showed little or no growth, and demand for high street shop units fell. Between 1989 and 1992, only minimal growth in retail sales took place. Unfortunately, the recession coincided with the opening of a number of new shopping centre developments across the country, which had been conceived in the ‘boom’ years. The result was difficulty in letting such new developments and keeping them occupied, and persistently high levels of vacancy.

A.4 In 1993 consumer retail expenditure per head for comparison goods increased by 3.1% in real terms, although it remains to be seen if this trend will be sustained. Overall, recent growth in national retail sales has not been strong. Consequently, on a national scale, there is still only limited demand for major new town centre retail developments; and these will be mainly in towns which have not had such developments during the late 1980s.

A.5 Against this background, some retail sectors, e.g. electrical goods, have experienced relatively higher growth rates, fuelling continued expansion plans. However, the rise of new retail formats and expansion of some key sectors has in many cases gone hand in hand with a growing preference by retailers for non-town centre locations. Nationally, a higher proportion of new retail development now takes place outside established town centres than in them.

A.6 There is also a process of concentration by new retailers in selected key retail locations, usually major regional or sub-regional town and city centres; or regional shopping centres/large retail parks serving a sub-regional catchment.

A.7 Finally, the recent large scale collapses seen amongst national retailing groups raise further concerns at the strength of some high street retailers. The vacancies created by the closure of Athena and Rumbelows stores across the country, in addition to the threat facing some other well known names, are of concern, particularly in the weaker centres. It is significant that the decline of some high street formats has coincided with continued growth in expenditure in other categories and the rapid expansion of out of centre formats, suggesting that the latter may be a contributory factor to the problems of some high street retailers.

Retail Trends

i) Food and Convenience Goods Retailing

A.8 The success of non-central food superstores has until recently increased the level of development activity within this sector of the market. To date, food retailers have withstood the effects of the recession better than non-food retailers, and are still actively pursuing new development opportunities; although the major food superstore operators, in particular, have recently reviewed their expansion plans.

A.9 In addition to developing new food superstores, retailers are continually reviewing their trading format in order to improve their attractiveness. Consequently, the character of food retailing continues to evolve, with retailers introducing new product ranges, competitive prices and improved facilities e.g. longer weekday opening hours, Sunday opening, etc. More recently, food retailers have demonstrated greater flexibility in their store requirements, and have developed a wider range of trading formats. Examples include Tesco Compact and Metro stores and Sainsbury Country Stores, which may provide more opportunities for integrated town centre and edge of centre development in accordance with the recommendations of PPG6.

A.10 Another growing trend is the provision of food stores at petrol filling stations. Both oil companies and retailers such as Tesco (Express), appear likely to increasingly exploit this market, thus fulfilling a comparable role to that of the traditional ‘corner
shop' and small neighbourhood supermarket. This has increased the competitive pressures on food and convenience goods shops in the smaller centres such as Kidlington.

A.11 Due to the high level of food superstore openings in recent years, many areas are well provided for, and some parts of the country may now face further pressure from operators for full range superstores. However, the market nationally for such development is not yet regarded as saturated, and in those areas which have seen little or no new development to date, retailers will continue to exploit those opportunities which remain, in order to increase their UK market share. In areas which are well served by large stores, there may still be opportunities for development of new trading formats to fill current gaps in provision.

ii) Food Discounters

A.12 The last two to three years has seen heightened interest in discount food retailing. Competition between discount retailers has been increased by the arrival of foreign discounters such as Aldi, Netto and Lidl. These 'deep discounters' offer a range of heavily discounted and often unbranded products. Others, such as Kwiksave, offer a wider range of popular brand products with secondary brands matching those of competitive discounters. Kwiksave has recently been the fastest growing multiple food retailer in Britain, and plans to open around 80 new stores per annum over the next three years. Its sales have trebled since 1987, while Sainsbury and Tesco have both approximately doubled sales. Typical new discount food supermarkets are about 1,500 sq m gross and are increasingly being developed as free standing, often non-central stores, with their own surface car parks. It is interesting to note that Kwiksave has targeted Bicester and Kidlington as centres where it has a requirement and has recently received planning consent for a store in Banbury.

A.13 In response to this trend and the recent recession, many of the leading food store operators have launched their own discount fascias to avoid losing potential market share. Gateway has converted some of its larger stores to Food Giant format, and some of its smaller ones to the Solo format as with Bicester. The Co-Op operates Pioneer and Discount Giant stores, and has recently purchased the LoCost fascia from Argill. Asda has launched its Dolos format. Such discount operations reflect the awareness amongst the national food store operators of the effects of discount food retailing.

A.14 The development of smaller store formats by the main superstore operators reflects their intention to extend their representation to smaller catchments, and their response to the more restrictive national planning policies towards out of centre superstores set out in PPG6 (revised). In contrast, the discount retailers have in the past largely concentrated on central and edge of centre locations; although there is a clear trend amongst some discounters to seek out of centre locations, sometimes near established food superstores, to compete more directly for car-borne trade.

A.15 While there continues to be strong demand nationally from discount food operators, there are concerns that the level of new store development in some cases is unlikely to be sustainable; and that as a consequence of strong price competition, the number of operators in the market at present may not be sustainable in the long term, for example, one operator, Eds, has recently ceased trading.

iii) Bulky Durable Goods

A.16 The development of retail warehouses in non-central locations has provided a convenient alternative to traditional outlets for shoppers seeking bulky durable goods e.g. DIY goods, carpets, furniture, large electrical items, auto parts etc. As a result of relatively low construction, start-up and running costs, and the ability to stock goods in bulk, such retailers are able to offer goods at competitive prices. This form of retailing also has the advantage of easy accessibility by car and free car parking facilities.

A.17 The success of this traditional retail warehouse sector has been linked to the fortunes of the housing market. Consequently, the early 1990s saw a reduction in the growth in retail warehouse development. However, there are now signs of renewed and strong interest in retail warehouse park developments. Some interest relates to the relocation from poorly located, outmoded single store units to more accessible, planned retail parks. Other interest stems from the pressure to widen the range of goods sold outside town centres, to include toys, stationery and office supplies, sports and outdoor goods, shoes, fashion goods and pet requisites, etc. Examples include PC World, Olympus Outdoor World, Childrens World, Shoe City and Office World.

A.18 As a result of the 'critical mass' and market demand created by successful bulky goods retail warehouses, there has been an increase in demand from recognised high street retailers who wish to gain a presence in these retail parks as they become established shopping locations. A number
of retailers operate both town centre and out of centre formats, selling comparable ranges in each location; examples include M&S, Alders (Alders at Home) and Co-Op (Homeworld). This illustrates the growing overlap between ‘town centre’ and out of centre formats and has caused concerns that such development may prejudice the chances for attracting these types of retailer into town centre developments.

iv) Discount Clubs

A.19 In addition to ‘conventional’ retail warehousing, discount clubs have recently established outlets in the UK — notably Costco at Thurrock and Watford. Discount Club retailing, which originated in the USA, involves the sale of discounted goods, principally food, to members of a club, usually excluding the general public. The emphasis is on price rather than packaging, and operators offer an extensive breadth, but only limited depth of range.

A.20 The recent acquisition of Cargo Club by Sainsbury reflects this group’s trading difficulties, and suggests that the market nationally for the discount club concept in the UK is more limited than some analysts originally forecast. Moreover, by catering almost exclusively for car home shoppers, serving a very extensive catchment, these developments are likely to be confined to the major conurbations. An exception is Matalan, which sells clothing, footwear and household goods, and is targeting smaller towns.

v) Factory Outlets

A.21 As Cherwell District Council is well aware, due to the recent opening of Bicester Village, the other major new retail format to emerge in recent years is the factory outlet centre (FOC), which also originated in the USA. These involve the sale by manufacturers of goods (often seconds, last year's stock, slightly damaged goods or manufacturers overruns) direct to the public at discounted prices. The format has also been used to test new product lines. FOCs require large surface level car parks and extensive catchment areas; but unlike other forms of out of town comparison goods shopping, do not require a conventional anchor store. Bicester Village is a typical example of a FOC.

A.22 Factory outlet centres have attracted some controversy, and in a number of cases have been vigorously opposed by local authorities and investors in nearby town centres. The principal concern has been at the direct impact of the sale of quality comparison goods such as clothing, china and glassware, and footwear; which are traditionally the mainstay of larger town centres since the sale of convenience goods and bulky durable goods has become well established in retail parks. In addition, the dependence on car trade, drawn over very long distances, raises issues as to the sustainability of this concept in terms of the guidance in PPG13, considered later. We comment in more detail on the impact of Bicester Village on Bicester town centre in section 3 and also consider the implications of any further expansion of the scheme.

Implications for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington

A.23 The comments and trends outlined above set out the general retail situation across the country. Clearly, the three centres of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington have distinctly different roles to fulfil within the retail hierarchy due to the catchment areas they serve and proximity to competing centres. The above comments are therefore intended to present a general overview and do not necessarily relate to each of the centres. We comment in more detail on the role and potential of each centre in the commercial overview sections of this report, but set out below our general observations on the implications of these national trends for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

A.24 The slow down in retail development and general oversupply of retail floorspace resulting from the 1980's 'boom' mean that developers and investors are, and will remain for some time, cautious about new town centre retail development. For the foreseeable future, town centre retail development will be focused firstly on the larger and more attractive town centres which can provide a greater 'critical mass' of attractions for mobile shoppers, and secondly towns where little new large scale development has taken place, such an example being the proposed Castle Centre extension in Banbury. Consequently, the prospects for town centre retail development in the centres of Bicester and Kidlington are limited due to their size and low level of demand from retailers. It is more appropriate for development in these centres to be undertaken on a piecemeal basis when opportunities arise and according to demand.

A.25 The development of food superstores, and more recently smaller formats for country towns has meant that food shopping has become increasingly located on highly accessible sites which have (sometimes overlapping) town wide catchment areas. Thus for food shopping in particular, hierarchical patterns have substantially broken down. The centres which have suffered most have
been district shopping centres, however,
Kidlington and Bicester have retained town centre
food retailing facilities despite the nearby food
superstores. Indeed, as mentioned above,
Kwiksave has indicated that it has a requirement
for a store in Kidlington despite the out of town
presence and existing village centre Tesco and Co-
Op. In contrast, the closure of the town centre
Sainsbury in Banbury was due to the opening of its
out of town store, although we understand that
Sainsbury may now wish to re-acquire a town
centre presence in accordance with current
trends.

A.26 The survival of many district centres, such as
Kidlington, has been assisted by the growth in
service business such as personal and professional
services, financial services, and also by an
increasing number of restaurants, cafes and hot
food takeaways. Such service businesses are
important to the vitality and viability of smaller
centres by providing a service, therefore acting as
a draw to the immediate catchment area, and also
because of their attraction to passing trade. It is
therefore vital that in centres such as Kidlington
opportunities for attracting passing trade are
maximised to ensure their long-term vitality and
viability.
Hillier Parker Retail Planning Information System (RPIS) Commentary

B.1 The Hillier Parker Retail Planning Information System (RPIS) is closely based on the PPG6 tests for vitality and viability. It is designed for regular updated and can be used as a basis for assessing the retail strength of each town centre, setting targets and monitoring future performance. Its principal use is therefore as a monitoring tool that can assist in measuring the impact of any retail strategy introduced.

B.2 The RPIS system collects and presents data on the following variables:
- Prime shop rents
- Prime retail yields
- Retailer representation and profile
- Retailer demand
- Shop vacancy
- Modern retail development

B.3 The information for Banbury and Bicester is represented numerically and graphically. It has been possible to supply the information for Kidlington as the centre is too small to be included in the research figures produced by us and by the Focus Property Database from which the RPIS is compiled.

B.4 We set out below a brief commentary on each of the indicators detailed above for Banbury and Bicester.

Prime Retail Rents

B.5 The rents which retailers are prepared to pay for prime retail space in a centre are an indication of the perceived strength of that centre.

B.6 It can be seen from Graph 1 that for Bicester, prime Zone A retail rents have remained at fairly consistent level since May 1991. Zone A rental levels in Banbury have been subject to fluctuations from a level of £565 per sq m (£52.50 per sq ft) in May 1991 to a peak of £592 per sq m (£55 per sq ft) in November 1992 to a current level of £511 per sq m (£47.50 per sq ft).

B.7 To enable a comparison with the Hillier Parker National All Shops Index, and South East Regional Index, we have converted the rental values of Banbury and Bicester to an index using the May 1991 values as the base point. This is shown in Graph 2. It is clear that Bicester has performed markedly better than the All Shops Index, whilst Banbury has fluctuated but is currently underperforming. Both towns have performed better than the South East Index, although Banbury has followed the general downward trend since November 1992. It can also be seen that Bicester is currently experiencing an upward movement in rental levels contrary to the other indices shown. This may be explained by the fact that Bicester Village opened earlier this year and may have had a positive effect on retailers' perceptions of the town, and the rental levels they are prepared to pay. It may also reflect the perceived benefits of pedestrianisation of Sheep Street, although existing retailers in the town have reservations regarding its success. It should also be noted that until May 1994 the Bicester and Banbury indices show a similar pattern, both experiencing a peak in May 1993 contrary to the All Shops and South East Indices.

B.8 The South East Regional Index underperformed compared to the All Shops Index as measured from the base point in May 1991 although it has followed the general trend. It is interesting to note that both towns have performed better than the South East Index since May 1992 showing the relative strength of these towns compared to a large number of south east towns which have been more severely affected by the recession than other areas of the country.

Prime Retail Yields

B.9 The yield on a property investment represents the return (in the form of rent) on capital to an investor. A yield is usually expressed as a percentage, and can be compared with the returns on other investments. As property investments do not normally produce a fixed income (i.e. rents are reviewed according to the terms of the property's lease), the greater the prospect of future rental growth, the lower the initial yield which an investor would be prepared to accept. Yields are therefore a useful indicator of expectations of rental growth and thus of general economic prospects for a town centre, and are recognised as such in PPG6.

B.10 Yields on property investments are also linked to yields on alternative investments (such as equities and gilts); and are therefore influenced by the performance of the economy as a whole. In particular, they are influenced by national monetary policies. Thus when interest rates nationally are high, property investment yields are higher than when interest rates are low. Graph 3 illustrates this phenomenon, and show how yields in both towns and in the south east generally and nationwide, fell markedly from the autumn of 1993 (when Britain left the ERM and base rate was substantially cut), but are now rising following the rise in base rate at the
beginning of the year. What is particularly relevant therefore are the differences between the trends in each town and the national and regional trends, rather than the absolute levels of yield in any town at any time. Such differences enable local investment factors to be distinguished from the national macroeconomic and monetary trends referred to.

B.11 As can be seen from Graph 3, both Banbury and Bicester, as well as the All Shops and South East Regional Indices have followed a broadly similar pattern, due to the national trends outlined above. There are however, a number of differences worth mentioning. First, Banbury and the South East Region started in May 1991 at virtually the same level (7.00% and 6.90% respectively), but by May 1995, Banbury’s yield was 0.61% higher than the average for the region. Expectations of rental growth in Banbury are therefore marginally lower than for the region as a whole. Second, In Banbury, the yield differential between Banbury (7.00%) and The All Shop Index (7.70%) was 0.70%, but in May 1995 both showed 6.50%, indicating that in relative terms, expectations of rental growth in Banbury are now no greater than the national average, although there is now a higher expectation of growth generally. Third, In Banbury, the rise in yields between May 1994 and May 1995 (5.35% to 6.50%) was more pronounced than in the All Shop Index (5.90% to 6.50%), and the South East Index (5.3% to 5.9%). Again, this indicates that in May 1994 Banbury was viewed as a more attractive location for investment in retail property than currently, which could be attributed to the uncertainty surrounding the proposed Castle Centre extension.

B.12 With regard to Bicester, it can be seen that until May 1993 the town matched the average yield for All Shops but since then there has been a differential of 0.85% in May 1994 and 0.50% in May 1995, indicating that expectations of rental growth in Bicester are lower than for the country generally. Furthermore, when compared to the South East Region Index there has always been a lower expectation of rental growth in Bicester than in the region as a whole and the differential in yields has increased since May 1993. This contradicts the indications of rental growth that we discussed at paragraph B.7. It may be that investors are more cautious than retailers at the potential threat of competition that the scheme poses to the town centre, but our opinion is that it is too soon after the opening of the scheme to draw any firm conclusions from these indicators.

Hillier Parker Classification of Shopping Centres

B.13 This information is derived from the Hillier Parker publication: Shopping Centres of Great Britain, A New Classification (1989) and is shown as Indicator 4 in the RPIS proformas. This ranks 694 towns in terms of the number of multiple retailers present in the town, based on a sample of 100 multiple retailers. 1989 is the most recent date for which nationwide comparative data is available although up to date figures are currently being prepared.

B.14 The trend up to 1989 has been for Banbury and Bicester to improve their relative positions. In 1984 Banbury was ranked 143, whereas by 1989 it had improved its position to 133 and Bicester had moved from 487 to 349 in the same period.

Retailer Demand - Focus Database

B.15 The information recorded on the RPIS proformas (Indicators 6 and 7), is derived from the Focus Database and shows the number of retailers with a requirement in the town, and the town’s national ranking by retailer demand out of a total of 616 towns. The larger the number of retailers seeking space in the town, the higher that town’s position in the national ranking. (Shown on Graph 4.)

B.16 Retailer demand levels in Banbury have remained fairly consistent from August 1992 to July 1995, although the town has slipped in the rank order from 133 in August 1992 to 172 in July 1995.

B.17 Likewise, Bicester has also maintained a consistent pattern of retailer demand throughout this period, although it increased in July 1995. Its ranking has increased from 427 in August 1992 to 334 in July 1995.

B.18 We have also included within the RPIS proformas a current update of retailer demand for each of the two centres, and this information has been broken down into occupier categories (convenience, comparison and services) and area requirements. This information is shown as Indicators 8 and 9 on the RPIS proformas and is also derived from the Focus database. For this purpose, we have concentrated on the retailer demand for space within the town centre and have therefore excluded any out of town retail demand.

Shop Vacancy

B.19 Although an important measure of a town’s vitality and viability, shop vacancies can occur even in the strongest town centres and it is therefore important to distinguish between vacancies in the prime retail
area and those in more secondary and tertiary retail areas. Shop vacancy rates are shown in Indicator 70. The figures are derived from the Coad Summary Report and include properties under construction as well as vacant units. For Banbury the latest data is from January 1995, and for Bicester from February 1995.

B.20 In Banbury the amount of vacant floorspace as at January 1995 represented 19.9% of the total floorspace in the town, compared to the national average of 11%. However, in terms of the number of vacant units compared to the total number of units in the town, 13.9% are vacant, which compares more favourably to the national average of 13.7%. In terms of amount of vacant floorspace, clearly the former Sainsburys and Do It All units have a significant impact on this figure.

B.21 There is a relatively low level of vacancy in the prime retail area situated along the pedestrianised section of High Street and within the Castle Centre. Generally, the vacant units appear to spread around the town but with no area having a higher level of vacancy than another. An exception to this are the two blocks of buildings fronting Bridge Street between its junction with Cherwell Street and Castle Street, but this is due to the proposed incorporation of this area within the Castle Centre extension.

B.22 In Bicester the amount of vacant floorspace as at February 1995 represented only 5% of the total available in the town. This compares well to the national average of 11%. In terms of the number of vacant units, the vacancy level is 9.5% of the total units in the town, again comparing well to the national average of 13.7%.

B.23 As with Banbury, there is a low level of vacancy within the prime retail pitch along the pedestrianised section of Sheep Street and within Crown Walk. Whilst the overall vacancy level for the town is low, this appears to be largely concentrated along Causeway, which creates a "run-down" image to visitors entering the town at this point. (A number of these units may have become vacant since February 1995 and may not therefore be reflected in the overall vacancy figures.)

Retailer Profile

B.24 Indicator 11 on the RPIS pro formas shows the retailer profile for each town as a percentage of the local number of units and as a percentage of the total floorspace in each town. There are three main categories of retailer shown: convenience, comparison and service. The proportions of each of these categories in terms of number of shops and floorspace for each town is similar to the national average and we feel is appropriate, given the role of each town.

Conclusions

B.25 The RPIS indicators show that both Banbury and Bicester are relatively strong retail centres, given their size and their role in the retail hierarchy. Rental levels, yields, vacancy levels and retailer demand have remained fairly constant over the past few years.

B.26 There appears to be some concern, particularly from investors, regarding the impact of the proposed Castle Centre extension in Banbury on High Street retailing, which is currently adversely affecting yields in the town. It is therefore important that a comprehensive strategy is developed for the town to regain investor confidence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Hillier Parker Retail Planning Information System</th>
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<td>6. Retailer Demand (No. of retailers)</td>
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| TABLE 2 | Hillier Parker Retail Planning Information System | Town Centre: BANBURY | Date: NOVEMBER 1995 |

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<td>5. Total No. of Residents in Focus Area (out of 100), by Population Group</td>
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<td>6789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Area Requirements - Maximum</td>
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List of Retailers Contacted

Clinton Cards plc
Early Learning Centre Ltd
Boots Properties plc
John Menzies plc
Littlewoods Organisation
Sketchley Ltd
Waterstones Booksellers Ltd
Dolland & Aitchison (Property) Ltd
Milward & Sons Ltd
Stead & Simpson Ltd
Blockbuster UK Group Ltd
Halfords Limited
Sears Retail Properties Ltd
Salisbury Handbags
Adams Childrenswear
Fosters Menswear Ltd
Millets Camping & Countrywear
Mothercare Ltd
Burger King (UK) Ltd
Kentucky Fried Chicken (GB) Ltd
Pizza Hut (UK) Limited
Pizzaland International Ltd
Burton Group plc
Country Casuals plc
Jaeger
Laura Ashley Limited
Next Retail Ltd
Lloyds Chemist Group
Superdrug Stores plc
The Body Shop International plc
Forbury's Ltd
W H Smith & Son Limited
Lloyds Supasave Drugstores Ltd
C&J Clark
F W Woolworth
Argos Distributors Ltd
Comet Group plc
Dixons Stores Group
Aldi GmbH & Co KG
Budgen Limited
Co-operative Retail Services Ltd
Gateway Foodmarkets Ltd
John Lewis Partnerships plc
J Sainsbury plc
Kwiksave Group plc
Netto Foodstores Ltd
Safeway Stores plc
Tesco Stores Ltd
Iceland Frozen Foods plc
McDonald's Restaurants Limited
Historical Collections Group plc
### COMPARISON OF HILLIER PARKER AND FOCUS DEMAND - BANBURY

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<td>Partners</td>
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<td>Shoe Express</td>
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<td>Tins</td>
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<td>The Works</td>
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<td>Vixella</td>
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### COMPARISON OF HILLIER PARKER AND FOCUS DEMAND - BICESTER

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speasavets</td>
<td>93 - 232</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>609 - 1,578</td>
<td>Total:</td>
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### CONVENIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPARISON</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>HILLIER PARKER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size Requirement (sq m)</td>
<td>Size Requirement (sq m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland &amp; Barrett</td>
<td>112 - 186</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knik</td>
<td>743 - 2,787</td>
<td>1,263</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>855 - 2,973</td>
<td>Total:</td>
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</table>

### SERVICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPARISON</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>HILLIER PARKER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size Requirement (sq m)</td>
<td>Size Requirement (sq m)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSS Hire Shops</td>
<td>279 - 836</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald's</td>
<td>186 - 232</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pizzalando</td>
<td>93 - 186</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Stitch</td>
<td>19 - 70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>577 - 1,324</td>
<td>Total:</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Ed's has ceased trading and therefore its requirement has been excluded from the total figure.*
Workshops and Survey

An urban design workshop was held in each of the three centres and attended by representatives of local interest groups. The conclusions from these workshops are recorded below. Findings were summarised and incorporated in a questionnaire which was mailed to attendees and other interested parties. The level of support or opposition for ideas emerging from the workshops is shown by the graphs recording the questionnaire results.

BANBURY URBAN DESIGN WORKSHOP
6TH NOVEMBER 1995

OUTCOMES

ANALYSIS:

Strengths
- Quality of individual buildings/architecture;
- Attractive town centre;
- Attractive streets;
- Attractive building materials;
- Place in the national consciousness;
- Gateway via the M40 to other areas;
- Mixed economy including, for example, the Cattle Market.

Weaknesses
- Domination of private transport;
- Access by road, rail and bus provides a very negative first impression of the town and subsequent pedestrian access is poor e.g., the walk from the railway station;
- Poor physical condition of some buildings;
- Under-utilised areas such as some industrialised areas and multi-storey car parks;
- Church Lane is suffering from a general malaise maybe due to too high rents;
- Concern about the Lanes due to night closure, lack of surveillance and the presence of high rents;
- Parsons Street has a ‘leftover’ feel;
- Wheatsheaf, George Street, Parsons Street and the Bus Station all feel unsafe at night;
- White Lion Walk/Church Walk under-utilised and unlit area where the youth hangs out.

Opportunities
- To establish a special identity for Banbury served by a town centre where people actually live;
- Raglan Development may be a boost to the town;
- Raglan Development may lead to an improvement in town facilities;
- New national cycle route which passes through Banbury.

Threats
- Polarisation of activity away from Horse Fair area due to the Raglan Development;
- Not taking a radical enough strategy through inaction and apathy on behalf of the population;
- Sanitisation of the public realm by large developments.

ACTION:

Town form
1. Make planning improvements to encourage traditional movement patterns from Banbury Cross to balance Raglan Development;
2. Create three poles of activity (Raglan Development, Do It All Centre Site and Sainsburys Site);
5. Pedestrianise the whole area bounded by the triangle with the nodes a. Market Square, b. North Bar and c. Horsefair/South Bar;
6. Ensure each node (a. Market Square, b. North Bar and c. Horsefair/South Bar) is considered equally in terms of development e.g., North Bar needs more weight placed on it to counteract the Raglan Development;
7. Give gateways into the town such as North Bar, Middleton Road and Oxford Road thematic treatments.

Vitality

General:
8. Create a database of rents and ownership which could stimulate development activity;
9. Close historic centre to traffic on market days;
10. Provide better access for disabled and vulnerable members of the community;
11. Provide alternative uses for older buildings;
12. Develop small scale, on-street leisure facilities e.g., cafe society;
13. Encourage small pockets of car parking throughout the town rather than concentrating car parking in large areas;
14. Increase the mix of uses throughout the triangle: (b. Market Square, b. North Bar and c. Horsefair/...
15. Encourage an improved mix of uses to increase the use of the town centre by a broader age group.
16. Open up facilities in the town for the use of everyone.
17. Provide for the under-18 market e.g. a bowling alley.
18. Promote night time activities through the Town Centre Management (TCM) concept.
19. Maintain access to public streets and spaces at night e.g. White Lion Walk.
21. Redevelop Cherwell Street as a mixed use area including a residential component.
22. Develop the Brewery Site on Bridge Street as a civic function in order that usage of the southside of the Raglan Development is encouraged.
23. Provide Bolton Street and the car park with a face lift, recognising that this is an important entrance into town.
24. Provide private enterprise in the White Lion Walk/Church Walk area.
25. Provide a good quality food store in the town centre for daily provision e.g. TESCO Metro.
26. Apply to the Lottery Fund to convert St. Mary's Church into a concert hall.

**South Bar**
27. Market Banbury pro-actively (as opposed to marketing the countryside only);
28. Exploit Banbury's unique selling points i.e. its natural and historic resources should be exploited as well as its retail attractions;
29. Enhance the image of Banbury through identity and substance;
30. Create an investment strategy to get the town what it wants;
31. Maintain and encourage a strong presence of small independent traders.
32. Provide a youth facility in the town centre linked to a strategy for the youth market;
33. Provide facilities for visitors e.g. toilets.

**Accessibility**
34. Provide a network of cycle routes linking through to the new national cycle route and extending through Peoples Park and Spiceball etc;
35. Apply to the Millenium Fund to provide a 'greenway' approach into the town through North Bar and South Bar.

**Public transport**
36. Provide an integrated public transport strategy;
37. Provide electric buses;
38. Improve the image of taxis and buses;
39. Position Bus Station close to its present location at the centre of town;
40. Relocate Railway Station to the North of Middleton Road, closer to the road than it is at present (closer proximity of rail and bus stations should facilitate better passenger interchange);
41. Provide a town transit system along the triangle (a.

**Market Square, b. North Bar and c. Horsetail/South Bar**
42. Integrate a waterfront use with this transport concept.

**Private transport/car**
43. Provide Park and Ride facilities from the out of town shopping centres down North and South Bar.
45. Provide a of less confused traffic flow at Marlborough Road, Calthorpe Street and High Street.

**Safety**
46. Improve street lighting in the Market Square;
47. Provide more lighting in the Church Walk area;
48. Provide lighting to footpaths along North and South Bar;
49. Provide longer shop opening hours;
50. Provide more police foot patrols;
51. Provide more housing in the town centre;
52. Move away from CCTV as it compounds safety problems, making an area feel more unsafe;
53. Provide traffic calming of the chicane variety rather than bumps.

**Partnership**
54. Appoint a Town Centre Manager through Cherwell District Council;
55. Establish representative committees for interest groups to participate in town centre issues;
56. Create a Town Council;
57. Use the Town Hall for discussion of town centre issues etc.
BICESTER URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY
7TH NOVEMBER 1995
SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

ANALYSIS:

Strengths
- Good access to surrounding towns;
- Good access to London, Birmingham, Milton Keynes etc;
- Good rail and motorway links;
- Strong convenient centre for local people;
- Character as a market town remains;
- Historic core and unique architectural character;
- Good stock of old buildings/streetscape;
- Good local variety of shops;
- Good selection of residential/business tenure;
- Residential accommodation relatively cheap;
- Good local skills base;
- Experiencing an upswing at present;
- Cosmopolitan.

Weaknesses
General:
- Internal traffic problems especially since the development of Bicester Village;
- Insufficient attractions in Bicester itself to attract people visiting Bicester Village;
- Poor frontage to shops;
- Poor layout of street furniture;
- Dereliction and weeds caused by lack of maintenance;
- Influx of new residences diluting character of town;
- Newcomers poorly integrated into the town;
- Poor communication with the Local Authority;
- Town decentralised in terms of its Civic presence;
- No identifiable centre since the town centre has shifted from the Causeway;
- No night time activity as the town is uninviting in the evening;
- Lack of facilities in the evening to keep people in the area for legitimate reasons;
- Aggressive atmosphere in the evenings;
- Lack of stores;
- Lack of services;
- Shut on Sundays!
- Poor image.

Specific:
- Garth Park is under-utilised;
- Traffic congestion particularly on Pingle Drive;
- Pedestrianisation of Sheep Street which has led to a drop in business;
- Empty buildings and associated hoardings, particularly in the Causeway.

Opportunities
- Shopping centre is viable but needs building upon;
- Potential benefits from the Bicester Village development;
- Completion of ring road would reduce the amount of traffic congestion in the town centre;
- Re-routing of the A421 would take the traffic pressure off the Banbury Road.

Threats
- Bicester has traditionally been a soft target in terms of limited planning restraint which may in the future lead to even more being squeezed out of Bicester as a market town;
- Loss of character as more new estates are tacked onto Bicester.

ACTION:

Town form
1. Incorporate Market Square into pedestrianisation scheme.
2. Preserve and enhance the character of the town centre as a market town;
3. Make use of accommodation above shops;
4. Creation of interpretation centre and historical trail;
5. Provide a centrally placed, multi-purpose civic building containing such things as a museum, information centre, cinema and theatre;
6. Improve layout of street furniture to form inviting clusters rather than lines;
7. Produce design guidance for use by retailers e.g. colour schemes, treatment of finishes and signs;
8. Protect the character of buildings;
9. Increase the diversity and quality of the goods on the market;
10. Encourage street entertainment in the Market Square;
11. Encourage small shops and cafes;
12. Provide landscaping on the three key entrances into Bicester;
13. Replace trees recently lost on the approach to the town centre.
14. Provide a more intimate level of street lighting rather than a wash of light.
16. Provide a Civic function in the old Post Office.
17. Provide a Civic function close to the Library.
18. Develop an urban park on the current TESCO car park site, making use of the stream adjacent to here.

Viability
19. Develop and market a shared vision;
20. Provide signs to the 'Historic Town of Bicester' from the M40;
21. Produce an investment strategy for town centre;
22. Introduce free short term parking or residents parking to benefit town centre businesses;
23. Support local businesses;
24. Facilitate development of under-used property in town;
25. Provide a shop window for the many individuals involved in local arts and crafts in the area who currently retail elsewhere.
26. Invest in Market Square and Causeway;
27. Improve links with Bicester Village through, for example, sign-posting.

Accessibility
28. Provide access for disabled into the rear of shops (Shop Mobility Strategy);
29. Integrate Garth Park into the centre of town through ameliorating traffic obstacle caused by Laughton Road;
30. Provide tree trails as a network of paths;
31. Develop Pingle Road in tandem with an ecological strategy which would make it a park linking Bicester Village and the town centre.
32. Improve existing cycle ways;
33. Provide cycle paths leading into town from every edge;
34. Provide greater inter-change between buses and trains;
35. Provide a bus link to Bicester Village;
36. Provide a circular bus system.
37. Provide a Park and Ride scheme on a weekend between Bicester Village, Bicester and the Railway Station;
38. Improve traffic flow on Oxford Road;
39. Provide parking on the edge of town;
40. Provide parking on the Causeway.

Safety
41. Improved lighting scheme;
42. Encourage people to live in the centre and thus provide natural surveillance;
43. Encourage housing above shops with their own separate street access;
44. Develop a wide range of facilities e.g. theatres, street life;
45. Concentrate on attracting people out of shopping hours;
46. Increased use of CCTV;
47. Increased presence of police on foot patrol;
48. Careful design of landscaping to avoid concealed danger spots being created.

Partnership
52. Establish partnerships between small traders to set up a car park fee refund scheme for shoppers who use certain small stores (similar to an idea used by large superstores)
KIDDLINGTON URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY
9TH NOVEMBER 1995
SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

ANALYSIS:

Strengths
- Growth in population has led to an increase in public services and employment;
- Village has a mix of functions (residential, commercial, social) spread through supported by many clubs and associations;
- Successful twice weekly market;
- Provision of free parking;
- Strong boundaries;
- Heritage within Old Kidlington Village;
- Strong community feeling.

Weaknesses
- Growth in population has not resulted in an increase in retail provision;
- Identity crisis: is Kidlington a village, a town or a suburb?
- Proliferation of ribbon development;
- North/South divide with the south end of the town benefiting from the presence of Sainsbury's whilst the north side tends to suffer;
- Environmental and social impact caused by much road traffic but little gain from passing traders;
- Main Oxford/Banbury Road is very busy and splits the town;
- Market in second class premises with a hand to mouth existence;
- Tatty appearance of market coupled with their limited development opportunity;
- No clearly identified centre;
- Pedestrianised area has confused regulations and irregular enforcement;
- No existing Chamber of Trade/Rotary Club;
- Market on a very short lease which could result in its closure in the next couple of years.

ACTION:

Village form

Vitality

General:
1. Create an identity for the village centre concentrating on an area extending from the Banbury Road through to Tescos and incorporating Sterling Road Approach, the High Street and possibly Exeter Hall;
2. Make the village centre more coherent, modern and user friendly;
3. Provide clear coherent 'branding' to Kidlington, for example in the surface treatments and street furniture, to make the centre appear as a whole;
4. Provide sign posting to Kidlington Village centre from far away as Sainsbury's;
5. Improve the weak visual entrances into the village centre;
6. Generate an identity for Kidlington which does not rely on the proximity of the supermarket or the airport but stands by itself;
7. Provide general greening of the village; Oxford/Banbury Road;
8. Provide sign posting in a prominent position on the Oxford/Banbury Road to promote the stores in the village centre and the free car parking. This could be as a French style list of stores which would give the advertisements some coherence;
9. Improve businesses on both sides of the Oxford/Banbury Road;
10. Plant trees on the Oxford/Banbury Road to visually narrow the road;
11. Plant an avenue of trees on the Oxford/Banbury Road to emphasise the centre of the village;
12. Provide pocket parks in front of the Garage at the top of the High Street and to the Oxford/Banbury Road side of Exeter Hall;
Market and Co-op Car Park;
13. Make improvements to the market site, providing some more permanent features;
14. Provide a pocket park in the existing market place and return frontage to Sterling Road Approach by providing frontages onto the Co-op Car Park (i.e. the rear of the Library, Post Office etc.)
High Street:
15. Encourage more outdoor activities in the High Street after 6pm;
16. Create rear access to the shops on the north side of the High Street in order that the High Street may be completely closed to traffic;
17. Encourage a greater variety of specialist shops throughout the central area;
18. Move some stores from the market into the pedestrianised High Street area;

Viability

19. Secure the long term future of the market;
20. Relocate the market to the car park behind Tescos;
21. Promote Kidlington as a place for new businesses

Accessibility

22. Make it easier to find the village centre using a symbol or a landmark (i.e. something that indicates that you have arrived and is more prominent than the existing bandstand).

Pedestrian:

23. Provide pedestrian priority on the Oxford/Banbury Road through narrowing the road and providing pedestrian crossings (perhaps of the raised table variety).

Cyclist:

24. Provide cyclist priority on the Oxford/Banbury Road;

25. Provide a site for an integrated traffic exchange;

Public Transport:

26. Restrict the quantity and speed of traffic using the Oxford/Banbury Road;

27. Do not force traffic off the main Oxford/Banbury Road onto roads in the old quiet parts of Kidlington;

28. Enforce the traffic orders in the High Street i.e. stop through traffic by placing seating in the middle of the street.

Safety

29. Increase evening activity through designing out the opportunity for crime using better lighting, more CCTV and defensive design to rid the centre of unsurveilled corners;

30. Provide facilities for youth, catering for those who do not want to be regimented i.e. create 'hang outs' in areas where the presence of youths will not be seen as threatening e.g. Benmead Road;

31. Improve facilities at Exeter Hall and open them up to youngsters e.g. an informal drop-in coffee bar.

Partnerships

32. Establish a Business Club/Chamber of Trade with a strong social dimension to it;

33. Appoint a manager who does much of the leg work and acts as a catalyst for activity;

34. Ensure that the Urban Design Strategy is implemented through the Business Club;

35. Involve large organisations such as the airport in the Business Club/Chamber of Trade.
QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondents name: ____________________________
Tel: _______________________________________

We need to ascertain the level of support for each of the ideas so far generated.

Please indicate the numbers of the 10-15 ideas which you support the most.

Please indicate the numbers of the ideas which you do not support.

Are there any other comments/suggestions which you would like to make on the following issues?

- Vitality
- Viability
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Partnerships

Are there any issues which you do not feel have been addressed?

Please return this Questionnaire to Stuart Yeaman at Cherwell District Council in the pre-paid envelope provided. We would appreciate it if you could do this within the week in order that we may push ahead in developing a coherent Town Centre Strategy for Banbury. Hopefully we can then all meet up again in the near future to discuss what collectively we have proposed. If you have any further comments, feel free to either contact Roger Evans (01865 350096) or Stuart Yeaman (01295 252555, Ext 4117). If you feel that there may be other individuals or groups which would want to be included in this consultation process, please supply their name and contact number in the space below:

Tel: _______________________________________
Tel: _______________________________________

Roger Evans Associates - November 1993
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amortised</td>
<td>A building whose development finance (eg mortgage) has been paid off through income from rents etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulevard</td>
<td>A wide, often tree-lined street accommodating traffic whilst creating a pleasant environment for pedestrians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour palettes</td>
<td>A range of colours used to guide the choice of materials or colours used in elevations, roofs or floorscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison goods</td>
<td>Generally manufactured items from electrical goods to clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure-ground drawing</td>
<td>Map showing built form in black and public realm (including streets) in white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perimeter blocks</td>
<td>Development which is built along the street to provide a public frontage and private or service backs (of large buildings set in the midst of car parking).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permeability</td>
<td>The ease with which parts of town can be accessed (on foot).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public realm</td>
<td>Streets, squares, parks and other public places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site brief</td>
<td>An illustrated document setting out the guiding principles for the built development of a site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streetscape</td>
<td>The usual quality of the street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viability</td>
<td>The commercial viability of a development.</td>
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<td>'Whips'</td>
<td>Young trees.</td>
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