21. Chipping Norton

21.1 Chipping Norton is a historic market town which lies on the A44 approximately 20 miles north west of Oxford and about 12 miles north of Witney; with Banbury some 13 miles to the north east with access to the M40 and good services to Birmingham and the North. It is connected by bus to Witney and Banbury and by bus/rail link to Oxford, London and Reading. The nearest mainline station is Kingham (4.5 miles) which is served by a shuttle bus connecting with most trains. Trains run via Oxford to Paddington with a best time of about 80 minutes. The town lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and close by are the Evenlode and Windrush valleys and many attractions including Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, the Rollright Stones, Stow-on-the-Wold, Moreton-in-Marsh, Burford, and Bourton-on-the-Water. This makes Chipping Norton an important centre for tourism.

21.2 The 2001 census recorded Chipping Norton's population at 5,688. Surrounded by an extensive rural hinterland and being relatively remote from larger towns, Chipping Norton acts as a service centre for residents, workers, visitors and up to 40 local villages. Although in West Oxfordshire for administrative purposes, it reaches out to other parts of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. It also provides a 'gateway' to the Cotswolds for visitors and tourists while retaining its strong heritage as a 'working town' with businesses and retailers of all kinds. The town has many listed buildings and a Conservation Area which covers most of the central, northern and eastern areas of the town. A separate conservation area extends over open land to the south west of the town providing the setting for the landmark Bliss Mill, the former tweed mill (Grade 2* listed building) now converted into flats.

21.3 The town currently has strong 'self sufficient' shops and services, state schools at all levels and health care services. There are around 100 clubs and societies, a theatre, leisure centre and sports facilities. Chipping Norton Golf Club is the oldest in Oxfordshire (Town Appraisal, 2003).

Transport in Chipping Norton

21.4 Topographically, the town is located in a high area of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a large part of the town is within a conservation area.

21.5 The setting and heritage of Chipping Norton limits sustainable development opportunities. The plateau to the east is the only land

on the fringes of the town which lies outside the AONB but here buildings and structures can be prominent in the wider landscape.

21.6 Chipping Norton is served by two doctor's surgeries located in the town centre where the majority of the town's amenities are based. Both are within walking distance of the residential areas and are situated near bus stops.

21.7 Shops and services in Chipping Norton are predominantly concentrated in the centre of the town. There is also a leisure centre to the south of the town.

21.8 There are many places for people to park in and around Chipping Norton town centre, making it extremely accessible by car. West Oxfordshire operates a free parking policy.

21.9 Chipping Norton is located within rural West Oxfordshire. Travel is required to access higher order services located in Banbury, Witney and Oxford.

21.10 The Chipping Norton to Oxford bus service (Stagecoach route S3) runs hourly with more buses in the peak and runs 7 days a week. Buses run as late as 2345 from Oxford on Monday to Saturday evenings. The service is operated with new high-specification double-deck vehicles with wi-fi connectivity. Stops along the route have been enhanced to 'Premium Routes' standards, with new pole, flag and information cases, improved kerbing and in some locations, electronic real-time information cases. There are also hourly services to Witney and Banbury, and a 2 hourly service to Stratford-upon-Avon. Local services also run, with some buses to Moreton-in-Marsh and Burford, as well as market day services. There is no bus station in Chipping Norton.

21.11 Chipping Norton does not have a railway station, however, there is a dedicated railbus (Cotswold Railbus service X8) which runs from Kingham Station (approximately 4.5 miles away) to Chipping Norton and operates to a timetable to ensure the bus connects with trains to and from Oxford, Reading and London.

21.12 Chipping Norton sits astride the crossing of the A44 and A361 which is a very busy through route, especially for HGV's.

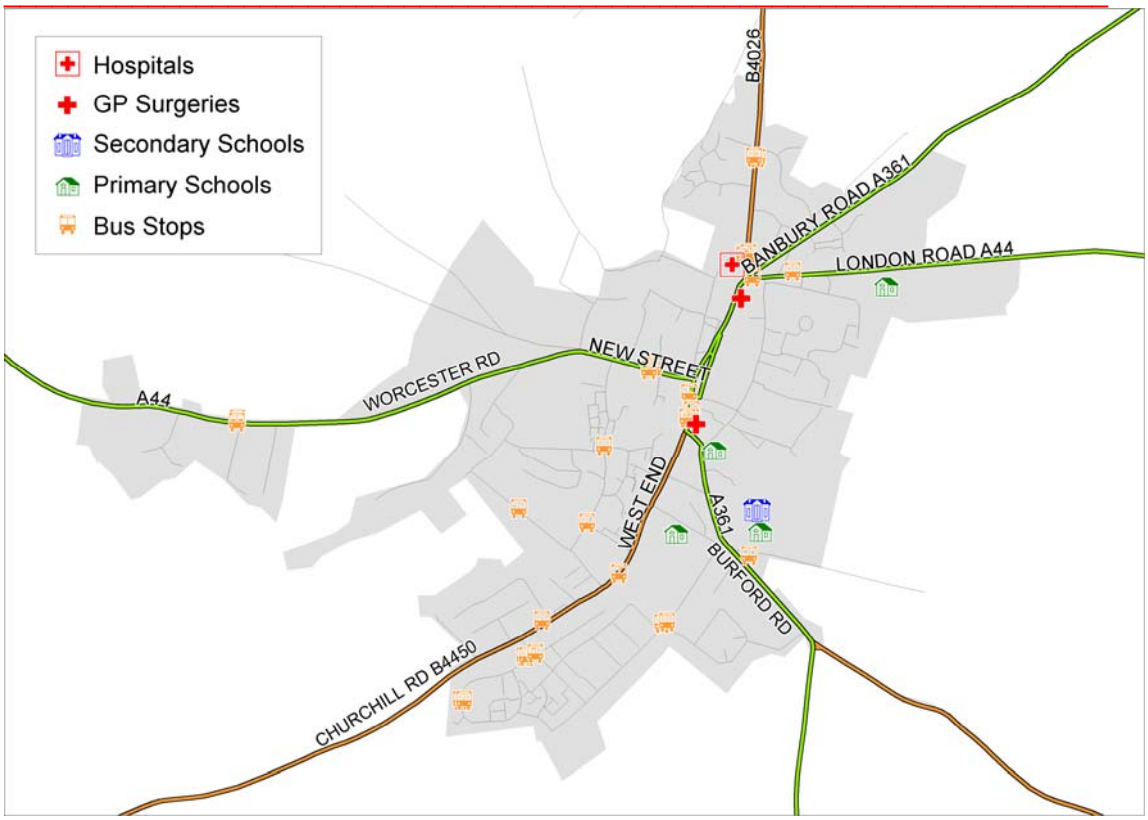

Figure 1: Plan of Chipping Norton

21.13 The town prides itself on being a 'working town' with over 50% of its residents working within Chipping Norton (2001 Census). The majority of Primary school pupils walk to school and approximately 34% are driven. Just over half of pupils at Chipping Norton Secondary School (and Sixth Form) catch the bus to school as many pupils travel from surrounding settlements; and 30% of pupils walk. 35% of pupils live within cycling distance (5km) of the school, however, the number of pupils who cycle is almost zero, this could be due to the hilly topography of the town and the lack of cycle routes. Some pupils living within Chipping Norton are travelling to school by car, even though the journey is a short walking distance. All Chipping Norton schools have a School Travel plan.

21.14 All areas in Chipping Norton, in terms of barriers to housing and key local services, are ranked within the top half of England's least deprived areas although variations between individual areas can be observed and there are pockets of multiple deprivation.

21.15 Chipping Norton has poor access to healthcare, reflecting the concentration of hospitals in Banbury and Oxford. The GP Surgeries are located within the town centre. The town has a relatively high rate of people out of work through sickness (LTP2).

21.16 There is a good range of public rights of way that connect the town to its surrounding countryside and settlements. However the

network is disjointed in many places where paths meet the road network. Selected improved management, road crossings and traffic-free links could help enable more people to access the countryside on foot, cycle or horseback.

Problems and Challenges

Overview

21.17 Due to the geographical location of Chipping Norton and it's proximity to major amenities, employment and healthcare, people are more reliant on their vehicles. Also, the topography of the town coupled with narrow roads within the town make it less conducive to cycling. Initiatives are required to improve the traffic management in the town in order to improve the air quality in the area. Improvements to public transport that service Chipping Norton may encourage people to use their cars less, and better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will make movement around the town more desirable.

Walking

21.18 Chipping Norton topographically is set in a high area of the Cotswolds on a steep slope which gives excellent views, however it can deter walking and cycling for some journeys such as those to the schools, work and local services. However, this topography also makes for an interesting and attractive recreational walking (and riding) destination for locals and visitors.

21.19 The close proximity between key locations have the potential to make positive contributions towards accessibility across Chipping Norton, though, this is hindered due to the topography and relatively poor cycle and walking connections within the residential areas.

21.20 Access to education within Chipping Norton is good. The distribution of the two primary schools and one secondary in Chipping Norton ensures the majority of dwellings are within walking distance. However, pedestrian routes to the schools from most parts of the town involve crossing busy roads, most without pedestrian crossings.

21.21 Legibility, way-finding and permeability are key issues, particularly within residential areas in Chipping Norton for pedestrians.

21.22 There is a lack of joined up, full/complete network of walking (and cycling) routes. There is also limited publicity of pedestrian (and

cycling) routes from residential areas, to local services, schools, employment areas and the town centre.

21.23 Adequate footway width and surface, as well as pedestrian safety are also key issues. There are areas of the town with busy traffic but no marked crossings.

21.24 Maintaining and 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 for local journeys and recreation.

Cycling

21.25 Many people commute in to Chipping Norton for secondary education. Access to this secondary education requires either public or private transport as there are no cycle links to Chipping Norton from the surrounding settlements.

21.26 There are few cycle routes at present in Chipping Norton or its vicinity due to restrictions caused by narrowness of roads.

21.27 The roads around Chipping Norton are often narrow country roads. Even within the town, some roads are too narrow for cycle paths. Although cyclists can use bridleways, restricted byways and byways (along with horseriders) these often do not connect up safely with roads that are safe to use.

21.28 There is limited publicity of cycling routes from residential areas, to local services, schools, employment areas and the town centre.

21.29 Cycle parking at key destinations within the town centre is considered poor.

Public Transport

21.30 Chipping Norton has a mixture of town, local, and national services, however, none of the services currently operate at a “turn up and go” commuter level frequency.

21.31 The current bus service to Banbury serves many villages along its route making it slow and unattractive as a viable means of regularly commuting to Banbury.

21.32 Considering the number of bus services which pass through or originate/terminate at Chipping Norton the main bus stops in West Street are too small to accommodate the number of buses, or to offer adequate interchange facilities.

21.33 Terminating bus services have rather a convoluted route to turn buses around due to the restrictive road network.

Behavioural change

21.34 The majority of Chipping Norton's built up area is contained within 2km of the town centre. 50% of residents work in the town itself, with relatively more residents working from home than the county average, however, 65% of the population in Chipping Norton drive to work, or are a passenger in a car or van with around 20% walking and just over 1% cycling to work. This level of commuting combined with few people cycling, indicate the need for behavioural change in the town.

Roads and Traffic

21.35 Just over a third of workers travel less than 2km to work, however, two thirds of commuters drive. Access to employment opportunities within the town by walking and cycling could be improved with more comprehensive routes and better promotion of the available routes. However travel for employment outside of the town, again predominantly require public or private transport.

21.36 Chipping Norton sits astride the crossing of the A44 and A361, with the heavily used lorry route to and from the Evesham area passing through the town centre. This has led to an Air Quality Management Area Action Plan and an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and being designated along the A44 and Horsefair and extending along Banbury Road. The presence of heavy through traffic detracts from the quality of the town centre as a destination and deters cyclists from using that route. The requirement for a bypass for the town to ease the impact of lorries on the town centre has been assessed in recent years.

21.37 Some areas of Chipping Norton have busy, narrow, poorly lit roads.

Transport Strategy

Walking and Pedestrian environment

To improve facilities for all pedestrians (including disabled people) across Chipping Norton through developing clear routes from residential areas to the town centre and other services and facilities around the town, along with making sure urban links join up with rights of way.

21.38 When resources or opportunities allow this is to be achieved by:

* Conducting an audit of current footways across Chipping Norton. The audit will identify schemes to improve legibility, way finding and permeability by creating formal walking routes to key facilities and employment from residential areas, and between key facilities by providing signage and improved crossing points.
* Publicising and promoting walking routes by producing, in conjunction with information on cycling; maps, literature and route planners, both in written print and on the internet.
* Improving the pedestrian environment in Chipping Norton. An audit process will identify areas where footways can be improved through widening, resurfacing, providing dropped kerbs, and new or improved crossing points, building up a work programme which will contributing to greater containment and thus supporting their vitality and economic success.
* Improving connections to the rights of way network particularly where urban footways meet rural rights of way though new footpaths and signage to provide footpaths throughout the town and into the countryside.
* Supporting the principle to strengthen the town centre and extend the boundary, and support designs which provide excellent facilities for pedestrians, in particular wider footways and pedestrian crossings.

Cycling

To ensure that the best cycle routes from residential areas to local services, schools, employment areas and the town centre is publicised. To provide a suitable number of good quality cycle stands at the key destinations and appropriate infrastructure where required along the route.

21.39 When resources or opportunities allow this is to be achieved by:

* Improving facilities for cyclists by conducting an audit of any existing cycleways, well used routes and locations of cycle parking across Chipping Norton. This data will be used to develop schemes which will provide a high quality cycle network. Measures will also involve the provision of additional cycle infrastructure such as cycle lanes/cycle paths, advanced stops lines, and cycle parking where appropriate, with a particular focus to improve accessibility to key destinations.
* Publicising and promote cycling routes by producing, in conjunction with information on walking, maps, literature

and route planners, which are made available both in written print and on the internet.

* Making street environment improvements for cyclists (cycle racks) and pedestrians at key destinations and employment sites.
* Joining up the riding network across the wider area using public rights of way so that routes for commuting and recreation are improved.

Public Transport

To work with the bus companies to enhance the Chipping Norton to Oxford service (S3) to achieve two buses an hour between Woodstock and Chipping Norton and to facilitate the provision of an alternate direct and via villages service to Banbury (488 and 489).

To sustain the historic long distance Oxford to Stratford-Upon-Avon route via Chipping Norton bus service, due to its importance for the tourist industry of Chipping Norton.

To ensure the provision of good quality bus information at bus stops and at local amenities in the town.

To enhance bus stop infrastructure and provision in the town, especially at the main West Street bus interchange area.

To ensure that new developments are located and designed to encourage the use of the bus, with particular attention to minimising walking distances to bus stops on the strategic inter-urban routes.

21.40 When resources or opportunities allow this is to be achieved by:

* Pump priming the Oxford to Chipping Norton Service (S3) to enable the frequency to be increased to two per hour (three per hour south of Woodstock).
* Working with the bus company to operate a direct, as well as the in-direct (via villages) service to Banbury to encourage greater bus use on this corridor, especially for journeys to work.
* Providing real-time information on the 488 and 489 Stagecoach services to Banbury via Bloxham and Hook Norton.
* Alterations to the bus stopping arrangements in West Street to enable three buses to stop in each direction, permitting better interchange between services.
* Providing timetables at all bus stops and where available appropriate real-time information, including information via the internet.

* Providing cycle stands at bus stops where physically possible.
* Providing new stops when the need occurs, for example, in the vicinity of the Parker Knoll site (A44, London Road).
* In terms of access to rail, investigate the following bus improvements:
* Promote and extend the X8 Kingham Railbus cross-town (London Road - health centre).
* Continue 'award-winning' promotion of the Cotswold Line Railbus.
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Behavioural Change

To work with organisations and businesses to develop and implement travel plans targeted at the areas which have the greatest problem. To provide suitable information (marketing and promotion) and platforms (such as car share, 'in the zone') to reduce the reliance and inefficient use of cars.

21.41 When resources or opportunities allow this is to be achieved by:

* Continuing to work with the schools in Chipping Norton with the highest trip rates to update their existing school travel plan, to monitor travel to school modes and travel opportunities and concerns for students travelling to school. Particular attention should be paid to reducing car use, increasing road safety education, and training and publicity, including cycle training.

* Approaching employers with high trip rates by car and then working with those employers to produce and enforce a workplace travel plan to understand current travel patterns, travel opportunities and concerns for employees travelling to work. A particular focus will be to reduce car use and promote walking, cycling and bus use.

* Conducting a feasibility study into the potential for car sharing to schools and/or places of employment from Chipping Norton, particularly in conjunction with any larger employers, in order to cut down single car journeys by commuters and/or school runs.

Traffic Management

To make best use of existing road space through careful planning, working with partners and utilisation of technology.

21.42 When resources or opportunities allow this is to be achieved by:

* Delivering relief to the town centre of Chipping Norton from HGV's; including HGV restrictions on Horsefair.
* Removing primary route status on the A44 between Oxford and Moreton-in-Marsh in order to deliver improvements in the AQMA.
* Conducting a traffic signage review on the strategic road network particularly on the A300, A361 and A44 of signage to Chipping Norton to remove clutter and ensure the routing is correct.
* Working with West Oxfordshire District Council to promote sustainable travel.
* Encouraging use of Low Emission vehicles as technology advances come forward. With the aim to reduce average CO_2 emissions in passenger vehicles and HGV's across Oxfordshire to 130 g/km by 2030 and improve air quality levels in Chipping Norton.
* Utilising the technologies to collect information about how the Oxfordshire road network is operating in order to manage the network by identifying and resolving both short and long term problems. This information could also be used to provide the public and businesses with up to date travel information.
* Reviewing road safety incidents and conducting speed surveys at sites of concern, particularly at the entrances to Chipping Norton and on the B4026 to the south east of the town and A44 London Road. Consider remedial road safety measures such as installing Vehicle Active Signage; build outs or lining/surface measures to address speeding.
* Investigate further measures for London Road network management improvements.