

CHARTING THE VOID

A MARKET TOWN TO MAKER TOWN

*Using artisanal incubation
to generate true local value.*



MAKING



INDEPENDENT
RETAIL



CREATIVE
ENTERPRISE



CRAFT
SKILLS

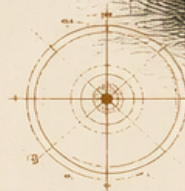


CIVIC
RENEWAL



LOCAL WEALTH
CREATION

*"A town prospers
when it makes
what cannot be
made anywhere else."*



BANBURY
OUR TOWN. OUR FUTURE.



A PROSPECTUS FOR
MAKER-LED REGENERATION
IN BANBURY
V1.0

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Market Town to Maker Town

A Vision for the Regeneration of Banbury's Historic Heart

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

0.1. Banbury did not become important by accident. For centuries it has been a place of exchange: a market town where goods, ideas, skills and people met at the crossroads of trade routes, beside the Oxford Canal and later the railway. Its historic centre remains the physical expression of that story. The narrow medieval lanes, market spaces, historic buildings and canal-side corridors speak of a town shaped by enterprise, commerce and craftsmanship. Banbury has always been a place where things were traded, made and shared; where economic life and civic life existed side by side. The challenge facing us today is not how to preserve that legacy, but how to renew it for a new generation.

0.2. Like many historic market towns, Banbury has experienced profound economic and social change. Traditional retail models have been disrupted by online shopping, consumer habits have evolved, and investment has increasingly gravitated towards out-of-town locations. The consequences can be seen in vacant premises, declining footfall and a town centre that too often feels less animated and less distinctive than it once was. At the same time, streets that should function as civic spaces remain dominated by movement and traffic, while historic assets that ought to be the town's greatest strengths are not always contributing fully to its future prosperity.

0.3. Yet these challenges also present an opportunity. The answer is not to chase a

past that no longer exists, nor to compete directly with larger retail destinations on their own terms. Banbury will succeed by embracing what makes it unique. In an age when almost anything can be purchased online, the greatest value of a town centre lies not in transaction but in experience. The future historic core should be a place that offers something that cannot be downloaded, delivered or replicated elsewhere: authenticity, creativity, craft makers and human connection. It should be a place where people come to discover new skills, meet makers, enjoy culture, explore heritage, spend time in attractive public spaces and participate in the life of the town itself.

0.4. This vision therefore proposes a new evolution in Banbury's story: a transition from **market town to maker town**. Not a rejection of the town's commercial heritage, but a natural progression of it. The market town of the future will not be defined solely by what it sells, but by what it creates. Workshops, studios, artisanal enterprises, creative businesses, independent traders and cultural spaces can bring new life to historic buildings and generate a renewed sense of purpose for the town centre. Banbury should become known not simply as a place where goods are exchanged, but as a place where things are conceived, crafted, made and celebrated.

1. A Distinctive Town Centre Economy

1.0. For much of its history, Banbury's prosperity was built not simply upon trade, but upon production. It was a town of merchants, craftsmen, workshops and enterprise; a place where economic value was created as well as exchanged. The challenge facing the historic centre today is therefore not merely one of retail decline, but of economic identity. Too much of the contemporary high street has become dependent upon businesses that could exist almost anywhere. If Banbury is to create a town centre that is resilient, distinctive and capable of attracting visitors, investment and talent, it must once again become a place known for what it produces rather than simply what it sells.

1.1. A successful twenty-first century town centre cannot compete with online retail on convenience, nor should it attempt to. The internet will always offer greater choice, lower prices and home delivery. Instead, Banbury should focus on the qualities that digital commerce cannot replicate: authenticity, artisanal skill, human interaction and a genuine sense of place. The historic core should become a destination where people experience making as well as buying; where workshops, studios, micro-producers and creative enterprises bring a visible vitality to streets and buildings that would otherwise stand empty. In this model, economic activity becomes part of the attraction. The process of creation is no longer hidden away but becomes a public expression of the town's identity.

1.2. To achieve this, vacant and underused buildings should be repurposed as **Artisanal Incubators**: affordable spaces where makers, craftspeople, artists, designers and specialist food producers can establish

and grow businesses without the prohibitive costs that so often prevent enterprise from flourishing. These incubators would provide more than workspace. They would create an ecosystem of shared facilities, mentorship, training, retail opportunities and collaboration, lowering barriers to entry while nurturing the next generation of local businesses. Historic buildings that have lost their original purpose would gain a new one, bringing activity, employment and creativity back into the heart of the town.

1.3. The long-term ambition should be to cultivate a recognisable culture of making that becomes synonymous with Banbury itself. Just as certain places have become associated with particular products, traditions or industries, Banbury should aspire to establish a reputation for quality, creativity and skilled craftsmanship. This could be supported through the introduction of a **'Crafted in Banbury'** mark: a locally recognised standard identifying goods that have been conceived, designed, crafted or produced within the town. More than a badge of origin, it would serve as a mark of authenticity, connecting products directly to the place and people that created them.

1.4. The value of such a mark extends beyond branding. It creates a powerful narrative around local enterprise and encourages consumers to engage with the story behind the product. A hand-thrown ceramic vessel, a crafted piece of furniture, a locally brewed drink, a hand-bound book or a bespoke item of clothing becomes more than a commodity. It becomes an expression of Banbury's culture, skill and creativity. The provenance of the product becomes inseparable from the place itself.

1.5. Over time, a network of workshops, galleries, studios, markets and independent producers could establish a vibrant **Crafted in Banbury Quarter**

within the historic centre. Visitors would come not simply to shop, but to meet makers, attend demonstrations, participate in workshops and discover products that cannot be found elsewhere. The town centre would become a place of curiosity and discovery, animated by production rather than passive consumption. Every successful enterprise would strengthen the town's reputation, attract further investment and contribute to a virtuous cycle of economic renewal.

1.6. This approach is fundamentally different from the traditional retail-led regeneration model. Rather than competing for footfall by replicating what can be found in every other town, Banbury would cultivate a unique economic identity rooted in artisanship, creativity and local enterprise. It would create reasons to visit that cannot be downloaded, delivered or commoditised. In doing so, the historic town centre would reconnect with its entrepreneurial heritage whilst building a more resilient and distinctive economy for the future.

1.7. The objective is not simply to fill vacant premises. It is to create a town centre where making is once again visible, valued and celebrated; a centre of production, innovation and craftsmanship that is unmistakably Banbury. Economic activity of this kind would generate the footfall needed to make local providers e.g. greengrocers, bakers, butchers and fishmongers to thrive in the historic core once again. If the market town was the defining economic model of Banbury's past, then the maker town can become the defining model of its future.



2. A town of pop-ups, creativity and opportunity

2.0. Successful regeneration rarely begins with grand projects. More often, it starts with small acts of enterprise that demonstrate confidence, reveal potential and encourage others to follow. If Banbury's historic core is to become a place of creativity and innovation, it must be accessible to those with ideas, skills and ambition but limited capital. Too many aspiring entrepreneurs are excluded before they begin by the cost and risk of securing permanent premises. A thriving town centre should offer space not only for established businesses, but also for experimentation, emergence and growth.

2.1. The principles set out in the **Pop-Up Manifesto** provide a practical framework for achieving this. Vacant shops, underused buildings, public spaces, market locations and temporary sites should be viewed not as signs of decline, but as opportunities waiting to be activated. Rather than standing empty, they can become platforms for enterprise, creativity and community activity. A pop-up coffee roastery, a seasonal artisan market, a maker's workshop, an exhibition space, a street food court, a creative studio or a community-led cultural event can transform perceptions of a place almost overnight. Activity generates interest; interest attracts people; people create vitality.

2.2. What makes the pop-up model so powerful is its ability to reduce risk whilst increasing opportunity. It allows new businesses to test ideas, build a customer base and refine their offer before committing to the costs of a permanent presence. It provides a pathway through which local talent can develop organically, supported by real-world experience rather than theoretical business plans. For the

public, it introduces variety, surprise and a sense of discovery. Every visit to the town centre becomes an opportunity to encounter something new.

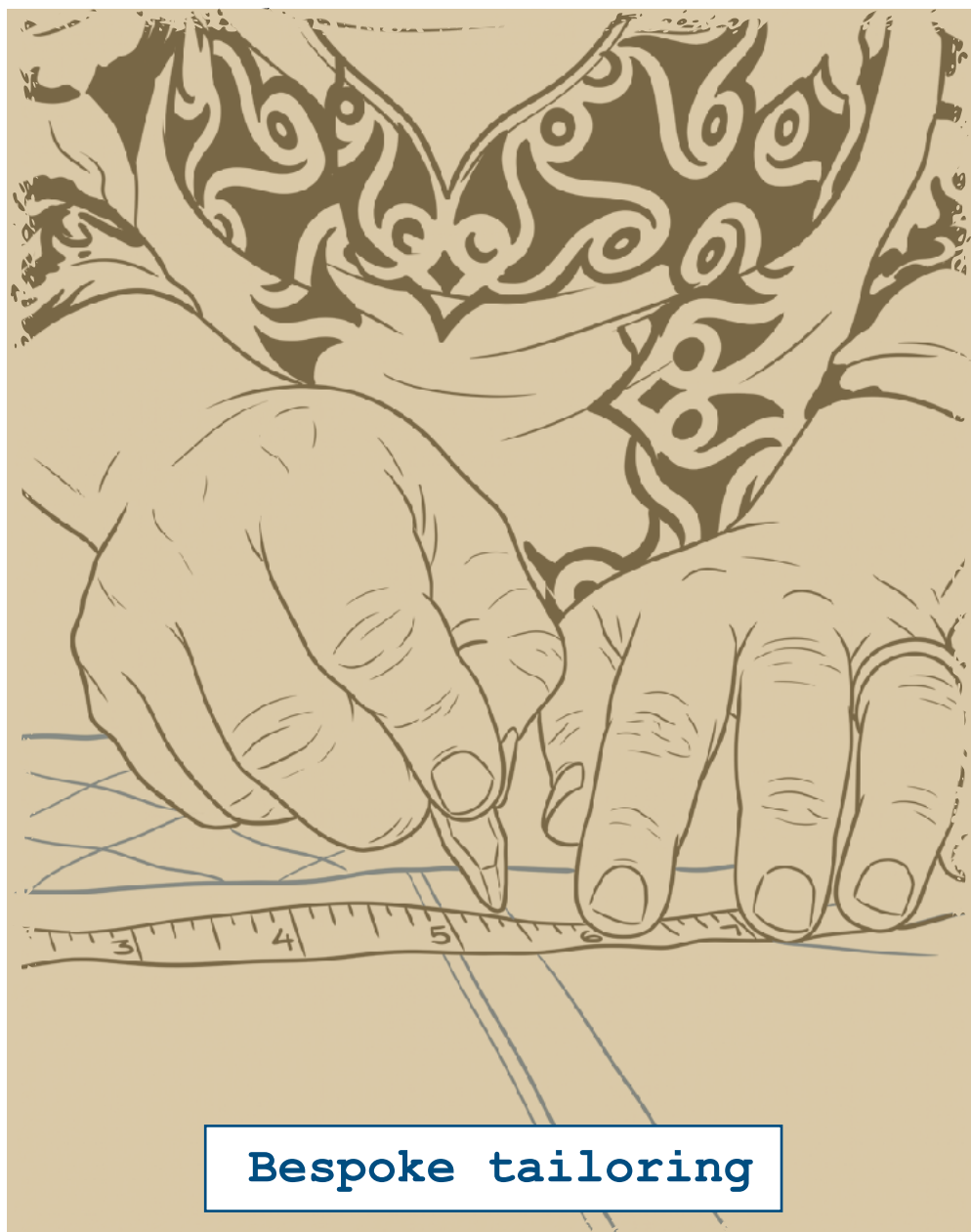
2.3. More importantly, pop-ups can help cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship throughout the historic centre. They encourage experimentation and reward initiative. Creative individuals, artisans, food producers, performers, educators and community organisations gain opportunities to engage with the public in highly visible locations, contributing to a town centre that feels dynamic and constantly evolving. The result is an environment in which enterprise becomes visible and participation feels possible.

2.4. This approach also changes the relationship between regeneration and time. Too often, towns wait for major investment, comprehensive redevelopment or ideal market conditions before taking action. In doing so, opportunities are lost and momentum dissipates. Temporary uses allow regeneration to begin immediately. They demonstrate demand, animate underused spaces and test new ideas with comparatively little cost or risk. Some interventions may last a weekend, others a season, and some may ultimately evolve into permanent enterprises. Each contributes to a cycle of renewal that is incremental, practical and responsive.

2.5. Over time, a network of pop-up opportunities could become one of the defining characteristics of Banbury's historic core. Visitors would come expecting to encounter new makers, emerging businesses, creative installations, markets and cultural events. Entrepreneurs would view the town centre as a place where innovation is welcomed rather than obstructed. Property owners would benefit from activated spaces and increased footfall. Most importantly, regeneration would become something people can participate in directly rather

than something delivered to them by others.

2.6. The ambition should be simple: to create a town centre where ideas are given room to grow. A place that lowers barriers, encourages creativity and rewards initiative. A place where temporary activity acts as the catalyst for permanent renewal. By embracing a culture of pop-ups, experimentation and enterprise, Banbury can create a more vibrant, resilient and adaptable historic centre—one that is constantly generating new opportunities for business, culture and community life.



Bespoke tailoring

3. A Historic centre connected by green infrastructure

3.0. The future of Banbury's historic core cannot be considered in isolation from the landscapes that surround and sustain it. The River Cherwell shaped the development of the town, influencing patterns of movement; and for more than two centuries the Oxford Canal has driven commerce and settlement. Today, it offers an opportunity to perform a different, but no less important, role. Together with *Canalside*, the River Cherwell and the wider network of green spaces, the canal has the potential to become the framework through which the town centre is reconnected to its neighbourhoods, its environment and its future. The regeneration of the historic core should therefore be understood not simply as an urban project, but as part of a wider landscape strategy in which movement, nature, heritage and placemaking are planned together.

3.1. Central to this ambition is the creation of the **Banbury Greenway**: a continuous, accessible and landscape-led corridor running through the heart of the town. More than an active travel route, the Greenway represents a new way of thinking about infrastructure. It is a movement corridor that enables walking, wheeling and cycling; a biodiversity corridor that supports nature recovery; a health corridor that encourages everyday physical activity; and a civic corridor that strengthens connections between people and place. By transforming the Oxford Canal from a largely overlooked asset into a defining piece of twenty-first-century infrastructure, Banbury can create a route that serves practical needs whilst enriching the experience of the town itself.

3.2. The Greenway would help weave together destinations that are currently

experienced as separate parts of Banbury. The railway station, *Canalside*, the Market Place, North Bar, South Bar and adjoining neighbourhoods would become linked by an attractive and legible route that encourages people to move through the town in a different way. Visitors arriving by rail could be drawn naturally towards the historic centre. Residents would gain safer and more enjoyable connections to employment, public services and leisure destinations. Infrastructural investment would therefore achieve far more than improved connectivity alone; it would strengthen the relationship between the town centre and the communities that depend upon it.

3.3. Equally important is the quality of the journey itself. The most successful places are not connected solely by roads and pavements, but by environments that people actively enjoy using. Travelling through tree-lined canal corridors, alongside water, wildlife and historic structures, creates a fundamentally different experience from moving through traffic-dominated streets. In this way, green infrastructure contributes not only to sustainability and biodiversity, but also to wellbeing, civic pride and quality of life. The landscape becomes part of the destination, encouraging people to spend longer in the town and engage more deeply with it.

3.4. The historic centre should ultimately become the point at which Banbury's most important assets converge. The Oxford Canal, the Banbury Greenway, the emerging Forest of Banbury, the River Cherwell and the town's remarkable historic environment should not be viewed as separate initiatives, but as interconnected elements of a single vision. Together, they have the potential to create a town centre that is greener, healthier and more attractive; a centre that draws strength from its landscape setting and uses it to enhance its economic, cultural and civic vitality.

3.5. In this vision, green infrastructure is not an amenity at the edge of regeneration. It is one of its principal foundations. By reconnecting the historic core to its waterways, landscapes and neighbourhoods, Banbury can create a town centre that is not merely accessible, but memorable; not simply functional, but beautiful. The result would be a historic heart that is once again fully connected to the life of the town it serves.



Wood sculpting and turning

4. A town centre designed for people

4.0. The clearest lesson emerging from the Banbury Vision 2050 engagement process was not a request for a particular development scheme or infrastructure project. It was something more fundamental. Residents expressed a desire for a town centre that feels welcoming, distinctive and alive; a place that is vibrant, safe, clean, green, fun, independent and worthy of being regarded as a destination in its own right. These aspirations are not superficial preferences. They are a statement about the kind of town Banbury wishes to become and the experience people want to have when they spend time in its historic heart.

4.1. For much of the last century, town centres were increasingly shaped around



the movement and storage of vehicles. Streets that once functioned as places of exchange, conversation and civic life gradually became conduits for traffic. While accessibility remains important, the future success of Banbury's historic core will depend upon restoring a better balance between movement and place. North Bar, South Bar, Horse Fair, Banbury Cross, the Market Place and the network

of medieval lanes should first and foremost be understood as civic spaces: the settings in which the daily life of the town unfolds and where its identity is most visibly expressed.

4.2. This requires an approach to regeneration that places people at the centre of design. Attractive public realm, high-quality paving, tree planting, seating, outdoor dining, cultural activity and improved walking connections should not be viewed as cosmetic enhancements but as essential ingredients of a successful town centre. The most memorable places are those where people choose to linger. Streets should invite exploration rather than simply facilitate passage. Public spaces should encourage conversation, creativity and community life. The historic core must become a place where residents and visitors feel comfortable spending time, meeting others and engaging with the town around them.

4.3. The true measure of success therefore extends beyond conventional economic and transport metrics. A thriving town centre is not defined solely by traffic flows, development outputs or retail performance, important though these may be. It is defined by the quality of experience it offers. Success will be evident when more people choose to visit the town centre because they enjoy being there; when independent businesses are able to flourish; when public spaces are animated by activity throughout the day and evening; and when residents once again speak about Banbury's historic heart with a sense of ownership, affection and pride.

5. Celebrating heritage while creating the future

5.0. Banbury's historic environment is not simply an inheritance from previous generations; it is one of the town's greatest assets for the future. Too often, heritage is treated as something to be protected from change rather than something capable of helping shape it. This vision takes a different view. The historic heart of Banbury should not function as a museum preserved in aspic. Its buildings, streets and public spaces must remain active, relevant and economically productive, contributing to the life of the town just as they have done for centuries.

5.1. Historic buildings should once again become places of enterprise and creativity. Former commercial premises, workshops and underused spaces can provide homes for makers, artisans, galleries, studios, cafés, educational initiatives, health centres and small businesses. In doing so, they not only preserve the fabric of the town but also renew its purpose. A historic building that supports employment, learning and creativity is more valuable to the community than one that stands empty, no matter how architecturally significant it may be.

5.2. Heritage should also be celebrated as a living narrative. Banbury's story is one of continual adaptation. From market town to canal town, from railway town to an emerging centre of creative enterprise, each generation has added its own chapter to the town's development. Public art, interpretation, events, festivals and cultural programming should help tell that story, enabling residents and visitors alike to understand how the town evolved and how today's regeneration forms part of a much longer journey. The objective is not nostalgia, but continuity; an understanding

that the future is strongest when it is rooted in an appreciation of the past.

5.3. The most successful historic places are those that evolve without losing their character. They embrace innovation whilst remaining authentic, allowing new uses and new ideas to coexist with old buildings and traditional street patterns. Banbury should aspire to this balance. Heritage and progress are not competing objectives; they are complementary forces. One provides identity, memory and distinctiveness. The other provides relevance, vitality and opportunity.

5.4. The regeneration of Banbury's historic core should therefore seek to strengthen the relationship between the two. By adapting historic assets to contemporary needs, supporting new forms of enterprise and celebrating the town's unique story, Banbury can create a future that is confident, prosperous and unmistakably its own. The aim is not to recreate a lost past, but to ensure that the next chapter in the town's history is every bit as significant as those that came before it.

'There is a real interest in old techniques and materials. People are really interested in using what's grown where they are.'

Hilary Burns
(artisan basket-maker)



6. A civic project

6.0. The regeneration of Banbury's historic core cannot be delivered through bricks and mortar alone. Nor can it be achieved by any single organisation, however well-intentioned. Local authorities can provide leadership, investors can provide capital and developers can deliver physical change, but the creation of a successful town centre ultimately depends upon the people who use it, work within it and identify with it. The future of Banbury's historic heart must therefore be understood as a civic project in the truest sense of the term: a shared endeavour that draws upon the knowledge, energy and aspirations of the wider community.

6.1. Throughout its history, Banbury has been shaped not only by investment and infrastructure, but by the collective efforts of its citizens. The markets, businesses, institutions, places of worship, voluntary organisations and cultural activities that have defined the town over generations emerged because people invested their time, skills and commitment in the places around them. Successful regeneration should seek to harness that same spirit. Residents, businesses, schools, cultural organisations, makers, community groups and public bodies each possess a different perspective on the town and a different contribution to make. When these perspectives are brought together, they create a richer and more resilient foundation for change than any single organisation could provide on its own.

6.2. The process of regeneration should therefore be as important as its physical outcomes. Community participation should not be confined to consultation exercises conducted after decisions have largely been made. Instead, local people should be actively involved in shaping priorities, testing ideas, animating public spaces, supporting local enterprises,

celebrating heritage and helping to steward the town centre over the long term. In doing so, regeneration becomes something that people do with one another rather than something that is done to them. The result is not only better decisions, but stronger relationships, greater trust and a deeper sense of collective ownership.

6.3. This approach also recognises that civic pride is not created through policy documents or capital programmes alone. It emerges when people feel a genuine connection to the places around them and believe that their contribution matters. Every community event, every volunteer-led initiative, every local business start-up, every successful partnership and every act of stewardship helps strengthen the social fabric upon which long-term prosperity depends. The regeneration of the historic core should therefore generate social capital alongside economic capital, creating networks of collaboration and shared purpose that endure long after individual projects have been completed.

6.4. Ultimately, the ambition extends far beyond improving streets, restoring buildings or increasing visitor numbers. It is about renewing the relationship between Banbury and its people. It is about creating a town centre that reflects local aspirations, celebrates local talent and inspires local pride. The true success of this vision will be measured not simply by the physical transformation of the historic core, but by whether the people of Banbury once again see it as a place that belongs to them, a place they value, and a place whose future they are helping to shape together.

6.5. At its heart, this is a project about strengthening Banbury's relationship with itself: reconnecting communities with their town centre, reconnecting heritage with enterprise, reconnecting people with place, and fostering a renewed confidence

in what Banbury is and what it can become.

6.6. The regeneration of Banbury's historic core should be rooted in the principle of **co-production**, not simply as a method of engagement but as the fundamental way in which change is conceived, delivered, and sustained. The Oxfordshire Definition of Co-production states that co-production is a process in which professionals and citizens "equally share a whole-life responsibility for the creation and delivery of products, services, or knowledge," underpinned by the principles of access, diversity, equality, and reciprocity. It is about imagining, planning, and managing together, with all contributions valued equally.

6.7. Applied to the regeneration of Banbury's historic core, co-production moves beyond the traditional model of consultation, where plans are developed by institutions and subsequently presented to the public. Instead, it recognises that residents, businesses, property owners, cultural organisations, civic groups, and public bodies each possess unique assets, knowledge, and experience that should shape the future of the town from the outset. The regeneration process therefore becomes a shared civic endeavour in which responsibility for place is distributed rather than held exclusively by any single organisation.

6.8. This approach directly builds upon the idea of the **civic project**: the belief that Banbury's future prosperity depends upon mobilising the collective energies of its people around a common purpose. Co-production acknowledges that local people are not merely stakeholders to be consulted but active partners in creating solutions. The role of public institutions shifts from being sole providers to becoming facilitators and convenors, helping to unlock the knowledge, creativity, and commitment already present within the community.

The principles identified by Oxfordshire—access, diversity, equality, and reciprocity—are particularly relevant to Banbury's historic core. Successful regeneration must ensure that all communities have a genuine opportunity to participate, that diverse voices are represented, that no single interest dominates decision-making, and that everyone who contributes receives value in return through improved places, stronger communities, economic opportunities, and a renewed sense of civic pride.

6.9. Under this model, the regeneration of Banbury's historic core becomes more than a physical programme of investment. It becomes a collaborative civic movement through which residents, businesses, and institutions work together to restore the town centre as the social, cultural, and economic heart of Banbury. Co-production therefore provides both the method and the philosophy through which a stronger, more resilient, and more confident Banbury can be realised.

7. The Vision

7.0. By 2050, Banbury's historic core will stand as one of the most distinctive and celebrated town centres in Britain; a place that has embraced change without losing sight of its identity. Its streets, buildings and public spaces will reflect a confident market town that has rediscovered the value of making, creativity and local enterprise. The historic centre will no longer be defined by vacant premises or declining footfall, but by thriving workshops, independent businesses, cultural activity and a vibrant public realm. It will be a place where heritage is not simply preserved, but actively contributes to economic life, civic pride and community wellbeing.

7.1. The regeneration of the historic core will have created a town centre rooted in authenticity. Historic buildings will once again be places of production, learning and exchange. Makers, artisans, designers, food producers and entrepreneurs will work alongside established businesses to create a distinctive local economy built upon quality, creativity and craftsmanship. The **Crafted in Banbury** mark will be recognised as a symbol of excellence and provenance, strengthening the town's reputation as a place that values skill, enterprise and innovation. Banbury will be known not only for what it sells, but for what it creates and the experience it provides.

7.2. The Banbury Greenway and the wider landscape framework of the town, including the Forest of Banbury, will form a connected network that brings together nature, heritage and everyday life. Visitors arriving by train will be drawn naturally into a welcoming and attractive historic centre. Residents will move easily between neighbourhoods, public spaces, cultural destinations and places of work through a network of routes designed for people

rather than vehicles. Green infrastructure, public art and high-quality civic spaces will contribute to a healthier, greener and more beautiful town centre that encourages people to spend time within it.

7.3. Most importantly, Banbury's historic heart will once again function as the principal civic destination for the town and its wider hinterland. Its streets will be animated by markets, festivals, exhibitions, workshops, performances and everyday social activity. Independent businesses will flourish alongside cultural institutions and community organisations. The town centre will feel vibrant, safe, welcoming and full of life; a place that reflects the aspirations of its residents and gives expression to the unique character of Banbury itself.

7.4. This vision is not simply about physical regeneration. It is about restoring confidence in the town centre as a place of opportunity, creativity and belonging. It is about creating a centre that strengthens Banbury's economy whilst deepening its civic identity; a centre that honours its past whilst embracing its future. Not simply a place to pass through: **A place to belong.**

8. Delivering the Maker Town of Banbury

8.0. From Vision to Action: a compelling vision is essential, but a vision alone will not revitalise a town centre. The transition from market town to maker town must be accompanied by a practical programme of delivery capable of translating aspiration into visible change. The success of this strategy will therefore depend not simply upon the quality of its ideas, but upon the partnerships, institutions and projects that bring those ideas to life.

The regeneration of Banbury's historic core should not be viewed as a single intervention or masterplan, but as a long-term process of civic renewal. Some changes will be immediate and modest in scale; others will emerge over decades. Collectively, however, they should contribute towards a common objective: creating a town centre that is economically productive, culturally distinctive, environmentally attractive and socially vibrant. The task before us is not to construct a new town centre, but to unlock the latent potential of the one we already possess.

8.1 A Banbury Makers' Partnership: the first step should be the establishment of a Banbury Makers' Partnership: a collaborative body bringing together local authorities, businesses, property owners, educational institutions, cultural organisations, community groups and makers themselves.

The purpose of the Partnership would be to champion the vision, coordinate activity, identify opportunities, attract investment and ensure that individual projects contribute towards a shared strategic direction. Regeneration is most successful when organisations work together rather than pursuing isolated

initiatives. The Partnership should therefore act as both a forum for collaboration and a vehicle for delivery.

Importantly, it should not become another bureaucratic layer. Its purpose must be practical: identifying opportunities, removing barriers and helping good ideas become reality.

8.2. Establishing Artisanal Incubators: the creation of one or more Artisanal Incubators should become an early priority along with a Corporate Social Responsibility Scheme for commercial landlords.

A detailed review of vacant and underutilised premises within the historic core should identify buildings capable of accommodating workshops, studios, production spaces and collaborative maker environments. Historic buildings that no longer fulfil their original purpose could gain a new role at the heart of the local economy, supporting enterprise whilst ensuring their long-term occupation and care.

The ambition should be to create affordable pathways into business ownership for skilled makers, craftspeople, artists and specialist producers. Shared facilities, mentoring programmes, equipment libraries and cooperative retail opportunities would reduce costs whilst fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

The success of the incubator model should not be measured solely by occupancy levels, but by the number of sustainable businesses it helps create and the contribution those businesses make to the wider vitality of the town centre.

8.3. The Crafted in Banbury Mark: a defining element of the maker town vision should be the introduction of a formal Crafted in Banbury Mark.

The mark would provide a visible guarantee that goods have been designed, crafted, manufactured or substantially produced within Banbury and its immediate hinterland. More importantly, it would create a common identity around which local enterprise can organise itself.

Accredited businesses would benefit from collective promotion and inclusion within a wider network of makers and producers. Visitors would gain confidence that they are purchasing authentic local products. The mark would help connect producers to place and strengthen Banbury's reputation as a centre of quality craftsmanship and creative enterprise.

In time, the objective should be to establish the Crafted in Banbury mark as a recognised symbol of provenance, authenticity and excellence.

8.4. Skills, Learning and

Craftsmanship: a maker town requires makers. The long-term success of the vision therefore depends upon investing in people as well as places. Schools, colleges, training providers and local businesses should work together to promote practical skills, entrepreneurship and creative industries. Young people should be able to see viable futures in design, artisanship, production, conservation, making and self-employment.

Apprenticeships, mentoring programmes, maker residencies and educational partnerships should be encouraged wherever possible. The objective is not simply to attract skilled people to Banbury, but to cultivate talent within the town itself.

In many respects, the regeneration of the historic centre should be viewed as a skills strategy as much as an economic one. By creating opportunities for learning and enterprise, Banbury can help develop the next generation of makers whose work will shape the town's future.

8.5. A Pop-Up and Enterprise

Programme: alongside permanent interventions, the town centre should support a rolling programme of temporary activity.

Pop-up shops, artisan markets, food traders, cultural events, exhibitions and creative installations provide opportunities to test ideas, animate vacant premises and generate footfall at comparatively low cost. They also allow emerging entrepreneurs to build confidence and establish businesses before assuming the responsibilities associated with permanent premises.

The objective should be to create a culture in which experimentation is encouraged and enterprise is visible. Every vacant unit should be considered a potential opportunity. Every underused space should be viewed as a possible venue for activity, creativity or community engagement.

Through a co-ordinated programme of temporary uses, regeneration can begin immediately rather than waiting for major capital investment.

8.6. A Makers' Festival and Cultural

Programme: successful places create stories that people wish to participate in.

Banbury should therefore develop an annual programme of events celebrating craftsmanship, creativity and local enterprise. A flagship **Crafted in Banbury Festival** could bring together makers, artists, performers, food producers and

community organisations in a celebration of the town's creative economy.

Open studios, demonstrations, markets, exhibitions and workshops would allow residents and visitors to engage directly with the process of making. Historic buildings and public spaces would become stages for activity, reinforcing the connection between heritage and contemporary enterprise.

Such events would not only generate economic activity but help shape a recognisable identity for the town centre. They would provide a tangible expression of what the maker town vision means in practice.

8.6. Investment and Funding: the delivery of this vision will require investment from a variety of sources.

Local authority funding, grant programmes, charitable trusts, heritage funding, cultural investment, private sponsorship and commercial partnerships should all play a role. No single funding stream will be sufficient on its own. Instead, success will depend upon aligning multiple opportunities around a clear and consistent vision.

The advantage of the maker town approach is that many interventions are comparatively modest in scale. Pop-up programmes, artisanal incubators, maker markets, public art projects and cultural events can often achieve significant impact without requiring major capital expenditure.

The emphasis should therefore be upon targeted investment that delivers multiple benefits simultaneously: economic, cultural, environmental and social.

8.7. Measuring Success: The success of this vision should not be measured

solely through conventional regeneration metrics.

Vacancy rates, footfall and business creation are important, but they tell only part of the story. Equally significant are the less tangible indicators of success: increased civic pride, stronger community participation, improved perceptions of the town centre and a growing sense of identity and belonging.

By 2030, Banbury should aspire to:

- Establish at least one flagship Artisanal Incubator.
- Establish the Banbury Maker's Partnership CIC (*app. 2*)
- Launch the Crafted in Banbury Mark (*app. 1*).
- Deliver a co-ordinated pop-up programme throughout the historic core.
- Host an annual makers' festival and programme of cultural events.
- Increase the number of independent businesses operating within the town centre.
- Reduce the number of long-term vacant premises.
- Establish a Corporate Social Responsibility Landlord Scheme (*app. 4*)
- Create a recognisable reputation for craftsmanship, creativity and independent enterprise.

8.8. A Long-Term Civic Legacy:

Ultimately, the maker town vision is not about individual projects. It is about creating the conditions in which future prosperity can flourish.

The most enduring regeneration programmes are those that leave behind more than physical



Hurdle making

improvements. They cultivate local skills, strengthen civic institutions, build confidence and create a shared belief in the future of a place. The ambition for Banbury should therefore extend beyond the refurbishment of buildings or the attraction of visitors. It should seek to establish a culture of making, creativity,

entrepreneurship and stewardship that continues to evolve long after the initial projects have been completed.

The objective is simple but transformative: to create a historic town centre that is productive rather than passive, creative rather than consumptive, distinctive rather than generic, and confident enough to shape its own future.

When realised, the maker town will become not merely a regeneration programme, but a lasting civic legacy for generations to come.

Paul-Austin Sargent
September 2026

Appendix 1

The Case for a ‘*Crafted in Banbury Mark*’.

Banbury has long been a centre of enterprise, innovation, and artisanship. From its historic market-town roots to its modern manufacturing, food production, creative industries, and specialist services, the town possesses a distinctive commercial identity that deserves greater recognition. A **Crafted in Banbury** mark would provide a visible and trusted symbol of that identity, helping businesses demonstrate their connection to the town while promoting the quality, skill, and authenticity associated with Banbury. More than a marketing tool, the mark would serve as a statement of civic pride, strengthening the relationship between local businesses, residents, and visitors.

The term **Crafted in Banbury** is deliberately broad and inclusive. Unlike a traditional “Made in” designation, which can be limited to physical manufacturing, a “Crafted in” mark acknowledges the value of design, creativity, innovation, expertise, and skilled service delivery. It allows the scheme to recognise not only manufacturers and producers but also artisans, food and drink businesses, designers, engineers, digital enterprises, retailers, and professional service providers. In doing so, the mark reflects the realities of the modern economy while remaining rooted in the values of quality, skill, and local connection.

To ensure credibility and longevity, the mark should be owned and governed by an independent **Crafted in Banbury Community Interest Company (CIC)**. A CIC offers the ideal legal structure because it exists for community benefit rather than private gain, ensuring that the mark remains a shared asset belonging to Banbury rather than any individual business or organisation. The CIC would act as the guardian of the brand, responsible for protecting its reputation, maintaining standards, and ensuring that accreditation is granted fairly and transparently. By combining public purpose with commercial flexibility, the structure would allow the scheme to grow and evolve while retaining public trust.

The governing board of the CIC should bring together representatives from across the town’s economic and civic life. Membership might include Banbury Town Council, our unitary council, local business leaders, manufacturers, creative and cultural organisations, hospitality representatives, educational institutions, and community stakeholders. Such a partnership would ensure that decisions reflect the interests of the town as a whole and that the mark develops as a collaborative initiative rather than a narrowly controlled programme. The organisation’s primary role would be to promote Banbury’s reputation, support local enterprise, and create opportunities for accredited businesses to work together under a common banner.

The success of the mark would depend upon public confidence in its standards. Accreditation should therefore be awarded through a clear and robust process designed to establish a genuine connection with Banbury. Businesses seeking accreditation would apply to the CIC and provide evidence demonstrating how they contribute to the town’s economy, identity, or reputation. Eligibility should be based on meaningful local involvement rather than simply having a postal address in the area. Applicants might be required to demonstrate that they are based in Banbury, design or create products and

services within the town, employ local people, contribute to the local economy, or undertake significant elements of their work from a Banbury location.

Applications would be reviewed by an independent accreditation panel operating on behalf of the CIC. The panel would assess the strength of the applicant's local connection, the quality of their products or services, and the extent to which they contribute to Banbury's economic and social fabric. Successful applicants would be granted the right to use the Crafted in Banbury logo and branding across their marketing materials, products, websites, and premises. Accreditation could be awarded for a fixed period, such as three years, after which businesses would be required to reapply in order to ensure standards remain current and meaningful.

The benefits of a Crafted in Banbury mark extend beyond individual businesses. For consumers, the mark would provide a trusted indication that a product or service has been created by a business with a genuine stake in the town. For visitors, it would offer a way of discovering authentic local experiences and products. For Banbury itself, the scheme would contribute to place marketing, economic development, and tourism promotion by creating a recognisable identity associated with quality and local excellence. As public awareness of the brand grows, so too would the collective value of membership, creating a virtuous circle that benefits both businesses and the wider community.

To further enhance its profile, the CIC could organise an annual **Crafted in Banbury Awards** programme celebrating outstanding achievement across a range of sectors. Categories could include manufacturing excellence, food and drink, retail innovation, creative enterprise, sustainability, and emerging business. An annual awards ceremony would not only recognise success but also generate publicity for accredited organisations and showcase the diversity and strength of Banbury's economy. Over time, such recognition would increase the prestige of the mark and encourage businesses to aspire to the standards it represents.

A Crafted in Banbury mark therefore represents far more than a logo. It is an opportunity to establish a shared identity for the town's business community, celebrate local talent, and strengthen Banbury's reputation as a place where quality, creativity, and enterprise thrive. Under the stewardship of an independent Community Interest Company, and supported by a transparent accreditation framework, the mark could become one of Banbury's most valuable economic and civic assets. By connecting businesses through a common story of place, it would help ensure that the Banbury name continues to stand for excellence, innovation, and community pride for generations to come.

Appendix 2

The Formation of a Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC

A Collaborative Vision for Banbury

Banbury has a long and distinguished history as a place of industry, innovation, trade, and artisanship. From traditional food production and engineering to modern creative enterprises, digital innovation, and specialist manufacturing, the town is home to a diverse and vibrant business community. However, while many businesses successfully promote their own brands, there is currently no collective identity that celebrates and promotes Banbury as a centre of excellence in making, creating, designing, and producing. The establishment of a **Banbury Makers' Partnership Community Interest Company (CIC)** would provide the vehicle to address this gap.

The Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC would be established as an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting businesses that create, manufacture, design, craft, or deliver skilled services from Banbury. Its purpose would be to strengthen the town's economic identity, support local enterprise, encourage collaboration, and raise the profile of Banbury as a destination for quality products and services. By bringing together businesses of different sizes and sectors under a shared banner, the CIC would create a stronger collective voice than any individual organisation could achieve alone.

Purpose and Objectives

The primary aim of the Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC would be to champion those businesses that contribute to Banbury's reputation as a place of innovation, creativity, and craftsmanship. Through marketing, networking, business support, and place-promotion activities, the Partnership would help members access new opportunities, reach new customers, and strengthen local supply chains.

A key objective would be to contribute to the development and provide representation to the management of a **Crafted in Banbury** accreditation mark. This mark would recognise businesses that demonstrate a genuine connection to Banbury through the products they create, the services they provide, or the jobs they support. The accreditation would serve as a trusted symbol of local provenance, quality, and community commitment, helping residents and visitors identify and support local enterprises.

The CIC would seek to foster collaboration between manufacturers, retailers, hospitality providers, creative businesses, education providers, and community organisations. By creating opportunities for networking and partnership working, it could help build a stronger local economy based on shared success rather than isolated achievement.

Governance and Membership

The Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC should be governed by a board that reflects the breadth of Banbury's economy and civic life. Directors could be drawn from local manufacturing, retail, hospitality, creative industries, education, and the voluntary sector,

alongside representation from local government. This mixed governance model would ensure that the organisation remains independent while maintaining close links with key stakeholders.

Membership would be open to businesses and organisations that support the Partnership's objectives and have a meaningful connection and prime business interest headquartered in Banbury. This could include manufacturers, food and drink producers, artisans, designers, technology firms, retailers, cultural organisations, and professional service providers. Members would benefit from shared marketing opportunities, networking events, collaborative projects, and participation in promotional campaigns designed to raise the profile of Banbury-based enterprise.

Activities and Programmes

One of the CIC's most visible functions would be the promotion of the Crafted in Banbury brand. Accredited members would be entitled to display the mark on products, premises, websites, and promotional materials, helping consumers identify businesses that contribute to the local economy.

The Partnership could also organise regular business forums, exhibitions, makers' markets, and networking events, creating opportunities for businesses to showcase their products and services. An annual **Banbury Makers Awards** programme could recognise excellence in categories such as manufacturing, food and drink, creative enterprise, sustainability, innovation, and community impact. Such events would celebrate local success stories while generating wider publicity for Banbury and its businesses.

In addition, the CIC could work with schools, colleges, and training providers to promote skills development, apprenticeships, and careers linked to local industries. By strengthening connections between education and business, the Partnership would contribute to the long-term growth of Banbury's economy and help develop the next generation of local talent.

Funding and Sustainability

As a Community Interest Company, the Banbury Makers' Partnership would operate for community benefit rather than private profit. Funding could be generated through a combination of membership subscriptions, sponsorship, accreditation fees, event income, grants, and partnerships with public and private sector organisations. This diversified funding model would help ensure financial resilience while keeping membership accessible for small businesses and start-ups.

Over time, as awareness and membership grow, the value of participation would increase, creating a self-reinforcing network that delivers tangible benefits to both businesses and the wider community.

Maker Town Property Partners

The Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC could administer the Corporate Social Responsibility Landlord Scheme through a formal accreditation programme known as

Maker Town Property Partners. Accreditation would recognise landlords and property owners who actively support Banbury's economic and civic development by making space available for makers, creatives, social enterprises, start-up businesses, and locally rooted independent enterprises. Participating landlords would commit to a Property Partner Charter that promotes social value leasing through measures such as flexible tenancy agreements, discounted start-up rents, meanwhile use arrangements, maker incubator spaces, and support for community-led activity. Accreditation could be awarded at Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum levels, reflecting the scale of contribution made to Banbury's Maker Town objectives. Assessment would consider factors such as occupancy rates, support for local enterprise, provision of affordable workspace, environmental performance, public realm improvements, and contribution to the vitality of the town centre. By creating a recognised standard, the scheme would encourage landlords to view their property portfolios not simply as commercial assets, but as important contributors to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Banbury.

To celebrate leadership and encourage wider participation, the Partnership could establish an annual **Maker Town Property Awards** programme. These awards would recognise landlords, investors, developers, and managing agents who demonstrate exemplary commitment to place-making and social value. Categories could include Property Partner of the Year, Best Use of a Vacant Building, Outstanding Social Value Lease, Maker Space of the Year, Heritage Property Stewardship Award, and Town Centre Transformation Award. A judging panel comprising representatives from the Partnership, local businesses, community organisations, and local government would assess nominations against published criteria. The awards would not only recognise good practice but help showcase successful projects, share learning, and encourage healthy competition amongst property owners. Over time, Maker Town Property Partner status could become a mark of distinction, demonstrating that a landlord is investing not only in buildings, but also in Banbury's future prosperity, civic pride, and economic resilience.

Conclusion

The creation of a **Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC** would represent a significant step towards establishing a stronger and more coherent economic identity for Banbury. By bringing together businesses, civic organisations, and community stakeholders, the Partnership would provide leadership, collaboration, and promotion for the town's makers, creators, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Through the management of a Crafted in Banbury accreditation mark, the organisation could contribute to a recognised symbol of quality and local pride while supporting economic growth, inward investment, tourism, and community engagement. In doing so, it would help ensure that Banbury is not only known for its history, but also recognised for the excellence it continues to produce today.

Appendix 2

A Pop-Up Manifesto for Banbury

Banbury deserves to be ambitious again. For too long, investment, attention, and opportunity have been concentrated elsewhere, leaving residents with the sense that decline must simply be accepted. The vision set out at www.grimsbury.org.uk challenges this assumption, arguing instead for a stronger, more resilient, and more prosperous Banbury where businesses can thrive, public spaces inspire civic pride, and residents are empowered to shape the future of their town.

A pop-up approach offers a practical way of turning that vision into reality. Rather than waiting years for large-scale regeneration projects, temporary and flexible initiatives can demonstrate what is possible. Vacant shops can become pop-up galleries, makers' studios, local produce markets, business incubators, community cafés, or cultural venues. Underused public spaces can host events, performances, exhibitions, and seasonal activities that bring life back into the town centre and create reasons for people to visit, stay, and spend locally. These interventions are not merely temporary attractions; they are prototypes for the future Banbury wishes to build.

At the heart of this manifesto is the belief that economic renewal and civic pride go hand in hand. Banbury's future prosperity depends not only on attracting investment but also on celebrating local talent, supporting local enterprise, and creating places that people feel proud to call their own. Pop-up initiatives can provide affordable opportunities for entrepreneurs, creatives, and community organisations to test new ideas and reach new audiences. In doing so, they help create the thriving local economy and renewed civic confidence that Banbury's future requires.

This approach should also reflect Banbury's commitment to sustainability, community wellbeing, and better-quality places. Public realm improvements, greening projects, temporary gardens, living walls, and community-led activities can make neighbourhoods healthier, safer, and more attractive while demonstrating how permanent improvements might look. Such projects align with wider ambitions for environmental resilience, improved quality of life, and stronger communities.

Ultimately, a Banbury Pop-Up Manifesto is about action rather than aspiration. It recognises that meaningful change does not always begin with major capital projects; often it starts with small, visible interventions that inspire confidence and demonstrate possibility. By embracing temporary uses, supporting local makers and entrepreneurs, and empowering communities to experiment and innovate, Banbury can begin creating the vibrant future its residents deserve—one project, one space, and one idea at a time.

Appendix 4

A Corporate Social Responsibility Landlord Scheme for the Banbury Maker Town

Banbury stands at an important moment in its economic development. Like many market towns, it faces the challenge of adapting to changing retail patterns, evolving consumer behaviour, and increasing competition from online commerce. Yet these challenges also present an opportunity. Across the country, successful town centres are increasingly distinguished not by the quantity of national chains they host, but by the quality, authenticity, and uniqueness of the experiences they offer. Banbury already possesses the ingredients needed to become a recognised **maker town**—a place known for craftsmanship, manufacturing, creativity, food production, design, and innovation. The missing ingredient is often access to affordable and flexible commercial space that allows local enterprises to establish themselves and grow.

A Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Landlord Scheme would seek to address this challenge by bringing together property owners, businesses, and the proposed Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC in a shared effort to strengthen the local economy. Rather than viewing vacant commercial premises solely as real estate assets, the scheme would recognise them as potential catalysts for economic activity, entrepreneurship, and placemaking. Under this model, landlords would become active partners in Banbury's regeneration, helping to create a thriving ecosystem of makers, creators, and independent enterprises.

At the heart of the scheme is the principle of **social value leasing**. This approach recognises that the value generated by a commercial property extends beyond rent alone. A vacant unit contributes little to the vitality of a town centre, whereas an occupied and active premises attracts visitors, creates employment, encourages spending, and enhances the attractiveness of neighbouring properties. Through flexible rental arrangements, reduced introductory rents, short-term licences, or pop-up occupancy agreements, landlords would be able to support businesses that might otherwise be unable to access commercial premises. In return, those businesses would bring life, activity, and economic energy into parts of the town that may currently be underutilised.

The businesses targeted through the scheme would be those that embody Banbury's identity as a maker town. These might include artisan food producers, craftspeople, designers, specialist retailers, repair workshops, creative studios, digital innovators, light manufacturers, and social enterprises. Such businesses often provide products and experiences that cannot be replicated online and are therefore uniquely capable of attracting visitors into physical locations. A concentration of these enterprises creates a stronger sense of destination, generating an environment where residents and visitors choose to spend more time and money.

The long-term commercial benefits for landlords should not be underestimated. While a reduced rent may initially appear less attractive than a conventional commercial letting, vacant premises often impose significant costs and risks. Empty units can contribute to a perception of decline, reduce footfall, discourage investment, and negatively affect neighbouring businesses. By contrast, active occupancy creates visible confidence in an

area, enhances the public realm, and signals economic momentum. A vibrant street populated with independent makers and entrepreneurs is more likely to attract additional businesses, investors, and customers than one characterised by shuttered shopfronts and inactivity.

Importantly, the scheme is not based on charity or subsidy. It is based on the understanding that social value and commercial value frequently reinforce one another. Experience from successful regeneration initiatives demonstrates that places become more desirable when they develop a clear identity and sense of purpose. As more creative businesses choose to locate in a particular area, customer demand increases, vacancy rates decline, investor confidence grows, and property values strengthen. The result is a virtuous cycle in which the initial support provided by landlords helps create the market conditions that ultimately benefit property owners themselves.

The proposed Banbury Makers' Partnership CIC would play a central role in delivering the scheme. Acting as a trusted intermediary, the CIC would identify suitable businesses, oversee accreditation through the Crafted in Banbury mark, and help match makers with available premises. The organisation would also co-ordinate marketing activities, events, exhibitions, and promotional campaigns designed to increase visibility for participating businesses and landlords. By providing a structured and credible framework, the CIC would reduce risk for property owners while ensuring that participating enterprises align with the broader vision for Banbury's economic development.

Participation in the scheme would also offer significant Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) benefits. Increasingly, investors, pension funds, property companies, and commercial landlords are expected to demonstrate positive social impact alongside financial performance. Supporting local enterprise, creating employment opportunities, encouraging skills development, and contributing to town centre regeneration are all tangible and measurable outcomes. The scheme would therefore provide participating landlords with a highly visible way of demonstrating their commitment to both community wellbeing and sustainable economic growth.

Recognition should form an important part of the programme. Landlords participating in the scheme could become accredited **Maker Town Property Partners**, publicly acknowledged for their contribution to Banbury's future success. Annual awards, promotional campaigns, and inclusion within Banbury Maker Town marketing initiatives would help celebrate those organisations that choose to invest not only in property, but also in people, enterprise, and place.

Ultimately, the CSR Landlord Scheme represents an opportunity to think differently about regeneration. Instead of waiting for large-scale development projects or external investment, Banbury can begin building momentum immediately by activating existing spaces and supporting local talent. Every occupied unit, every new maker, and every successful enterprise contributes to a stronger and more distinctive town centre. By aligning the interests of landlords with the ambitions of local entrepreneurs, Banbury can create a model in which social responsibility, economic vitality, and long-term property value growth work together. In doing so, the town can establish itself as a leading maker town—one that combines commercial success with community benefit and civic pride.