



Oxfordshire County Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

WITNEY HIGH STREET AND MARKET SQUARE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME

February 2026

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Environment and Place – Infrastructure Delivery
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Witney High Street and Market Square Enhancement Scheme
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New project
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The project aims to enhance the public realm and encourage better active travel in Witney Town Centre. When designing changes to the public highway there is a potential to exclude access for people who identify with having disabilities, particularly those experiencing mobility issues.</p> <p>This may be impacted by narrow footway widths, poor walking surfaces, pedestrian crossings that don't comply with accessibility guidance and absence of blue badge parking.</p> <p>It is important that any improvements to the walking environment are not provided at the expense of reduced access to buses and taxis and that any changes are balanced appropriately.</p>
Completed By	Nick Howdle-Smith
Authorised By	Chris Dyer -----
Date of Assessment	03/02/26

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The existing traffic restriction in Witney High Street and Market Square was implemented as a trial under an experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) in summer 2020 and subsequently made permanent in December 2021 through the formal traffic regulation order process. The reduction of car traffic in the town centre had revealed opportunities to reallocate road space to contribute to a better pedestrian environment, improved cycling access and new retail and leisure activities.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>OCC applied for and was subsequently awarded £1.98m of active travel (tranche 3) funding for full project delivery comprising scheme development, design, consultation, construction, and monitoring/evaluation of the project. Early concept designs were drafted to support objectives included in the funding application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport • Rationalise existing space for taxis and on-street parking • Improve the road layouts at the junctions of High Street/Welch Way and Market Square/Corn Street to support the existing traffic restriction • Implement public realm enhancements <p>The development of active travel projects in the County help to meet the Council’s strategic priorities and Local and Connectivity Plan targets.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that</p>	<p>Before developing construction plans for the project, OCC conducted a community engagement exercise to understand what the priorities for the community are to inform the designs to be taken forward for implementation.</p>

<p>supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups.</p>	<p>Community Engagement involved a survey on the Let's Talk Oxfordshire engagement platform, in person stakeholder workshops, two face to face public events and other comments received by email and post.</p> <p>The results from the Community Engagement online survey showed majority support for the scheme objectives and the feedback received informed the later design stages and the plans presented for public consultation in 2024. The public consultation showed similar levels of support for scheme overall.</p> <p>The full Community Engagement report is available to download at https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/witney-high-street and the Public Consultation report is available to download at https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/witney-high-street-2</p> <p>The survey results from the community engagement and public consultation exercises enabled OCC to profile respondents based on their demographics. The responses showed that the number of participants in the survey who declared that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a long-term illness, health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months is similarly proportionate to the overall share of people in Witney who are identified as disabled under the Equalities Act.</p> <p>Accessibility is an essential consideration within the project, so overall responses have been compared to those who declared their day-to-day activities are limited because of a long-term illness, health problem or disability to help identify differential preferences and potential negative impacts for that group. Using this information officers could identify potential gaps in service delivery and necessitate further engagement with transport and accessibility groups, before finalising designs for construction.</p>
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Alternatives considered / rejected

Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a temporary traffic restriction was introduced on the High Street to support social distancing and improve access. As part of those temporary measures, the existing short-stay parking bays between Welch Way and Corn Street were converted to disabled persons' parking places to ensure continued access to amenities for Blue Badge holders. A subsequent decision was made to retain this arrangement on a permanent basis.

However, following further assessment, it became clear that the temporary bays did not meet accessibility standards, primarily because they were not located adjacent to a footway. This creates significant challenges for individuals with mobility impairments when entering or exiting vehicles safely. It was also identified through an accessibility audit and Road Safety Audit that footway widths in some locations were insufficient to safely accommodate wheelchair users and the level of footfall typically experienced in the town centre.

The current scheme therefore proposes to reconfigure the location and number of disabled persons' parking places to ensure they are:

- Located adjacent to footways for safe access;
- Designed to meet accessibility best practice;
- Delivered alongside widened footways and improved sight lines at pedestrian crossing points.

Disabled Persons Parking Bay Numbers

- Pre-COVID: There were six disabled persons' parking places on the High Street and Market Square.
- Public consultation (early design): The scheme proposed twelve disabled bays.
- Statutory consultation (final proposal): The scheme now proposes ten disabled persons' parking places.

This adjustment from 12 to 10 spaces was necessary to achieve improvements in footway width and pedestrian safety, and to address concerns raised during accessibility and safety audits. Despite this reduction from the earlier proposal, the scheme still provides a notable improvement on the pre-pandemic provision of six bays. Blue Badge holders are also permitted to park on double yellow lines for up to three hours, where it is safe and reasonable to do so. This continues to provide additional flexibility for accessing the High Street.

This revised approach reflects a carefully considered balance between:

- Improving the accessibility of the public realm;
- Ensuring compliant and safe disabled parking provision;
- Meeting the needs of pedestrians, businesses, public transport and loading activity.

	<p>The outcome proposes a more accessible and inclusive town centre environment, while still improving the overall provision of disabled persons' parking compared to pre-pandemic levels.</p>
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Changes to the highway can exclude those with disabilities where improvements made do not adhere to accessibility guidance / advice. However the project has the opportunity to increase the level of service for people with disabilities.	Engagement / consultation with accessibility groups to ensure the highway changes do not adversely impact disabled users	Nick Howdle-Smith, Project Manager, OCC	Public consultation in 2024 and additional engagement with accessibility groups and third party consultants in 2025. Adjustments were then made to the designs.
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Feedback from the Community Engagement can raise awareness of high preference for extra transport links to rural communities around Witney.	The project must ensure that bus service levels are maintained and also provides for future increases in services	Nick Howdle-Smith, Project Manager, OCC	Engagement with bus companies and site monitoring in 2025 identified exceptional demand for additional passenger and vehicle capacity bus stop and shelters. An additional bus stop and shelter has been provided in the design.
Armed Forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other Council Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Providers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New public realm in the project area can enhance the walkability and new public spaces which has shown to improve: health/well-being, social cohesion, business trading activities and public events.	CCTV monitoring and better lighting can help to police/deter anti-social behaviour that may be attracted to new public realm areas	Nick Howdle-Smith, Project Manager, OCC	Comments on the proposals for the preliminary design have been integrated in the final construction plans. Pedestrian monitoring in the High Street is ongoing and will inform baselines and future measures of success.

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	February 2026
Person Responsible for Review	Nick Howdle-Smith
Authorised By	Chris Dyer