

## Bicester – A Spatial Portrait

*Version 1 August 2009*

Bicester is the second largest town in Cherwell district, located 12 miles from Oxford, 21 miles from Banbury and 24 miles from Milton Keynes. It has excellent transport links via the A34 and the nearby M40, and has rail links from its two stations to Oxford, London Marylebone, High Wycombe and Birmingham. The town is an historic market centre which began life in Saxon times, and also has a long history of links with the military. It is now one of the fastest growing towns in Oxfordshire, with large amounts of housing development in and around the town.

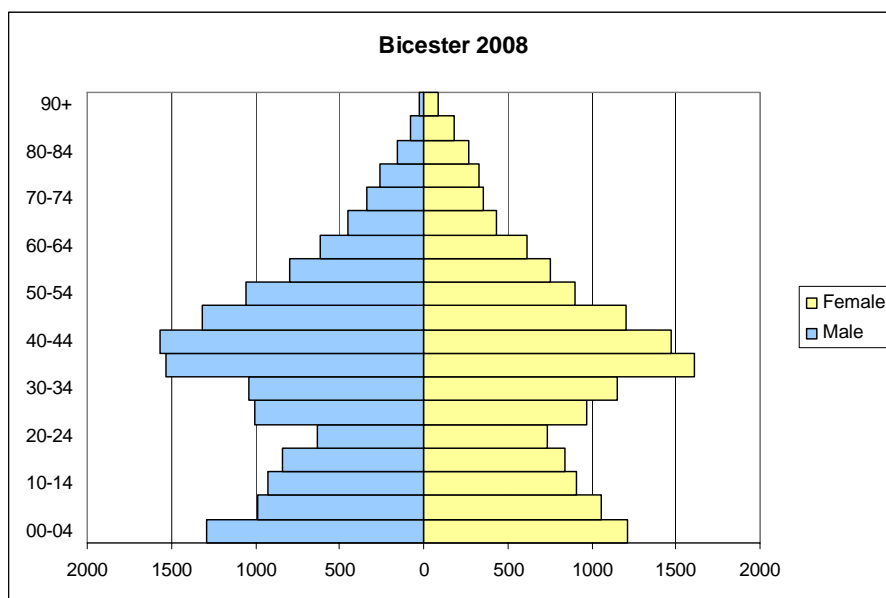
Bicester serves a rural hinterland that includes Fringford, Caversfield, the Astons & Heyfords, Launton, Ambrosden & Chesterton and Otmoor, as well as parts of rural Aylesbury Vale. This significantly rural area is bisected by the railway, M40 and A41, and includes some popular commuter villages. Bicester itself is home to an outlet shopping village which is extremely popular with visitors from all around the world. Several nearby villages have completed community plans recently, including Fencott & Murcott, Fritwell and Launton (as at August 2009).

### Population

Bicester's population is currently 28,705. It is predicted to rise to 32,620 by 2016, which will be an overall 14% increase from the 2001 census. Growth rates in the surrounding wards are variable, with very large increases in population projected in Ambrosden & Chesterton and The Astons & Heyfords but projected significant decreases in Fringford and Otmoor.

Ward	2001	2008	2016	% change 2001 - 2016
Bicester East	6,194	6,140	6,079	-2%
Bicester North	5,653	6,414	6,420	14%
Bicester South	4,366	5,206	6,257	43%
Bicester Town	4,931	4,779	6,517	32%
Bicester West	7,561	7,473	7,348	-3%
<b>Bicester total</b>	<b>28,705</b>	<b>30,012</b>	<b>32,620</b>	<b>14%</b>
Ambrosden & Chesterton	3,336	3,363	4,947	48.3%
Caversfield	2,897	2,882	2,879	-0.6%
Fringford	2,337	2,244	2,155	-7.8%
Launton	3,048	3,075	3,038	-0.3%
Otmoor	2,455	2,324	2,250	-8.4%
The Astons & Heyfords	4,711	4,682	6,006	27.5%

(Oxfordshire County Council 2008 Forecast)

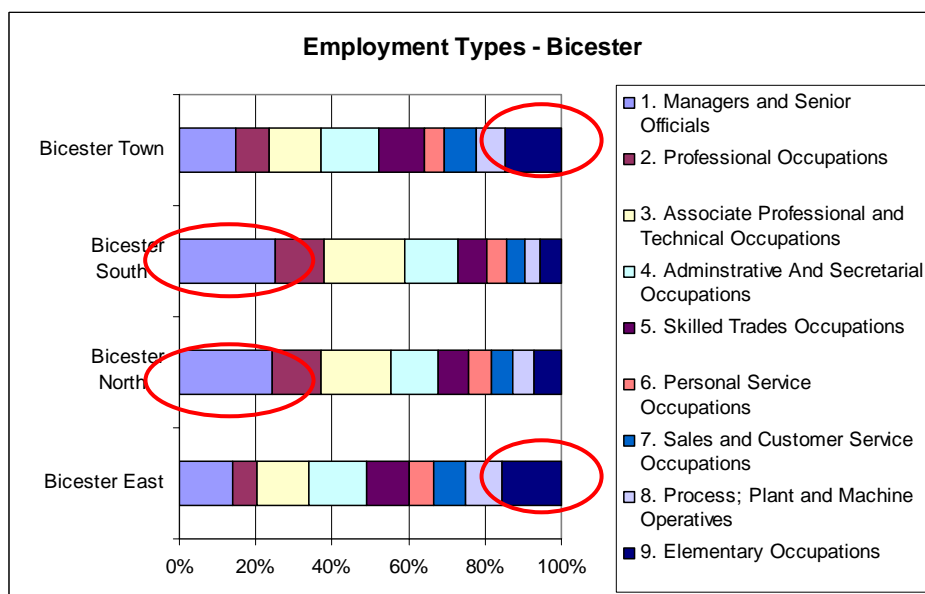


Bicester's population has a relatively high birth rate, with a small number of people in the 20 – 24 age group, more people aged from 30 – 54 and more women than men in the older age groups. This is a fairly typical population pattern for a market town that has experienced rapid growth.

In the rural areas, by contrast, there are many more older people (particularly older women), fewer people of working age and fewer young people. In common with most rural areas, Cherwell's population as a whole is projected to age significantly by 2016.

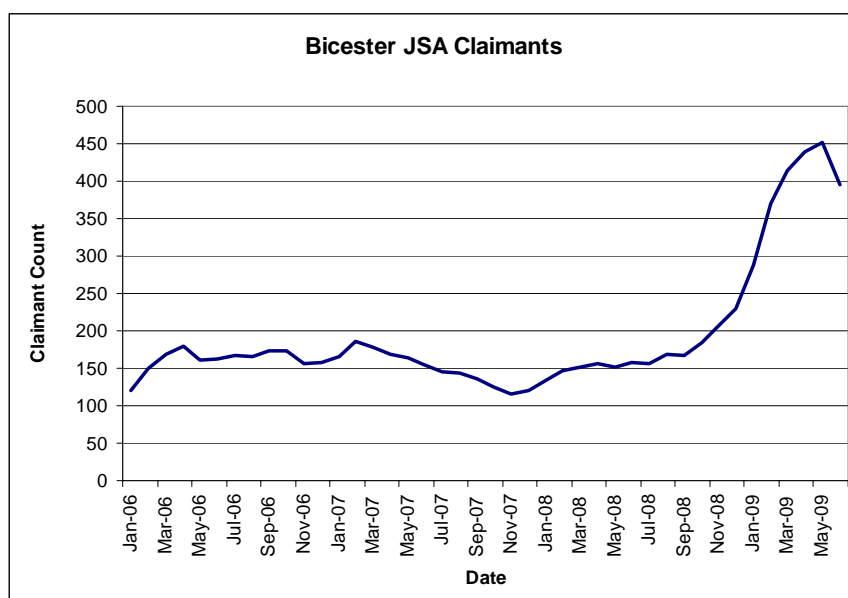
## Economy and Employment

66% of Bicester's population is working age (males aged 16 – 64 and females aged 16 – 59). Of the working age population, 87% is economically active. (NOMIS 2008). Major employers in and near the town include Tesco, the MOD Central Ordnance Depot, Fresh Direct Foods, Meta Management Services, and a variety of retailers at Bicester Village.



Bicester South and Bicester North have very high proportions of people working in management occupations, while Bicester East and Bicester Town have more people working in elementary occupations.

Bicester's rural hinterland has a high proportion of people working in management jobs (around 20% of working age people) and professional jobs (around 15%), and few people (less than 10%) working in elementary occupations. Over one third of people in Ambrosden & Chesterton work in technical occupations. (NOMIS July 2009)



Bicester has low unemployment, but rates rose due to the recession. Overall, 2% of working age people claim Job Seekers' Allowance, with the highest claimant rates in the East and West wards. This rate is significantly lower than the national average.

(NOMIS July 2009)

Claimant counts in the rural hinterland are low, at around 1.5%. The Cherwell average of 2.6% is much lower than the Great Britain average of 4.1%. (NOMIS July 2009)

## Education and Skills

GCSE results at Bicester's schools have improved slightly in recent years but are still lower than the England average. At the Cooper School 40% of pupils achieve a level 2 qualification (5 or more GCSEs at A\*-C inc. maths and English). At Bicester Community College 43% achieve this. (DCSF 2008 results).

Qualification levels in the rural wards vary from around 21% of people with no qualifications in Ambrosden & Chesterton to almost 40% of people with no qualifications in Launton. 27% of Bicester's residents have no qualifications, however there is a lot of variation, with only 12% in Bicester South compared with almost 40% in Bicester Town. The England average is 36%. (NOMIS 2009 from 2001 Census)

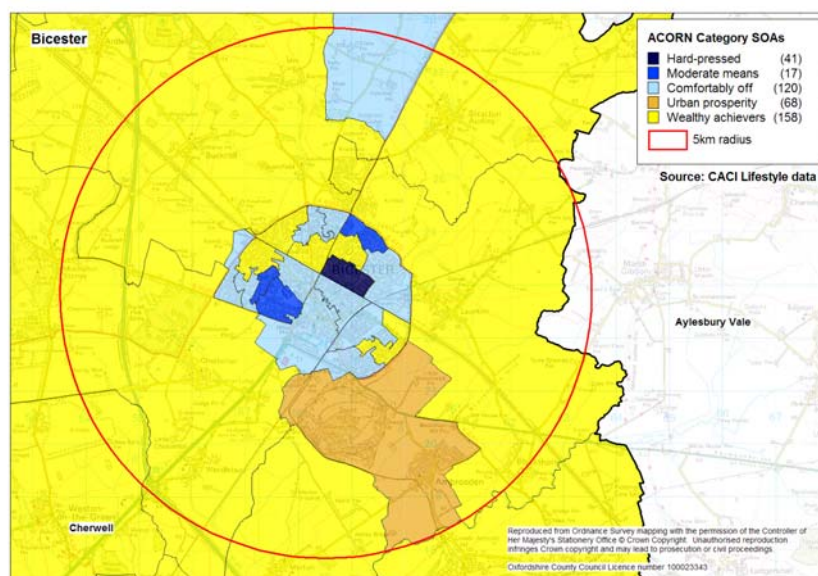
## Housing

79% of housing is owner occupied – this is higher than the Oxfordshire average of 70%. 11% is social rented, and 8% is privately rented. Over 85% of housing in falls into Council Tax bands A-D. 30% of properties are detached, 29% are semi-detached, 35% are terraced and 7% are flats. (OCSI 2006 from VOA and census 2001)

Like most of Oxfordshire, Bicester experienced a growth in property prices from 1997 onwards, with prices reaching a peak around 2007/8. However the current economic climate means that prices and sales have slowed down. The median house price in Bicester (May 2009) is £179,062, which is around 5 times the median income. (Land Registry from UpMyStreet.com)

<b>Median selling price for all properties</b>	<b>May 2006</b>	<b>May 2007</b>	<b>May 2008</b>	<b>May 2009</b>
Bicester	£179,250	£190,231	£235,000	£179,062
Oxfordshire	£220,581	£243,381	£247,901	£212,872

## Lifestyle and Health



CACI ACORN is a commercial dataset which classifies areas into five broad categories. Much of rural Cherwell, including Bicester's hinterland, is classified as 'wealthy achievers', however in common with many urban areas, Bicester has a mixture of lifestyle types. One area of Bicester Town is classified as 'hard pressed'.

(CACI ACORN 2008<sup>2</sup>)

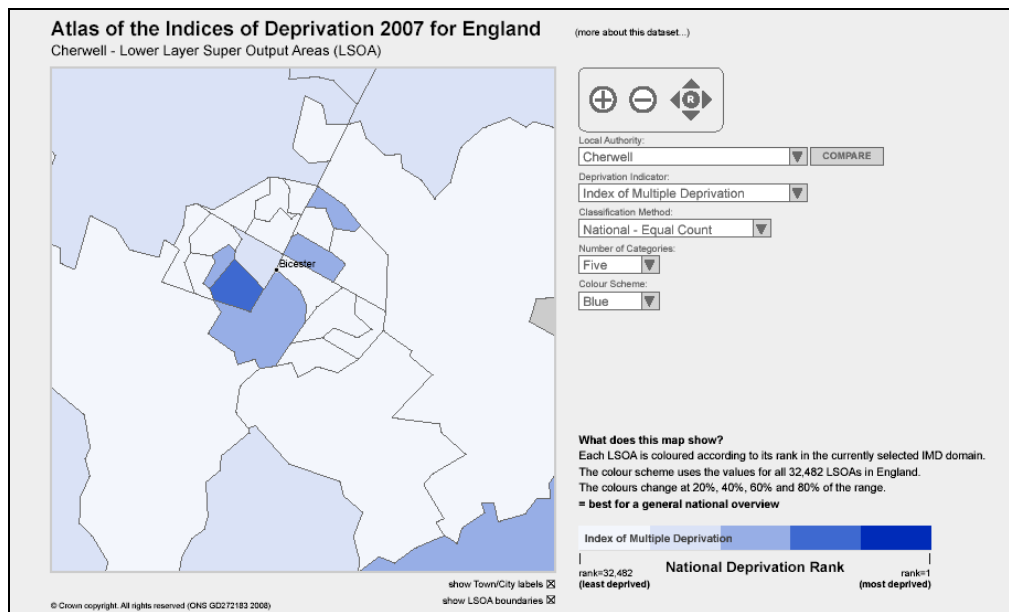
Bicester has a number of health issues in the Town ward, where life expectancy is lower than average. East and West wards, although relatively affluent, have problems such as higher than average levels of smoking, the consumption of fatty and sugary foods, and sedentary lifestyles. Life expectancies are variable in the rural areas near Bicester, ranging from 76 years in Caversfield to 83 years in Fringford. (CACI's HealthACORN data<sup>3</sup> and the 2008 Oxfordshire PCT Joint Strategic Needs Assessment<sup>4</sup>)

Within the Bicester area there is a wide range of average annual household incomes. The lowest levels of income are in Town ward and in Launton. The highest levels of income are in excess of £40,000 and are found in South and North wards, Caversfield and Fringford. (CACI Paycheck 2008)<sup>5</sup>

Ward	Median annual household income
Bicester East	£33,918
Bicester North	£41,351
Bicester South	£45,201
Bicester Town	£31,193
Bicester West	£33,015
<b>Bicester average</b>	<b>£36,936</b>
Ambrosden & Chesterton	£37,016
Caversfield	£40,011
Fringford	£42,981
Launton	£32,710
Otmoor	£37,615
The Astons & Heyfords	£35,557
<b>Cherwell average</b>	<b>£34,099</b>
<b>Oxfordshire average</b>	<b>£33,901</b>



# Deprivation



Much of rural Cherwell is very undeprived overall, but in common with many urban areas, Bicester has pockets of relative deprivation. One area ranks in the 40% most deprived areas nationally, and four in the 60% most deprived areas nationally.

(Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007<sup>6</sup>)

In general, Bicester's deprivation issues relate to education, skills and training and crime. Bicester is relatively undeprived in terms of living environment and employment, reflecting the availability of jobs and the recent housing developments in the town. In the rural areas surrounding Bicester, overall levels are deprivation of generally low, although part of Launton falls into the 60% most deprived nationally. However almost all of the surrounding area falls into the 20% most deprived areas nationally for access to housing and services, with Otmoor, Launton and Fringford scoring particularly badly.

## Notes

1. Super Output Areas, or SOAs, are statistical geographies each containing around 1,500 people <http://tinyurl.com/rcn8m7>
2. CACI ACORN is commercial socio-economic lifestyle data <http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/default.asp>
3. CACI HealthACORN is commercial in-depth health analysis <http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/healthacorn.asp>
4. <http://www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk/your-health/jsna.aspx>
5. CACI Paycheck provides local estimates of gross household income from all sources <http://tinyurl.com/czd28y>
6. IMD 2007 measures deprivation across multiple themes at small area level and is made up of seven domains of deprivation <http://tinyurl.com/cfpemu>

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