Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan
1 Jan 2015 - 31 March 2031
Our town, our future

Chipping Norton Town Council
Foreword

Like other residents of Chipping Norton I’m justifiably proud of our town. Its combination of thriving community spirit, attractive built environment, stunning landscape setting, rich history and active calendar of events makes ‘Chippy’ a highly desirable place to live, work and visit. While the town is an undeniable jewel of the Cotswolds as one of its gateways, it’s also a real, working town that maintains a sense of independence and welcoming spirit increasingly rare in today’s fast-paced world.

The challenge over the coming years is to meet the needs of development without compromising the town’s unique appeal. It’s a formidable challenge but one that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group feels is addressed by this Neighbourhood Plan.

The primary purpose of this document is to provide guidance to any parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within the town. The Plan has been produced by the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group after some three years of background research and community consultation. All documents relating to the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan can be accessed via the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Town Council’s website: www.chippingnortontowncouncil.co.uk

As the neighbourhood planning process is new and we were awarded Front Runner status, we have had to learn and adapt throughout, sharing experiences with other towns embarking on their own plans. We have worked closely with planning officers at West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and with Planning Aid, a service provided by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).

The Steering Group has consulted the community through open days, surveys, task groups, focus groups, the intermediate consultation document ‘Chipping Norton: Looking Back, Stepping Forward’ and, finally, the formal six-week public consultation process on the draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan now becomes a statutory document within the local development framework. The policies contained within it carry legal weight and will help to shape development over the coming years.

The Steering Group believes this Neighbourhood Plan reflects the views of our community. An overriding message emanating from the consultation process was that the residents of Chipping Norton are proud of their town and have a strong desire to retain its unique character. This was key to agreeing the overarching vision of the Plan from which its objectives and policies have been derived:

A working Cotswold town thriving economically and socially as a rural hub while maintaining its strong sense of community spirit and conserving and enhancing its character, high-quality historic built and natural environments, local services and facilities.

We strongly believe that this Plan is robust and provides the necessary policies for determining planning applications. It provides clarity to the community, landowners and other interested parties on how the town will evolve for the benefit of the existing and future population up to 2031. It is expected that Chipping Norton will continue to thrive over the period of the plan, maintaining its reputation as a welcoming, warm-spirited and beautiful place to live, work and visit.

Chris Butterworth
Chairman, Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
## CONTENTS

**Section 1: Introduction**........................................................................................................................................... 1  
What is a Neighbourhood Plan?................................................................................................................................. 1  
Chipping Norton’s Neighbourhood Plan..................................................................................................................... 1  
Submitting body.......................................................................................................................................................... 1  
Plan period and monitoring......................................................................................................................................... 1  
Purpose of this document........................................................................................................................................... 1  
Neighbourhood Plan area.......................................................................................................................................... 1  
The Neighbourhood Planning process..................................................................................................................... 1  

**Section 2: National and Local Planning Context**................................................................................................. 4  
Setting the context..................................................................................................................................................... 4  
National Planning Policy Framework and planning practice guidance................................................................. 4  
National Planning Policy and Neighbourhood Planning....................................................................................... 5  
Status of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031..................................................................................................... 6  
Achieving sustainable development......................................................................................................................... 7  

**Section 3: Chipping Norton today**....................................................................................................................... 9  
The evidence base..................................................................................................................................................... 9  
Chipping Norton’s setting......................................................................................................................................... 9  
The natural environment........................................................................................................................................... 11  
Built environment.................................................................................................................................................... 11  
Population............................................................................................................................................................... 12  
Local economy........................................................................................................................................................ 13  
Transport................................................................................................................................................................. 13  
Housing.................................................................................................................................................................. 13  
Health and wellbeing............................................................................................................................................. 13  

**Section 4: Community engagement**.................................................................................................................. 14  
Methods of engagement.......................................................................................................................................... 14  
Key issues raised....................................................................................................................................................... 14  

**Section 5: Vision and objectives**......................................................................................................................... 15  
Our vision................................................................................................................................................................. 15  
Objectives............................................................................................................................................................... 15  

**Section 6: Masterplanning**................................................................................................................................. 17  
Employment policies............................................................................................................................................... 17  
Play and green space provision policies.............................................................................................................. 20  
Previously developed (brownfield) land policy...................................................................................................... 26  
Natural environment and landscape protection policies......................................................................................... 27  

**Section 7: Transport and movement**.................................................................................................................. 30  
Traffic and highways policies............................................................................................................................... 30  
Public transport policies...................................................................................................................................... 33  
Walking, cycling and accessibility policies........................................................................................................... 35  

**Section 8: Town centre**....................................................................................................................................... 39  
Town centre functionality policies......................................................................................................................... 39  
Town centre parking policy.................................................................................................................................. 41  
High Street character and viability policies......................................................................................................... 43
CONTENTS CONT...

Section 9: Building design and use ................................................................. 47
Historic built environment policies .............................................................. 47
Housing typology policies ........................................................................... 51
Self-build policies ...................................................................................... 54
Bicycle and bin storage policy .................................................................... 56
Water management policies ....................................................................... 57
Appendix A: Public rights of way assessment .............................................. 61
Appendix B: Summary of policies ................................................................. 68
Appendix C: Aspirational projects ................................................................. 74
Appendix D: Steering Group members .......................................................... 75
1: INTRODUCTION

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?
1.1 A Neighbourhood Plan sets out the vision for an area and planning policies for the use and development of land. It forms part of the statutory local development framework for the area, which means that the policies and proposals contained within it will be used to help determine planning applications, including appeals. The policies within a Neighbourhood Plan cannot block the strategic development needs of the wider area as outlined in the local development framework. They can, however, shape and influence what that development will look like and where it will go.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan forms the most locally specific planning document within the statutory planning framework. While a planning authority’s Local Plan (in this instance the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011) sets out district-wide policies, a Neighbourhood Plan adds an additional layer of detail specific to the locality that it covers.

Chipping Norton’s Neighbourhood Plan
1.3 In 2012 the imminent publication of West Oxfordshire District Council’s then Draft Local Plan 2029 was recognised as a chance for the residents of Chipping Norton to contribute a local perspective to the statutory planning framework for the area. The town enjoys a rich history and distinctive character, something the Town Council wants to conserve and enhance through its own Neighbourhood Plan (henceforth also ‘the Plan’).

Submitting body
1.4 This Plan is submitted by Chipping Norton Town Council, a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011. The preparation of the Plan was delegated to the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, whose members are listed in appendix D.

Plan period and monitoring
1.5 Working in consultation with the local planning authority West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) it was decided that the Plan should cover the period up to 2031. This mirrors the timeframe of WODC’s emerging new Local Plan, which this Plan will sit alongside. As the Neighbourhood Plan authority, Chipping Norton Town Council holds primary responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the Plan and, as required, its review over the course of the Plan period.

Purpose of this document
1.6 This document builds on previous public engagement exercises and draws on comments from statutory consultees to produce a series of policies. Following a formal six-week public consultation these policies were amended where appropriate to produce this final version of the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan area
1.7 The Plan relates to the Parish of Chipping Norton in West Oxfordshire, as outlined on the map in Figure 1.1 on the next page.

1.8 The area of the Plan was decided in consultation with WODC. The Plan area was formally designated by WODC on 12 December 2012. The parish boundary forms a logically defined area, incorporating the entirety of the town and its immediate surrounding countryside.

1.9 Chipping Norton Town Council confirms that the Plan relates solely to the Parish of Chipping Norton and that no other Neighbourhood Development Plan is in development within this designated area.
Figure 1.1: Boundary of Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan area
The Neighbourhood Planning process

1.10 The journey to reach a final Neighbourhood Plan consists of an eight-step process, as outlined in Figure 1.2 below. Subject to a successful referendum, this document, which constitutes the final Plan as amended following recommendations of the independent examination, will become part of the local development framework.

Figure 1.2: Eight steps in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan
2: NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Setting the context

2.1 As the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory planning framework it must:
   i. Have regard to national planning policy and advice
   ii. Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
   iii. Be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan in the local area
   iv. Not breach, and be otherwise compatible with EU obligations, including human rights requirements

2.2 Chipping Norton sits within the District of West Oxfordshire. The development plan of the local area (point iii above) is therefore set by the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan. The current Local Plan (2011) was adopted in 2006 and the Council is currently in the process of consulting on a new Local Plan covering the period to 2031. It is expected that the new plan will be adopted in March 2016.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and planning practice guidance

2.3 The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and came into effect in March 2012. It replaces over a thousand pages of planning policy statements and planning policy guidance previously issued by the Government with a document of around 50 pages. It provides the basis for local planning authorities to prepare their Local Plans and for communities producing Neighbourhood Plans.

2.4 The Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Local Plans must be consistent with the principles and policies set out in the Framework, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF accepts the UN General Assembly definition of sustainable development as: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

2.5 The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future\(^2\) sets out five ‘guiding principles’ of sustainable development: living within the planet’s environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

2.6 To deliver sustainable development the NPPF lists the following factors as desirable:
   • Building a strong, competitive economy, ensuring the planning system does everything it can to support economic growth.
   • Ensuring the vitality of town centres.
   • Supporting a prosperous rural economy, with planning policies that support economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity through conversions and new build.
   • Promoting sustainable transport.
   • Supporting high quality communications infrastructure, including the development of telecommunications and high-speed broadband technology.

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\(^{1}\)DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), May 2012, para 14

\(^{2}\)DEFRA, Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy, March 2005
• Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes to boost significantly the supply of market and affordable homes.
• Require good design.
• Promoting healthy communities, including the provision of shared space and community facilities (local shops, meeting places, sports venues, public houses and places of worship) and protection of existing open space and playing fields.
• Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding.
• Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

2.7 On 6 March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched a planning practice guidance web-based resource available to search at: planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk

2.8 The website means that planning practice guidance is now available entirely online. Any important information for any user of the planning system previously only published in separate documents can now be found in one place quickly and simply. Users can link between the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant planning practice guidance, as well as between different categories of guidance.

National Planning Policy and Neighbourhood Planning

2.9 The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should support the strategic development needs of the wider area set out in the Local Plan. They should not promote less development or undermine the Local Plan’s strategic policies. It adds that Neighbourhood Plans should plan positively to shape and direct development that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan. This three-layered planning approach is summarised in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Layers to the statutory planning framework
Status of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031

2.10 WODC is in the process of replacing its adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 with a number of documents known collectively as the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will include the following:

• West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, which sets out an overall strategy to guide development across the district until 2031.
• Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out what infrastructure will be needed to address the future level and distribution of growth set out in the Local Plan.
• Other relevant documents, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and supplementary planning documents.

2.11 The new Local Plan will set out an overall strategy to guide development across the District in the period up to 2031 and will address the overall strategy for growth including key strategic issues such as housing and employment. It will also include strategic (i.e. large-scale) site allocations. The final version of the pre-submission Local Plan was published in March 2015 for a six-week consultation ending 8 May. The final version builds on several rounds of previous consultation including the draft Local Plan published in November 2012 and the Local Plan Focused Housing Consultation that took place in August 2014. The Local Plan’s adoption is timetabled for March 2016.

2.12 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will sit alongside the Local Plan and focus on the physical, social and environmental infrastructure that is needed to support the level of growth identified in the Local Plan. The IDP will be kept up to date and will form the basis of the council’s ‘Regulation 123’ CIL list which sets out the infrastructure that the council intends to fund via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL is essentially a charge that may be levied on certain forms of development to help fund new and enhanced infrastructure such as roads, schools and healthcare.

2.13 The objectives, policies and proposals from both WODC’s adopted Local Plan and its pre-submission Local Plan are taken into consideration by the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Plan. However, while the adopted Local Plan 2011 carries District-wide policies, it does not carry a section, vision or policies specific to Chipping Norton. The pre-submission Local Plan does. For this reason, and due to the fact the current Local Plan is now nine years old (having been adopted in June 2006), reference is made throughout the Neighbourhood Plan’s main text to the pre-submission Local Plan as it is felt this is most relevant to future development within the town.

2.14 The pre-submission Local Plan sets out a vision for Chipping Norton as follows³:

Chipping Norton will strengthen its role as a centre of enterprise in the northern part of the District. It will continue to be an economically and socially strong market town serving the needs of a large rural area. Its distinctive historic character and fine setting will be conserved and enhanced at the same time as accommodating new development to meet identified needs.

³WODC, West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, March 2015, ‘Our Vision’, p.21
2.15 Five key strands make up the pre-submission Local Plan’s approach to development:
   1. Presumption in favour of sustainable development.
   2. Locating development in the right places.
   3. Prudent use of natural resources.
   4. High quality design.
   5. Supporting infrastructure.

2.16 The pre-submission West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 has set a housing target of 10,500 new homes to be built from 2011 – 2031\(^4\). The figure is based on the findings of two reports commissioned by WODC following on from findings of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) that was published in April 2014. The pre-submission Local Plan is proposing to allocate strategic sites for many of these homes, including 600 homes in a new Strategic Development Area (SDA) site allocation on the eastern side of Chipping Norton.

2.17 WODC’s overall strategy is to focus the majority of development over the coming years on the District’s three main towns of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. A total of 1,800 homes will be built in the Chipping Norton sub-area, which includes the town and its surrounding villages and countryside. However, it is likely that the majority of this housing will be built within the town itself, given the identified SDA target of 600 homes, the Council’s town Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (June 2014) capacity of 350, plus homes already completed and existing planning commitments within the town.

2.18 While the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan, it is regarded as good practice to be mindful of the emerging Local Plan. To that extent the current proposals coming forward in the pre-submission Local Plan and, in particular, the scale of housing development have provided the context for this Neighbourhood Plan. So while the Neighbourhood Plan does not identify the scale and location of this new development, it contains policies and proposals that will help to shape and influence this development.

**Achieving sustainable development**

2.19 As part of meeting the basic condition that requires the Neighbourhood Plan to meet sustainable development, the formation of the policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan have taken account of the need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

2.20 The strategic objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan carry the principles of sustainable development at their heart. Town centre and employment land objectives seek to promote a thriving economy, while the housing and community facilities policies promote the creation of a viable population and caters for all. Objectives surrounding the natural environment and energy and water efficiency recognise the value of the local and wider environment and the resource limits imposed by an expanding population on a finite world.

2.21 Further detail of how each of the Neighbourhood Plan policies contributes to achieving sustainable development is outlined in the accompanying Basic Conditions Statement.

\(^4\)WODC, West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, March 2015, para 5.17
3: CHIPPING NORTON TODAY

The evidence base

3.1 The background evidence on which this Neighbourhood Plan is written is derived from a series of public consultations as well as a number of published sources including:

- Demographic and transport choices data based on the 2011 Census results available from the Office for National Statistics.
- Local economy data based on the WODC Economy Study Update and Retail Needs Assessment, and the West Oxfordshire Economic Snapshot produced by CAG Consultants.
- Historic built environment data and characterisation sourced from WODC’s document Chipping Norton: Conservation Area Character Appraisal.
- Housing data derived from the Office for National Statistics, WODC’s Affordable Housing Consultation Paper, the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and WODC’s 2011 Housing Needs Assessment.
- Leisure and green space provision from the West Oxfordshire Open Space Study 2013-2029.


Chipping Norton’s setting

3.3 Chipping Norton has a highly attractive landscape setting with the majority of the town, excepting the most recent developments on the east, lying within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

3.4 The Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment 2009 notes the town’s relatively high altitude, having grown up along the western side of a pronounced ridge which affords a far-reaching outlook to the west of town, overlooking a steep-sided valley that runs south to the Evenlode Valley\(^1\). Much of the town lies between the 183m and 213m contours.

3.5 The historic Bliss Mill and its setting within a relatively rural valley on the west side of town are regarded by the Landscape Assessment as a particularly important component of the local landscape, providing a distinctive landmark structure visible from many parts of the town. View of Bliss Mill are widely recognised in West Oxfordshire and beyond.

3.6 To the north of Chipping Norton lies the small village of Over Norton, separated from the town by an undeveloped gap of around 300m. The main roads into the town from the northeast and east, along the two branches of the A44 (Banbury and London Roads) are tree-lined, giving a soft approach to the town.

\(^1\)Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment 2009, June 2009
Figure 3.1: Constraints to development in Chipping Norton
The natural environment

3.7 The countryside surrounding the town comprises a range of distinct character types, as identified in the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study\(^2\), dominated by farmland slopes and valley sides to the west and a broad area of farmland plateau to the east. The Neighbourhood Plan area includes within its area a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the east of the town. The Glyme and Dorn Conservation Target Area occupies a substantial part of the southeast quadrant of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

3.8 The valley bottoms and sides support a linked network of semi-natural habitat that is particularly important to the wildlife and the landscape of the town, such as the mosaic of deciduous woodland, grassland and parkland of Over Norton Park\(^3\). Large, established trees along the roadsides and among built-up areas are a notable feature of the town.

3.9 The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-2013\(^4\) states that ‘characteristic habitats and some species are in decline or have been lost’ and notes that this is due to a combination of direct human influence and indirect factors such as climate change.

3.10 The hilltop position of Chipping Norton means that only a very limited area of Chipping Norton parish is affected by a flood zone, as outlined by the dark blue shading in Figure 3.1 (constraints map) on the preceding page. However, Local flooding from surface water runoff and spring lines can occur after particularly heavy rain.

Built environment

3.11 Chipping Norton’s special character is in part down to its historic built environment. The town has a distinct and diverse architectural style consisting of a mix of imposing formal and less imposing functional buildings, often built in local materials. The honey-coloured stone of many buildings within the town creates an attractive townscape.

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\(^2\)Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, available at: owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk
\(^3\)MAGIC interactive map: www.magic.gov.uk
\(^4\)CCB, Cotswold AONB Management Plan 2013-18, March 2013
3.12 The town has a high proportion of Listed structures (126) and a substantial Conservation Area, in which the town centre is fully encompassed. Around 50 buildings pre-date 1700. Chipping Norton Motte and Bailey Castle and Fishpond, near the parish church of Saint Mary’s is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

3.13 The current extent of the Conservation Area was designated in September 2013. The WODC document ‘Chipping Norton: Conservation Area Character Appraisal’ details the characteristics of the Conservation Area and lists all nationally and locally Listed buildings in the town.

Population
3.14 The population of Chipping Norton was 6,337 at the time of the 2011 census, an increase of 6% on the 2001 census. The town’s population is also ageing, with the proportion of residents over the age of 60 rising from 22.9% to 26.8% in 2011.

Figure 3.2: Population pyramids for Chipping Norton, 2011 and 2026

3.15 Both the proportion and absolute number of those aged over 65 is expected to continue to increase over the coming decades. Ward forecasts for the town supplied by Oxfordshire County Council predicts the population of this age group will increase by 36% in the 15 years from 2011 to 2026.

ONS 2011 Census
Hollis, J., West Oxfordshire: Three Demographic Projections using the first 2011 Census Results, Sept 2012
Local economy
3.16 At the time of the 2011 census 71% of those aged 16 to 74 were in employment with the rate of employment growth outpacing the rate of population growth over the previous 10 years. The town has a greater than average proportion of residents employed in skilled trades and personal services8.

3.17 2011 census data also reveals that 8.3% of working residents work at or mainly from home. Furthermore, 35.9% of commutes originating within Chipping Norton are completed within the town itself (64.1% commute out from the town to elsewhere)9.

3.18 Two-thirds (66.3%) of residents’ convenience shopping is bought within the town. Total retail expenditure in Chipping Norton is forecast to grow from £40.1M in 2012 to £62.7M by 202910.

Transport
3.19 Residents of Chipping Norton heavily rely on private vehicles; just over 65% travel to work by car8. While nearly a fifth of residents walk to work, cycling uptake remains low. A network of footpaths and bridleways gives ready access to the surrounding countryside.

3.20 The town has suffered from one of the highest nitrogen dioxide levels within West Oxfordshire at the pinch point of Horsefair and along High Street. While levels have improved, diffusion tube data derived from a non-automatic air quality analyser at Horsefair revealed an annual mean concentration in 2014 of 57.7 μg/m³, above the Government’s 40 μg/m³ air quality objective 11.

3.21 The difficulty of finding a parking space at peak times was identified as a major issue by residents during the consultation process. Detailed input from the public is given in the Consultation Statement accompanying the Plan.

Housing
3.22 An average of 34.9 new dwellings per year were added between 1990 and 2012. In 2011 there were 3005 separate dwellings in Chipping Norton.

3.23 There is a high level of single households (31.8%), while single pensioners account for 16.2% of all households8. The proportion of single pensioners is forecast to grow significantly over the Plan period.

3.24 The town has a high percentage of social housing at 17.3%. However, with 80.3% of concealed households12 unable to afford a one-bedroom flat in town, there is a need for more affordable housing.

3.25 Affordable housing is defined by the NPPF as social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing that is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Health and wellbeing
3.26 Almost seven percent of residents’ day-to-day activities are limited by a long-term health problem or disability8, reflecting the town’s higher-than-average proportion of older residents.

3.27 Among older people Chipping Norton sits within the most income deprived group8.

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8ONS 2011 Census
10WODC, West Oxon Retail Needs Assessment Update, 2012
11WODC, Updating and Screening Report for West Oxfordshire District Council, April 2015
12Defined as a household living in a multi-family household in addition to the primary family – e.g. a young couple living with parents
4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 All stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process demand that the community and relevant statutory bodies are involved and consulted. The Plan is for the people of Chipping Norton, so from the start the Steering Group sought every opportunity to engage the local community.

Methods of engagement

4.2 A full list of the activities and methods of engagement undertaken are given in the Consultation Statement accompanying this Plan. In summary the following groups were invited to contribute:

- All residents and businesses within the town via open meetings/workshops, an exhibition, questionnaire and regular publicity through the local media.
- Requests for feedback were also invited on the intermediate consultation document ‘Chipping Norton: Looking Back, Stepping Forward’, a summary leaflet of which was delivered to all properties within the town.
- Outreach via focus groups comprising the following groups: older people, local businesses, working age people, young people.
- Statutory consultees via a dedicated workshop. Attendees included representatives from Oxfordshire County Council, WODC, English Heritage, Cotswold AONB, Stagecoach Bus and local housing associations Cottsway and Sovereign.

Key issues raised

4.3 Issues raised through community and statutory consultee engagement include the following:

Transport
Traffic and pollution, particularly from HGVs, is seen as a major issue. Parking provision is regarded as inadequate. There is a call for improved public transport links.

Environment
The rural landscape setting and wildlife habitats of the town are highly valued and should be protected and enhanced. New housing and commercial premises should meet the most rigorous environmental standards.

Local economy
There is a desire for a thriving town centre with shops and services for both residents and visitors, plus a wide range of employment options within the town. Better quality office space is needed. Tourism should be encouraged.

Housing
The town needs more affordable housing to rent and buy as well as smaller units, accommodation suitable for older residents and housing for families – so a wide variety of housing types. Development should integrate within the town and complement the vernacular architecture. It should be well connected, facilitating walking and cycling into the town centre.

Built environment
The town has an exceptionally high quality built environment. This is one of Chipping Norton’s greatest assets that makes it a good place to live and visit.

Health and wellbeing
Recreational facilities and green spaces are valued, but additional natural and open green space and play areas are called for within any new developments. Community facilities are important to individual well-being and some key facilities are seen as lacking, for example an improved capacity library.

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1Background information on each consultation exercise may be found in the Consultation Statement that accompanies this Neighbourhood Plan.