7: TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

Traffic and highways policies

7.1 Due in part to its rural setting Chipping Norton rarely has serious traffic congestion. However, at peak times traffic can build up at key points on the town’s road network, particularly along West Street to meet the junction with the A44 and along the A44 itself.

7.2 The A44 and A361 which run through the town centre act as major routes for through traffic, most notably heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). This often causes pollution levels well above Government targets at pinch points such as Horsefair. In 2005 WODC declared an Air Quality Management Area in Chipping Norton centred on Horsefair and High Street (see Figure 7.1 overleaf) after it was concluded that this area would fail the Government’s objective for the nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentration. Consideration needs to be given to introducing environmental weight limits and signage to divert all but locally serving HGVs away from the town.

7.3 In line with other settlements in West Oxfordshire there is a heavy reliance among residents on private vehicles, with just over 65% travelling to work by car, versus 62% in nearby Woodstock and 70% in Witney. Conversely there is also a higher-than-England average of workers choosing to walk to work, at close to 20%. With car usage so prevalent the impact of new developments on the existing highways capacity should be seriously considered so as to avoid any new traffic hotspots and so that the town continues to remain attractive for pedestrians.

T1: Design and highways proposals that mitigate the impact of through traffic within Chipping Norton, particularly from heavy goods vehicles, are strongly encouraged. Proposals could include:
• Traffic calming measures;
• Weight restrictions, particularly on London Road;
• Declassification of roads and/or signage to divert heavy goods vehicles away from and around Chipping Norton (while allowing for access).

T2: Proposals for development should take into full account the capacity of the existing highway network, protecting the town’s historic character of narrow roads and pavements and taking note of its hilly nature. If an acceptable level of impact cannot be achieved additional infrastructure should be provided that is compatible with other policies within this Plan.

Where new developments require access through an existing residential road, appropriate traffic calming measures should be implemented on the existing approach road/s.

T3: The installation of public electric car charging points is supported.

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1WODC, Air Quality Action Plan: Horsefair and High Street, Chipping Norton
2ONS 2011 Census
Figure 7.1: Chipping Norton Air Quality Management Area
Justification

7.4 WODC’s pre-submission Local Plan expresses the desire of WODC to work with developers and other stakeholders such as Oxfordshire County Council to deliver highway improvements to support expected growth. WODC’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan notes that as a result of the town being a very busy through route, especially for lorries ‘the town centre suffers from congestion and air pollution’.

7.5 The SWOT analysis conducted by CAG Consultants for the West Oxfordshire Economic Snapshot also picks up on the issue of traffic, identifying Chipping Norton’s key weaknesses as [poor] local infrastructure and congestion.

7.6 The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan Policy CN8 states that the county council ‘will ensure that best use is made of existing road space through careful planning, working with partners and utilising technology’. The Local Transport Plan goes on to offer a range of suggestions for achieving this, including HGV restrictions, removal of primary road status for the A44 between Oxford and Moreton-in-Marsh, and ensuring correct routing of traffic. The Neighbourhood Plan is supportive of these and other ideas to relieve traffic and pollution through the town.

7.7 Any traffic management measures should respect the historic character and appearance of the town. Guidance on this can be found in English Heritage’s streetscape manual Streets for All: South East. The Town Council will expect to work with other authorities to help ensure there is not an unacceptable impact to the town’s historic environment.

7.8 Chipping Norton’s Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is a direct result of poor air quality within parts of the town. The full extent of the AQMA is shown in Figure 7.1 on the preceding page.

7.9 The WODC pre-submission Local Plan suggests that changes in how transport is fuelled (with alternative fuels such as electricity playing a greater role) could have positive effects on the town’s AQMA. To encourage greater use of electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles within Chipping Norton this Plan wishes to support the installation of public electric car charging infrastructure.

7.10 Alternative-fuelled vehicles, including electric cars, are witnessing rapid growth, representing 2.8% of new car sales in November 2014, up from 1.5% a year earlier.

Relevance to planning framework

NPPF paras 7, 9, 17, 34; WODC Local Plan BE1, BE3, T6; Pre-submission Local Plan CO10, 13, 16 and paras 7.14, 7.19, 7.21, 7.43, 7.47-7.48

Relevant Neighbourhood Plan objectives

OB2, OB4

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3 WODC, Local Plan 2031, Mar 2015, Policy T2
4 WODC, West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), July 2014 Update
5 CAG Consultants, West Oxfordshire Economic Snapshot, Jan 2015
7 English Heritage, Streets for All: South East, June 2006
8 WODC, Local Plan 2031, Mar 2015, para 7.48
Public transport policies

7.11 Bus services operate between Chipping Norton and Oxford, departing hourly with more buses during peak times. Hourly Monday to Saturday daytime services to Witney and Banbury also exist, along with a two-hour frequency daytime service to Stratford-upon-Avon. There are once-a-week ‘community bus’ services to Chipping Norton from villages to the west and east but there is a possibility that these could be reduced as a result of Oxfordshire County Council cutbacks. There are also once-per-week services to Cheltenham and Moreton-in-Marsh market.

7.12 While Chipping Norton does not have a railway station, a dedicated RailBus exists to link the town with nearby Kingham Station, connecting with trains to and from Oxford, Reading and London Paddington. As this link offers commuters a vital connection it is locally significant. This bus also serves to connect the town centre with the health centre on London Road from mid-morning to afternoon only.

7.13 During the public consultation respondents emphasised the need for more direct bus routes to nearby centres, as well as links to other tourist centres west and south of town, such as Stow, Moreton and Burford. Improved bus links would be attractive to commuters and tourists alike.

T5: Any residential development and major non-residential development more than 1000m² will be required to make provision for enhanced public transport through a planning obligation or a payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Particular emphasis will be placed on increased frequencies to Oxford and express, evening and Sunday services to Banbury and, where possible, new tourist-focussed routes to Stow-on-the-Wold, Moreton-in-Marsh and Burford.

T6: The provision of a secure parking area for up to 12 service buses will be sought as part of any major development along or off London Road, either on-site or through the provision of an alternative site in a suitable, accessible location. The area reserved should be broadly rectangular, at least 0.3 hectares, fenced and securable.

Justification

7.14 If dependency on private vehicles is to be reduced it is important that new development should accommodate and enhance the existing public transport network. In particular, there is a need to provide improved services to the hospitals in Oxford and Banbury. This will have knock on effects on improved air quality, reduced congestion and could make Chipping Norton a more accessible place for people of all mobilities.

7.15 WODC’s Tourism Strategy 2009-2012¹⁰ has developed a series of priorities for tourism in the district, including the encouragement of sustainable tourism. Priority 5 in the document states an action point to ‘encourage the improvement and usage of public transport to and within the District [WODC].’

¹⁰WODC, Tourism Strategy 2009-2012
7.16 Policies T4 to T6 are directly supported by the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan’s public transport policies for the town. This Plan wishes to see the full implementation of policies laid out for Chipping Norton as they reflect our vision of a well-connected and hence viable and inclusive town.

7.17 Direct correspondence with Nick Small, Strategic Development Manager (Midlands, Oxfordshire and West) for bus service company Stagecoach has identified a number of reasons for safeguarding and expanding bus parking within the town, as outlined in the following paragraphs. The full response from Nick Small is shown in appendix C.

7.18 The peak period for bus use starts within Chipping Norton. Loss of bus parking capacity in the town would displace buses to Witney or Banbury, increasing unproductive operating time and cost, while compromising lower fares.

7.19 Stagecoach’s S3 service to Oxford has seen a three-fold increase in patronage since 2000. The expected increase in Chipping Norton’s population is seen by Stagecoach as an opportunity to expand further, offering more services to major employment and health centres in Oxford.

7.20 The number of buses parked at Chipping Norton has increased from three to nine over the same period, now supporting 12 full-time local jobs. Growth is expected to increase the number of buses parked in town to 12.

7.21 Buses are currently parked on employment land, as shown in figure 7.2 below. The current yard is on a short-term lease pending redevelopment, with three months noticeable by the freeholder. There is therefore a need to secure longer-term facilities.

7.22 Access and turning arrangement of any new bus parking site would need to be agreed with the Highways Authority. The Town Council will seek to engage with Oxfordshire County Council and bus service providers to agree the position, layout and specification of any bus parking site.

Relevance to planning framework
NPPF paras 7, 9, 17, 23, 30, 32, 35, 41, 58; WODC Local Plan BE1, BE3, T3; Pre-submission Local Plan CO10-11, 15-17 and para 7.55

Relevant Neighbourhood Plan objective
OB4

Figure 7.2: Current bus parking area
Walking, cycling and accessibility policies

7.23 Despite Chipping Norton’s hilly topography walking levels in the town are relatively high, though cycling levels are substantially below national levels – the percentage of residents choosing to cycle to work is one fifth of the England average\(^1\). This is almost certainly due to a combination of the town’s rural setting, its topography, busy traffic and the town’s compact nature making walking a more desirable option.

7.24 The town has an extensive and well-connected network of footpaths both within the urban area and out into the surrounding countryside. The town centre’s truly central location makes it highly accessible by foot from all areas of town. However, while the western side of the town can be effectively bypassed via a series of linking footpaths and bridleways, as outlined in Figure 7.3, the eastern side of town is lacking a similar joined-up pedestrian route. New development presents an opportunity to help redress this imbalance.

7.25 Appendix B details a full footpaths assessment performed by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

T7: Any residential development and major non-residential development more than 1000m\(^2\) will be required to contribute to the improvement and enhancement of the public rights of way network throughout the town and surrounding areas through a planning obligation or a payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

All new development will be expected to safeguard the existing public rights of way network within and around the town.

T8: Development should be well connected to other parts of the town. Attractive and safe walking and cycling routes towards the town centre and other community facilities should be provided to serve new development.

T9: Developments should take account of the movement needs of people of all abilities on pavements, pathways and road crossing points. Access to new developments should flow seamlessly from the existing pedestrian network and prove easy for all to navigate.

Justification

7.26 The benefits of increasing the uptake of walking and cycling as a means of transport is clear and includes among other things: reduced congestion, reduced emissions of climate change-causing gases, improved local air quality, a healthier population and financial savings on transport infrastructure.

7.27 Oxfordshire County Council’s Local Transport Plan\(^2\) (LTP) highlights how ‘improving links where public rights of way meet urban footways and highways could help to enable more people to feel confident in using alternatives to the private car’. The LTP suggests a full audit of footways across town, which the steering group has completed in order to identify where improvements to the rights of way network can be made – see Appendix B: Public rights of way assessment.

\(^1\)ONS 2011 Census
The Local Transport Plan goes on to say that when resources allow the cycle network across the wider area will be joined up to provide better routes for commuting and recreation. New developments within the town present an ideal opportunity to initiate this. The steering group’s public rights of way assessment lists opportunities for the extension and creation of new public rights of way as a result of new development.

Public rights of way could be improved or enhanced by, for example:
- The creation of new public rights of way to connect existing statutory paths and ginnels to create a route;
- The creation of new public rights of way to provide traffic-free corridors towards the town centre and out into the surrounding countryside;
- Improved signage of existing and new public rights of way;
- Better surfacing of heavily used public rights of way, for example the footpath connecting the end of Church Lane to Over Norton.

New public rights of way and improvements or enhancements to existing public rights of way should be in keeping with the rural character of the town.

Safe and convenient footpaths and cycle routes towards the town centre will help to support easy access to the retail premises and businesses to be found there. This will contribute towards the town centre’s ongoing functioning.

Relevance to planning framework
NPPF para 7, 9, 17, 23, 30, 32, 35, 38, 69, 75; WODC Local Plan BE2-3, T2, TLC8; Pre-submission Local Plan CO11, 13, 15-17 and paras 7.63-7.64, 7.67-7.69

Relevant Neighbourhood Plan objectives
OB2, OB4
Figure 7.3: Ordnance Survey map showing footpath and bridleway connections
8: TOWN CENTRE

Town centre functionality policies
8.1 The town centre offers a vibrant environment and a good range of shops supplemented by street markets supporting both the town’s residents and residents of the surrounding rural area. Retail expenditure in the town is set to grow to £62.7M by 20291.

8.2 Businesses owners in the town centre wish to see Chipping Norton promoted as a destination, appealing to a wide audience. The recently launched not-for-profit group Experience Chipping Norton (www.experiencechippingnorton.com) aims to facilitate this message.

8.3 Residents value the town centre but evidence from the public consultation exercises suggest that the town could be improved in appearance while making more of passing trade and tourism. There is support for increasing the provision of town centre facilities.

| TC1: Proposals within the town centre that provide space for community facilities will be strongly supported. |
| TC2: Proposals that improve signage, interpretation and street furniture within the town centre will be supported to encourage tourism and longer stays. Proposals should seek to minimise street clutter and a proliferation of signage. |
| TC3: Improvements to the town centre will be supported to provide a better environment for pedestrians and a public transport interchange. |

Justification
8.4 Policy E5 of the WODC pre-submission Local Plan supports the development and retention of local services and community facilities to promote ‘social wellbeing, interests, interaction and healthy inclusive communities’2.

8.5 Tourism in West Oxfordshire supports nearly 5,000 jobs and contributed £273.8m to the local economy in 20133. WODC’s Tourism Strategy 2009-2012 Priority 44 on Quality includes an action to ensure destinations are ‘perceived to have a quality environment through public realm activity including working with Street Scene and Town and Parish Councils and County Council to maintain the quality of footpaths, toilets, waste and signage’.

8.6 Results from the Neighbourhood Plan survey show residents like to support their local shops. The West Oxfordshire Retail Needs Assessment1 emphasises that ‘if this function were to erode we expect that visitation rates could drop which would consequently result in a detrimental impact on Chipping Norton town centre.’ Ensuring a vibrant and attractive town centre will help to promote the town and make it a desirable setting in which to shop.

8.7 Tourists and visitors are already attracted to Chipping Norton but the town benefits less from this trade than nearby centres such as Burford or Stow-on-the-Wold. There is room for development here, with the town centre reorganised as opportunities arise to offer a more attractive and traffic-free setting for people to linger for longer.

1WODC, West Oxon Retail Needs Assessment Update, 2012
2WODC, West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, Mar 2015, Policy E5
3CAG Consultants, West Oxfordshire Economic Snapshot, January 2015
4WODC, Tourism Strategy 2009-2012
8.8 The town’s historic environment offers great potential for attracting more visitors. This strong asset is relatively underdeveloped and should be exploited as a reason for including Chipping Norton on any trip to the Cotswolds. WODC’s ‘Chipping Norton: Conservation Area Character Appraisal’ describes the main aspects of character and appearance which contribute to the special interest and quality of the town. 

Relevance to planning framework
NPPF para 7, 9, 17, 23, 57, 58, 69, 70;
WODC Local Plan TLC12, T6, BE15, SH1, SH3; Pre-submission Local Plan CO3, 8, 12 and paras 6.66-6.67, 6.72, 6.77-6.82

Relevant Neighbourhood Plan objectives
OB2, OB6

WODC, Chipping Norton Conservation Area Character Appraisal, Sept. 2013
Town centre parking policy

8.9 The public consultation exercises found that parking provision was perceived as a major issue among respondents, particularly at peak times when it can take a considerable amount of time to find a space. While public transport, walking and cycling should be encouraged to reduce dependency on private vehicles it is unrealistic to expect the net use of private vehicles to decline in the near future given population projections for the district.

TC4: Proposals that increase the level of provision and/or improve the functionality of off-street parking to serve the town centre will be strongly supported. Developer contributions through the payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or a planning obligation may be used to facilitate the provision of additional off-street parking spaces and improvements to its management. Proposals that reduce the number of off-street parking spaces to serve the town centre will be resisted.

Relevance to planning framework

NPPF paras 7, 9, 17, 23, 40; WODC Local Plan BE3, T8; Pre-submission Local Plan CO13 and paras 7.72-7.76

TC4: Proposals that increase the level of provision and/or improve the functionality of off-street parking to serve the town centre will be strongly supported. Developer contributions through the payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or a planning obligation may be used to facilitate the provision of additional off-street parking spaces and improvements to its management. Proposals that reduce the number of off-street parking spaces to serve the town centre will be resisted.

Justification

8.10 Car parking has been identified by WODC as insufficient, creating congestion and constraining the viability of the town. If the desire to see a thriving town centre and local economy is to be realised then parking should be addressed as a priority. Increased parking provision will also improve the viability of Chipping Norton as a tourist destination. A map of public car parks is given in Figure 8.1 overleaf.

8.11 Development will create even more demand for parking. WODC suggests it is therefore critical that future provision is considered.

Relevant Neighbourhood Plan objective

OB3

8.12 Parking is a complex issue. Alongside increased capacity other controls may be available to improve the functionality of parking within the town. This could include the use of different time limits within different locations, or reviewing current parking limit zones to produce an optimal solution.

6WODC, Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, p40
Figure 8.1: Location of public car parks in Chipping Norton
**High Street character and viability policies**

8.13 The town centre of Chipping Norton has a distinct vernacular. Its line of imposing buildings, constructed primarily from soft-coloured oolitic limestone, appears to glow when the sun illuminates the stonework. The town centre has escaped the hotchpotch of architectural styles that have evolved over the decades in other towns, giving a pleasing harmony appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Other areas of the town, particularly within its wider Conservation Area, also contribute to Chipping Norton’s vernacular.

8.14 The survey of residents undertaken as part of the consultation process found that 93% of respondents agreed that the pleasant physical environment of Chipping Norton was a major positive aspect of the town that made them want to live here. Open views of the countryside to the west are clearly visible from the High Street, enhancing the centre’s appeal as a destination; the survey also found that 99% of respondents value the surrounding countryside as a contributing factor to making the town a desirable place to live. Local services and shops (89%) and the community and its spirit (93%) also scored highly.

**TC5:** Proposals that retain and enhance the existing character and amenities of the High Street will be supported in principle.

**TC6:** To ensure the vitality of the town centre this Plan will support the provision of new Town Centre uses within the defined Town Centre Boundary as outlined in Figure 8.2. Particular support will be given to provision of active frontages including ground-level shops and restaurants.

The loss of retail uses within the primary shopping frontages will be resisted and the loss of other town centre uses within the secondary shopping frontages will also be resisted.

Throughout the defined Town Centre Boundary, the provision of office space and residential accommodation at first floor level above commercial uses will be supported in principle.

**Justification**

8.15 Chipping Norton has tourism potential. To realise this and in order to continue to preserve the town’s special environment it is important that existing retail and restaurant units are protected, where possible, and that every opportunity is taken to improve the infrastructure of the town.

8.16 WODC’s Retail Needs Assessment states that while internet shopping will continue to put pressure on bricks and mortar retail spaces ‘it will be important that the West Oxfordshire centres continue to provide a differentiated retail and leisure offer, tailored to the local catchment and encouraging resident and tourist spend.’

8.17 The type of active frontages should pay due regard to Permitted Development Rights.

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7 ODC, West Oxfordshire Design Guide
8 WODC, West Oxon Retail Needs Assessment Update, 2012
8.18 The assessment goes on to suggest that if the provision of local shops is eroded then visitation rates could drop which could ‘result in a detrimental impact on Chipping Norton town centre. Therefore the retail and leisure offer should be protected and consolidated over the plan period to ensure the continued health of the centre’.

Relevance to planning framework
NPPF para 7, 9, 17, 19, 23, 37, 57-58, 60, 70, 126, 131; WODC Local Plan BE2, BE5, BE8, BE14, BE16, SH1, SH3-5; Pre-submission Local Plan CO3, 8, 12 and paras 6.64, 6.66-6.67, 6.70, 6.72, 6.76-6.82

Relevant Neighbourhood Plan objectives
OB1, OB2, OB6, OB8
Figure 8.2: Extent of Chipping Norton Town Centre to which town centre policies apply