A vision for a working Cotswold town

The report of the Chipping Norton Town Appraisal 2003

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Foreword from the Mayor

August 2003

Chipping Norton is a town that has always seemed able to sort itself. There has historically been an air of independence about the place and a pride in its heritage. Always underpinning this, too, has been a great sense of community, thriving on the diverse nature of its people, businesses, facilities and buildings.

In 2003, the town, along with many other rural market towns, faces some challenges and some choices. It had been ten years since the last full town appraisal when we embarked on this Town Appraisal in 2002. It seemed to me that much had changed in the town in the intervening years. There had been quite considerable growth in housing with brown and green field sites being developed. The economy of the town appeared to be changing from industrial to more of a service base.

So, as a Town Council it seemed to us that there was a need for a thorough and comprehensive new Town Appraisal, which would enable as many of the inhabitants of the town as possible (young and old) to give their views as to where they would want to see this wonderful, buzzing, vibrant town of Chipping Norton going in the next ten years.

What you have here is the final report of a process that has taken some 18 months. This process has involved over 100 individuals in expert task groups, contributions from over 1700 local residents and villagers, over 70 local businesses, over 500 young people and the review of many facts, figures and reports.

The whole process has been a 'home grown' affair, for we are very fortunate in Chipping Norton to have as residents many extremely skilled people, who have voluntarily given of their skills and expertise.

As Town Mayor, I am especially indebted to these people who have been instrumental in effecting the completion of this Town Appraisal Report – Keith Ruddle, Jill Thorley, Gina Burrows, Rob Evans, Jim Crease, Roger Backhaus. There are many, many other people without whom this Appraisal Report could not have been written – the task group members and the skills group – and of course, those of you who filled in and returned a questionnaire. Thank you.

This Town Appraisal report must not be seen as the end in itself. The Town Council fully endorses the report and the view that Chipping Norton needs to develop and thrive as a working Cotswold town – a vision set out in the report. The Council must now consider how to take this vision forward into the 21st century, using this Town Appraisal to help it, along with other groups, formulate an action plan for Chipping Norton. There will be a progress report early in 2004 at the Annual Parish Meeting. Some separate actions are already underway - and the Appraisal report will be used to influence those both in the town and outside.

This is the really exciting stage of putting 'Vision into Action'. It will be where we really do need to 'pull together' as a community. My fellow Councillors and I would be delighted to talk to anyone interested in helping us along this journey.

Cllr Jo Graves

Chipping Norton Town Mayor

1 Summary - shaping our future

A report to influence our future

This report sets out the findings from the Chipping Norton Town Appraisal project carried out during 2002-3 at the instigation of Chipping Norton Town Council. The project was overseen by an Appraisal Steering Committee chaired by the Mayor. It has involved nearly 100 local people in expert task groups, a major review of factors influencing the future of the town, and inputs from surveys, meetings, and external reports and experts. These views cover a wide spectrum and many more might still to be heard. Many views conflict but there are some key themes that will drive the future and the Appraisal team have set out a vision for Chipping Norton in the next 10 years, together with detailed commentary on the challenges and issues facing the town in achieving progress towards that vision. Progress will require action - both by people and groups in the Town, as well as from public and other bodies outside Chipping Norton that can influence the Town's future.

The Town Appraisal - why now?

Chipping Norton carried out its own Appraisal last in 1990. This set the scene for a number of changes in the Town including investments in education, leisure, transport and the Town's facilities. The Town Council took a strong view that it was key to take stock again in 2002-3 at a time when market towns such as Chipping Norton are faced with both opportunities and threats from a changing rural and national economy and environment. Market towns, including Chipping Norton, have survived and thrived over centuries as rural hubs of trade, commerce and social life. Chipping Norton's own heritage has been a proud and fruitful one as such a centre in North Oxfordshire but bordering on the rich life of the Cotswolds, in one of the most pleasant environments in this country.

Chipping Norton in 2003

The Town today, with a population of around 6000, acts as a rural hub to a wider community of at least that many again and up to 40 local villages. Although in West Oxfordshire for administrative purposes, it reaches out to other parts of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire all nearby. 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 currently has strong 'self-sufficient' shops and services, state schools at all levels with good reputations, and highly valued health and caring services. There are around 100 clubs and societies, a thriving theatre, a new leisure centre and good sports facilities. The Town relies on connections to other larger towns - with for example roughly 50% of residents who work travelling elsewhere to their jobs and 50% of local business employing people from elsewhere. There is a broad mix of housing and incomes - with very little unemployment.

What does everyone think about Chipping Norton?

People who choose to live or stay in the town are very positive about the pleasant environment to work and live, peace and safety, the location, the community spirit, the health services, leisure and sport, local education and shops and services. While still being positive, concerns are raised in areas such as: a lack of things to do, paucity of the right kind of housing, keeping the Town's shops and services, public transport and employment opportunities, and of course the heavy lorries and traffic. But, alongside this, progress over the last 10

years on improving education and learning, the new leisure centre, upgrading The Theatre and the Town Hall and initiatives such as the millennium garden and the William Fowler Memorial Wood have all been positive.

Business and employers in the town are positive about Chipping Norton as a place to 'do business' particularly about local services and facilities. They have concerns about: finding the right people to employ in an area of low unemployment and high housing cost, support from local public authorities for business, town centre access and parking issues, IT infrastructure, the Town's attractiveness, and the need to promote the Town for visitors, new businesses and economic prosperity.

Visitors to and users of the Town are many, from outlying villagers who use the Town shops and services, to visitors from far and wide who use The Theatre and other leisure and cultural facilities, shops, pubs, restaurants, specialist service businesses - or simply come and stay a while. The villagers particularly want the Town to be more attractive - and value shops, the library, The Theatre, and the leisure centre apparently even more highly than the townspeople.

Balancing the different views

The Appraisal has taken views from many sources - including those already published such as the census, West Oxfordshire surveys, national statistics and existing plans. The views of nearly 100 local people in the different task groups have also been very influential. Key inputs have been as follows:

- the household survey with 1753 town and village residents replying - with car drivers concerned about parking, and pedestrians wanting safety; retired people wanting peace and quiet but young people wanting more facilities and things to do.

- perhaps surprisingly, in spite of a slight bias toward older people in the survey, 55% of the town survey support the current plans for growth in the Town and 33% would support more or significant growth if needed.

- town residents who put a safe and peaceful town as a top priority but only 2% of them rate 'attracting more visitors' at the top - compared with the 74% of the 149 village respondents who put 'attracting more visitors' top of the list.

- over 40 business people, many from the town centre, who in feedback from their meetings want better access and short term parking for visitors and employees, more promotion of the Town, and more support from public authorities.

- 77 businesses, many from the business parks, who in a questionnaire said they liked the Town for business but have concerns about finding employees, local housing costs, public transport, and IT infrastructure.

- around 500 young people, both under 11s and 11-16 year olds, who surprisingly value similar things to adults about the Town, but want more facilities, a bowling alley, a skateboard park and many more things to do.

- 35 clubs and societies who responded, many wanting to grow, bring people from outside the Town, but concerned about the quality of meeting venues and town facilities.

A vision for 2013

The Appraisal team suggest the people, visitors, the Town Council and business leaders in Chipping Norton will applaud a vision for the Town in 10 years that keeps the good things of today but moves the Town forward. The vision for 2013 would see a working Cotswold town thriving economically and socially as a rural hub - but keeping the strong community spirit and local services and facilities. A 'virtuous circle' set out in this report suggests how this can be achieved.

The choices and challenges ahead

The Appraisal team, in setting out a Vision for 2013, were conscious that this future could not be achievable unless many of the challenges identified in this Appraisal were dealt with. The team looked at how the future of Chipping Norton might evolve if some of the underlying trends continued or changed direction. This market town's future will depend on everything from Government policy towards towns this size, demographics, the drivers of economic prosperity, connectedness, access and many

other factors. Three scenarios were created for the Town as:

- A sleepy Cotswold jewel - driven by demographics of retired people and high income commuters moving into town
- A rural outpost - driven by economic drift and decline with investment going to larger towns
- A thriving cultural gateway - driven by maintaining critical mass through growth, with the risk of threats to environment and a quiet peaceful atmosphere

The current situation in 2003 sees many of these things at a crossroads - with early signs of economic drift (such as factory and hotel closures) as indicators that more proactive action is necessary. Evidence from other market towns shows that taking a strong hold at a local level can overcome some of the inexorable external forces influencing the Town.

The key priorities for attention

From the wide range of evidence gathered in the Appraisal three overriding concerns need significant attention. They are:

- a radical solution to pollution by lorries and traffic through the centre of town

- providing much more affordable housing with a moderate growth rate to support a working town

- giving more attention to youth facilities and activities

These three priorities may require sustained effort over the longer term. The other key areas for action to support the needs of a working Cotswold town are:

- attracting more businesses and visitors through practical policies and marketing the Town
- accessibility and balanced development plans for the working town centre
- preserving heritage and an attractive town scene
- safety and security measures
- reinvestment in 21st century health & social care
- increased and viable public transport
- keeping ahead on size and quality of schools
- more ambition and action on the library, Town Hall and sporting facilities

All these priorities, with the issues and current response to them are set out in each section of the report.

Putting vision into action

While many of these priorities are themselves part of wider plans for public bodies beyond Chipping Norton, the Appraisal team believe that the Town itself - and all its 'stakeholders' - can and should take a more proactive role in direct action and influence - or the Town will not get the attention its history and status warrant.

There are already a number of initiatives under way, separate from this Appraisal, involving other bodies in areas such as:

- reviews on the future of the Hospital and Castle View residential care home
- new lobbying groups for dealing with traffic and the lorries
- the Town Council liaising with business
- a review of the future of public sites
- lobbying on planning - for example on the possible future of the Parker Knoll site
- initiatives in public transport, youth facilities and CCTV amongst others

Probably more important is the need for the Town Council and other stakeholders to work together in partnership - making sure that the best local resources are brought to bear on the key issues. Many market towns have established town partnerships and oversight groups for this purpose - with funding and resources found both locally and from County, District and other public sources. The Town Council has only limited formal powers and budgets, but by working with other local groups should be in a good position to influence and provide a voice for the future.

The Appraisal Report has set out findings, a vision and key issues. The Town Council, working with other public bodies and groups in the Town, will now take forward the important priorities identified in this report with an action plan to be developed in 2003 and a report of progress will be made in early 2004 at the Parish Meeting.

2 The Appraisal - why, what and how?

What is an Appraisal ?

The Town Appraisal is an opportunity for the people and organisations in Chipping Norton to contribute ideas about the town they live in today and its future. What are the key likes and dislikes of those living and working here? What do we see as the threats and opportunities for the future and can we influence what might happen? It involves consultation by many means – including a questionnaire to each household.

But the Appraisal is not just about collecting interesting views. It includes analysis and summary of the key issues, a view on a future vision and summary of key priorities that may need action. By itself it is not a policy or action document – that has to be the province of others – but the Town Appraisal Report can provide an agenda for the Town Council, other authorities, local businesses and organisations and individuals to own and act upon.

Can the Appraisal make a difference ?

An Appraisal Report can give a coherent view of the Town's needs, aspirations and anxieties as well as a blueprint for the future. Those who make decisions that affect us – county and district councils, health and police authorities - are more likely to listen to our views if they are clearly presented with a 'grass roots' statement that can be seen to have support from people of the Town. All public authorities and government agencies (and there are many) now have to collaborate with local communities in partnership – and an official 'Appraisal statement' from a local parish or town now has some status. A report can also influence businesses or developers looking at the Town for their future. The last Appraisal in 1990 undoubtedly had some influence on proposals for the Co-op development and the recent new Leisure Centre.

Finally the Town can also choose to update the document as plans and actions develop as a 'living action and progress report', something the Town Council and its 'partners' may wish to consider.

The 1990-1 Appraisal and moving on

Chipping Norton's last Appraisal was over 10 years ago and was primarily conducted by a door-to-door questionnaire. The key suggestions made were around many of the same topics still firmly on the agenda today: affordable housing, traffic calming, lorries, public transport – as well as ideas for a roof on the swimming pool, a new leisure centre, retail redevelopment and town centre improvements – and indeed a support for tourism but alongside local business and manufacturing employment. The Appraisal document was used formally in District and County Structure and Local Plans and within Planning Briefs. It also made progress in getting WODC and OCC to focus on facilities for the town – in areas such as the ACE Centre and the Leisure Centre. The Appraisal also provided a mandate for welcoming modest growth for the future.

The 2002-3 Appraisal - a new agenda

The 1990-1 Appraisal relied heavily on external consultants with limited involvement across the community. It focused in the end largely on planning and traffic. A parallel business survey was also conducted by the then Chamber of Trade and Commerce, strongly based on the retail and commercial sector rather than manufacturing and service industries. There was little input from young people.

For this new 2002-3 Appraisal the Steering Committee felt it should be more broad ranging in the topics it covered (for example covering health, education, law & order and culture). It should be conducted predominantly by townspeople and there should be a specific focus on youth opinion whilst aiming at broad representation of all other age groups.

How this Appraisal was organised

The Appraisal process was agreed by Chipping Norton Town Council which established an *Appraisal Steering Committee* made up of councillors and key task group members. The group followed other recent Appraisal processes – and particularly guidance from the

Countryside Agency's Market Towns Health Check approach. Main work was done by teams involving nearly 100 individuals from the town (see back cover). This included:

Five key area task groups comprising councillors, organisation representatives and interested individuals who met several times to assess the current situation, identify issues, design the main household and other surveys, review results and develop findings. Groups covered:

- Traffic and Transport
- Business, Commerce and Tourism
- Health and Social Services
- Housing, Development, Environment, Law and Order
- Learning Culture and Recreation

A youth focus group to identify issues of particular relevance to young people (across all areas) and design and conduct surveys and analysis

A 'Skills Pool' who researched and disseminated statistical data and external reports, and helped with the main survey processes, key events and report production

The work was largely done in four key stages over the 18 months:

Taking Stock and identifying issues (Jan – July 2002) – with around 3 meetings of each task group getting inputs from many different parties in the Town and drawing up a set of issues that the Appraisal should address. This resulted in a major Town Hall workshop in July 2002 with around 50 participants to look at scenarios for the Town and agree the key questions for a town survey.

Surveys and other data gathering (August 2002 - January 2003) – the main Household Survey was delivered to around 2700 households with 1753 individual replies (32% return) from town and villages. A business survey was conducted by the Business, Commerce and Tourism task group. Youth surveys were done by the focus group, of under 11s and Year 10s. Other inputs included a short survey of clubs and societies, and ad hoc surveys such as parking and traffic statistics were completed. The data input and processing for the large surveys was handled externally by Warwick Solutions using the Village Appraisal software suite. Much other data on the Town and the area was obtained from sources such as WODC quality of life and housing surveys, the 2001 Census, national social deprivation, health and employment statistics, County education and social services, and many County, District, and Health PCT planning documents.

Analysis, findings and vision (January - April 2003). The main task groups were reformed, working with the central skills group on analysis and then a main workshop of 50 task group members and guests went through results and a vision for the town.

Consultation and report writing (May - August 2003). A 3-day Town Hall exhibition of the Appraisal results was held in May, and then report drafting led to meetings with the Town Council, West Oxfordshire District and Oxfordshire County Council to share findings in July and August.

The work of the Appraisal team stopped at this point. The Councils and other bodies now need to consider how they wish to take forward the vision and priorities identified.

Funding the Appraisal

The Town Appraisal process over the 18 months from January 2002 to August 2003 was funded largely by a budget from Chipping Norton Town Council not to exceed £8000 (for expenses such as meetings and workshops, copying, printing, materials and data processing agency costs for surveys), a £1300 Oxfordshire County Council Living and Learning Grant to support the youth appraisal work, and a West Oxfordshire District Council grant of £250 to support the business questionnaire. Time and effort of all steering group, task group and skills group members have of course been given free.

3 Chipping Norton today

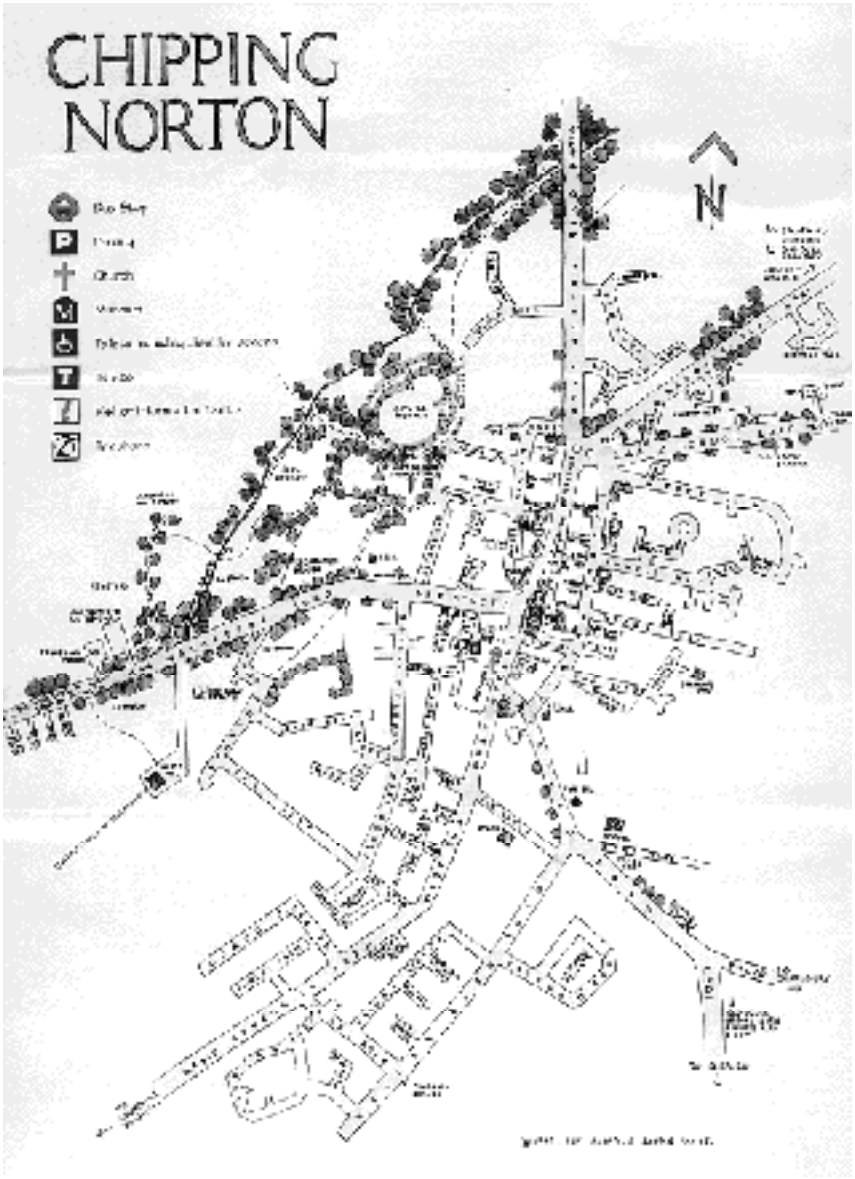
Chipping Norton – the town and its people in 2003

A rural Cotswold hub

Chipping Norton is a small town of 6000 people in West Oxfordshire. It is surrounded by a hinterland of small and larger villages and serves as a hub and service centre for the population of those villages. Its nearest larger towns are Witney (12 miles), Banbury (13 miles) and Oxford (20 miles). It is connected by bus to all these towns and by a bus/rail link to Oxford, London and Reading. Topographically the town is set in a high area of the Cotswolds on a steep slope which gives excellent views to the west but does present difficulties in winter when pavements are icy and road conditions become hazardous. The approaches to the town are dominated by avenues of mature trees.

An attractive town centre

The town consists of a central open space which is used for parking and the weekly market. This space is traversed by the A44 and surrounded by buildings with an elegant 18th century façade fronting mediaeval burgage plots of considerable depth. The whole of this area is designated as 'conservation' and contains many listed buildings. The majority of these buildings contain offices or retail premises and there are a number of hotels, pubs and restaurants. Most of the shops are small and privately owned. However there are two small supermarkets (with their own car parks) and one or two high street multiples as well as three banks and a post office. There are several residential properties also within the town centre. Dominating this area is the 18th century Town Hall.



Socially mixed residential areas

The town stretches in all directions around this central area but predominantly to the south and east where there are larger residential developments. Most of the housing estates were built by private companies but the large estate of council houses was eventually subject to Large Scale Voluntary Transfer and the properties remaining outside private ownership are maintained by Oxfordshire Housing. 80% of properties in the town are owner occupied. Within the conservation area most houses are period properties, mostly terraced and hardly any have space for off-road parking. Beyond this area houses consist mainly of a variety of terraced, semi-detached and detached two-storey residences with gardens and garages, some with open-plan frontages.

There are also a number of bungalows and two storey blocks of flats. There are no high-rise buildings but there are flats over some of the shops.

A range of self-sufficient education

The town has a state nursery school, two primary schools, a secondary school and a school for children with severe disabilities run by the National Children's Home. It has a number of nurseries and pre-school groups and a nationally acclaimed children's centre providing a range of support. The majority of the town's children attend its state schools. Community education is provided both on the secondary school site and at the ACE centre where there is a computer unit. A full range of daytime and evening classes run throughout the year. Along with the Charlbury centre it serves a number of villages. There is also a Chipping Norton Youth Centre.

A connected working town

There is a working population of nearly 3000, one quarter of whom are engaged in public administration, education and health. While half of the working population leaves the town to work, 50% of the workforce comes in from outside. 30% of the respondents to the questionnaire are retired and unemployment is very low. There are several industrial estates or business parks and two neighbourhood shops. The principal industry has been furniture making at Parker Knoll but now that this is under threat of closure the largest single employer is education. There are a number of hi-tech industries on the industrial estates, a quantity of professional and financial services and some people who work from home.

A core of local public services

Two surgeries are situated in the town centre as is the Memorial Hospital (with minor injuries and maternity units) and a county council run home for older people (whose future is currently under debate).There is a nursing home on the edge of the town and a private older people's home. In addition to existing sheltered housing for elderly people other retirement homes are being built or in the pipeline. The ambulance station is no longer operative with ambulances stationed at critical 'response' points within the area. There is a fire station run by Oxfordshire Fire Service and manned by permanent and retained firefighters. The police station is permanently manned, with a community police officer and an inspector who belong to the Thames Valley Constabulary. The nearest magistrates' court is at Banbury and the nearest crown court at Oxford.

Active sport and cultural facilities

A year ago a leisure centre with indoor pool was opened for dual use between the community and the secondary school. There is an open-air pool open in the summer months but whose future is under debate. There is a football club with clubhouse and rugby, bowls and rifle shooting clubs all at Greystones, land and buildings owned by the Town Council but leased out to the clubs. There are four mainstream churches and a community church meeting in the school. The churchyard is now closed for burials but the cemetery has just been extended. A major feature of the town centre is The Theatre seating just over 200 which also acts as a cinema. Theatre audiences come from far and wide, particularly for its annual pantomime and its reputation is far-reaching. Amateur dramatics and music are very popular and there are nearly 100 clubs and societies within the town.

Political and public administration

The town has a Town Council of 16 members, elects three councillors to the West Oxfordshire District and one councillor to the County Council. The Guildhall houses offices for the Town Clerk and West Oxfordshire District Council as well as the Visitor Information Centre.The Parliamentary constituency is Witney and West Oxfordshire. A number of organisations represent local business and commerce. Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages takes place at the ACE Centre. The Primary Care Trust is Cherwell Vale and the nearest general hospitals are the Horton at Banbury and the John Radcliffe in Oxford. Other public bodies include the Government Office for South of England and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

The Town's residents and why they live here

A social mix for a market town

From the 2001 census we know that West Oxfordshire - of which Chipping Norton is a part

- is near the national average on age mix - although 15-30 year olds are under-represented
- has 71% in employment and only 1.5% registered unemployed
- has 13% retired
- has 94% born in the UK and 98.4% from white ethnic groups (versus 91% nationally)

The mix for Chipping Norton specifically is shortly to be published from the census, but based on other recent data the people of the town

- have a slighty higher retired population and is 'getting older' in mix
- are similarly well employed
- have relatively low average incomes compared with those employed elsewhere, but a large range from top to bottom
- are healthy but have 'patches' of social deprivation (as nationally defined), in spite of the other extreme of high value property

The household survey respondents

We can also get a view of people in Chipping Norton and some local villages from the Appraisal public survey which had responses from 1753 individuals - around 32% of the population over 11. Of our respondents there were

- 52% working in a variety of occupations
- 29% retired (probably higher than the average for the town)
- 35% with a degree or professional qualification

but also

- 32% with GCSE only or no qualification

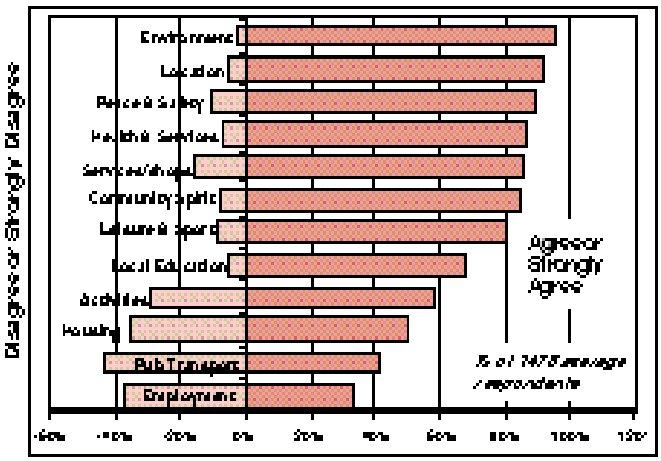
Around 27% were born in the area but there were a range of reasons why people came to the area - inluding jobs in the area (25%) love of country life (16%) and moving with or wanting to be near family.

What people like about the Town

We know from the WODC 2001 quality of life survey that compared with other people in West Oxfordshire, Chipping Norton residents are **more satisfied** with access to shops, availability of schools, health care and services for the elderly. They were however, **still concerned** about facilities for young people, community safety, traffic and road congestion, and threats to health and social care. Much of this was born out in this Town Appraisal.

Major positive aspects of living here

Q19: The following are major positive aspects of Chipping Norton that make you want to live here - do you agree?



People agreed (or strongly agreed) that the major positive reasons for living here were:

- the pleasant physical environment
- the town's location
- peaceful and safe neighbourhood
- local health and caring services
- local services and shops (although with some disagreements!)
- the community and its spirit
- facilities for leisure and sport
- good local education and schools

Views were, however much more mixed on the issues of

- lots of things going on
- the right housing available
- good public transport
- local employment opportunities

Much of this is developed in detail in the main sections of the Appraisal Report.

A thriving market town - recent progress and success

To complete a short overview of Chipping Norton today it is worth a brief review of some of the changes that have happened in recent years. During the past decade there have been a number of developments in different elements of the life of the Town. Here are 10 examples - when we are looking at gaps and omissions we should also consider these:

New Businesses - A number of new employers have established themselves in the Chipping Norton business parks in recent years including:

· CETA	1991	80 employees
· Owen Mumford	1992	89 employees
· The Phone Co-op	1997	19 employees

The Theatre, Chipping Norton 1995 -The Theatre was completely transformed as a result of Lottery Funding – extended stage, new box office, dressing rooms and rehearsal areas, extended bar and gallery. New seating will be installed this summer.

Town Centre Scheme 1996 - New pavement surfaces, pedestrian walkways and street furniture on Topside funded by WODC and Town Council, all improvements applauded by some and still questioned by others

The ACE Centre 1998 - One of the very first Government Early Years of Excellence centres – comprising Nursery School, Crèche and Childcare activities, Computer Centre and Adult Classes. After School Club, Registrar services and community outreach (used by 500 people every week). Designated as a Children's Centre in 2003 .

X8 Bus-Train link 1999 - Regular Mon-Sat service linking directly with trains from Kingham Station to Oxford, London, Worcester and other connections, also linking villages and areas of the town – Kingham, Churchill, Bledington as well as Cornish and Churchill Roads. 89,205 passengers since it started – 100 per day. Established and funded by the County Council and Stagecoach.

Chipping Norton Millennium Garden 2000 - A Town Council project at the junction of Burford Road and West Street, planted and maintained with considerable voluntary help.

Chipping Norton Leisure Centre 2002 - New and environmentally designed award-winning dual-use leisure centre for the community and Chipping Norton School. A collaborative venture between WODC, OCC and Sport England which is run by Wycombe Leisure Ltd with swimming pool, sports hall, squash courts, fitness centre and dance studio.

Chipping Norton Rugby Club 2001 - major extensions, new facilities and new pitches, much funded by Sports England Lottery money and local fundraising.

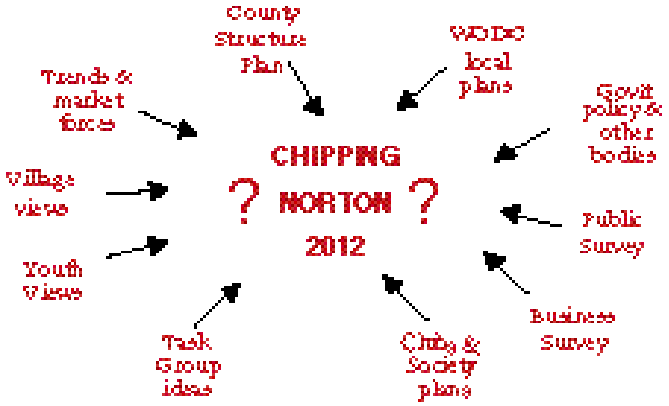
Chipping Norton Town Hall 2001-3 - refurbishment and renovation project by the Town Council.

Chipping Norton Schools - 10 years to 2003 - Pupil numbers are expanding in all our schools and education is one of the Town's major employers. All the Town's schools have received positive OFSTED reports and Chipping Norton School has Training School status to train new teachers. There is also an expansion in private and public playgroup and nursery provision.

4 A vision for Chipping Norton in 2013

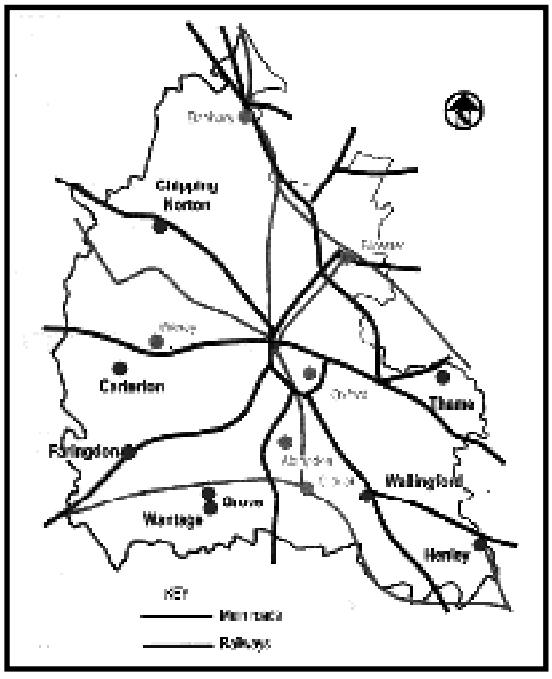
What will influence Chipping Norton's future?

The Town Appraisal looked at Chipping Norton today as well as views of the Town tomorrow. This Town's future will depend on many external factors - but also on the actions and will of the people in the Town. Positive views and actions can influence change - for the better or worse! A number of key themes emerged that are likely to determine this Town's future.



The Town's 'role' as a small market town is heavily influenced by Government and County views - currently that Chipping Norton is **not** one of the major towns in the County designated for major economic growth (Oxford, Didcot, Banbury and Witney), but is to be treated as a 'smaller town with a limited amount of employment development'. This, at one level, seems in line with a town on the edge of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The specific policies behind this 'town designation' - in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the WODC Local Plan, do however mean restricting new business development, favouring limited housing to meet county needs, and losing out potentially on any major investment in railways, premium bus routes and road development, and even major new community infrastructure such as health and education.

The 'smaller towns'



Access and 'connectedness', economic base and prosperity, and critical mass are all themes that will drive the likely future for Chipping Norton as larger towns attract investment.

The shift in ***demographic and social make-up*** will also be critical, as will the Town's ability to maintain ***well-being, security and health*** alongside a ***sense of community***. The Town's ***attitude to the environment*** and its ***willingness to look outside as well as inside*** the Town in defining its role will also influence the future.

Scenarios - what could happen by 2013?

The Appraisal team discussed 3 different scenarios for Chipping Norton in 10 years - all based on possible assumptions about how these themes would play out. These were used to test views in the Town. The chart on the next page gives more detail. These scenarios included:

A **'Sleepy Cotswold Jewel'** - driven by a 'demographic drift' attracting wealthy commuters, retired people and losing the working town

A **'Rural Outpost' -** driven by economic drift towards the larger towns and seeing decline in services and employment

A **'Bustling Cultural Gateway'** - driven by inward investment and critical mass - but which would mean greater growth and some risk to environment and quiet

Three possible scenarios

Sleepy Cotswold jewel	*Rural outpost*	*Bustling cultural gateway*
'demographic drift'	*'economic drift'*	*'critical mass'*
-retirement homes/affluent elderly -high house prices -commuter territory -nice place to live -decline of public transport -tourism attracted -environment protected *'Annual upmarket arts festival'* *'Nature park on allotments'* *'Struggling school drops down tables'* *'Bypass proposal finally accepted'* *'Mayor opens new senior citizens centre'*	loss of industry to high growth towns -small low-skill jobs -local unemployment -gradual rural isolation -commuting, but poor transport -Pollution and health issues -community divisions – us and them. *'Derelict factory site drugs hangout'* *'50 tonne lorry crashes into Town Hall'* *'6th form nostalgic reunion'*	- new industry attracted -higher growth of houses to support demand - 'hub' for increased activity -public transport increases -Town centre retail investments -busier town centre and more traffic *'Greystones new housing development approved'* *'Allotments give way to new sports park and pitch-and-putt'* *'Theatre opens new community arts centre extension'* *'Burford Road supermarket proposal agreed'* *'Car parking charges increased'*

Of course, none of these are actual predictions and the key to what happens in Chipping Norton is how the inexorable march of market and governmental forces is balanced by local influence, choice and action. What is clear is that events do drive change. The Appraisal team in 2002 created some future headlines - two of which included

'100s of jobs lost through closure of major local employer'

and

'Town hotel to close - more retirement homes on the cards'

Both of these have turned out to be close to reality - based on events in 2003 - and a key purpose of creating a vision for the Town must be to try to change and influence the 'march of history'.

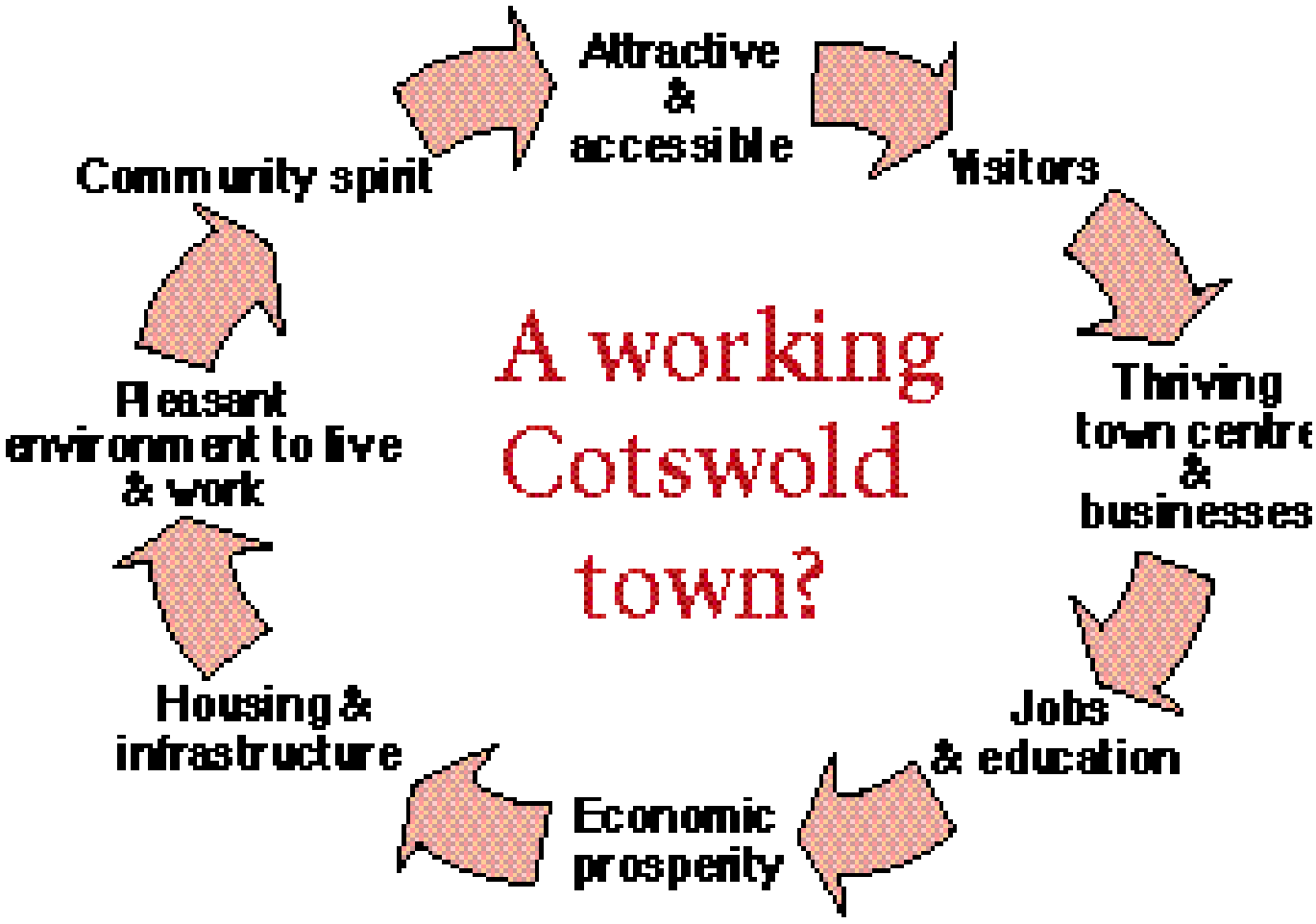
Vision - a Working Cotswold Town for 2013

The Town Appraisal team believed strongly, based on the feedback from the whole process, that the best vision for Chipping Norton is as a **Working Cotswold Town.** It can use the best of the past but with the best of investment for the future as a rural market town 'hub' that can act as a centre for the Town and villages around it. This view is in line with the latest view of the Countryside Agency in its own report on the future of Market Towns.

This vision requires a 'virtuous circle' to work into the future to act as an 'engine' for future success and prosperity - measured in many different ways. The virtuous circle (see chart below) clearly demonstrates how future success depends on linking together many aspects of the Town. So Chipping Norton, as a pleasant place to live and work, creates a community spirit and attractiveness for visitors and new businesses. The thriving town and economic prosperity, jobs and education all justify better housing and infrastructure and so on.

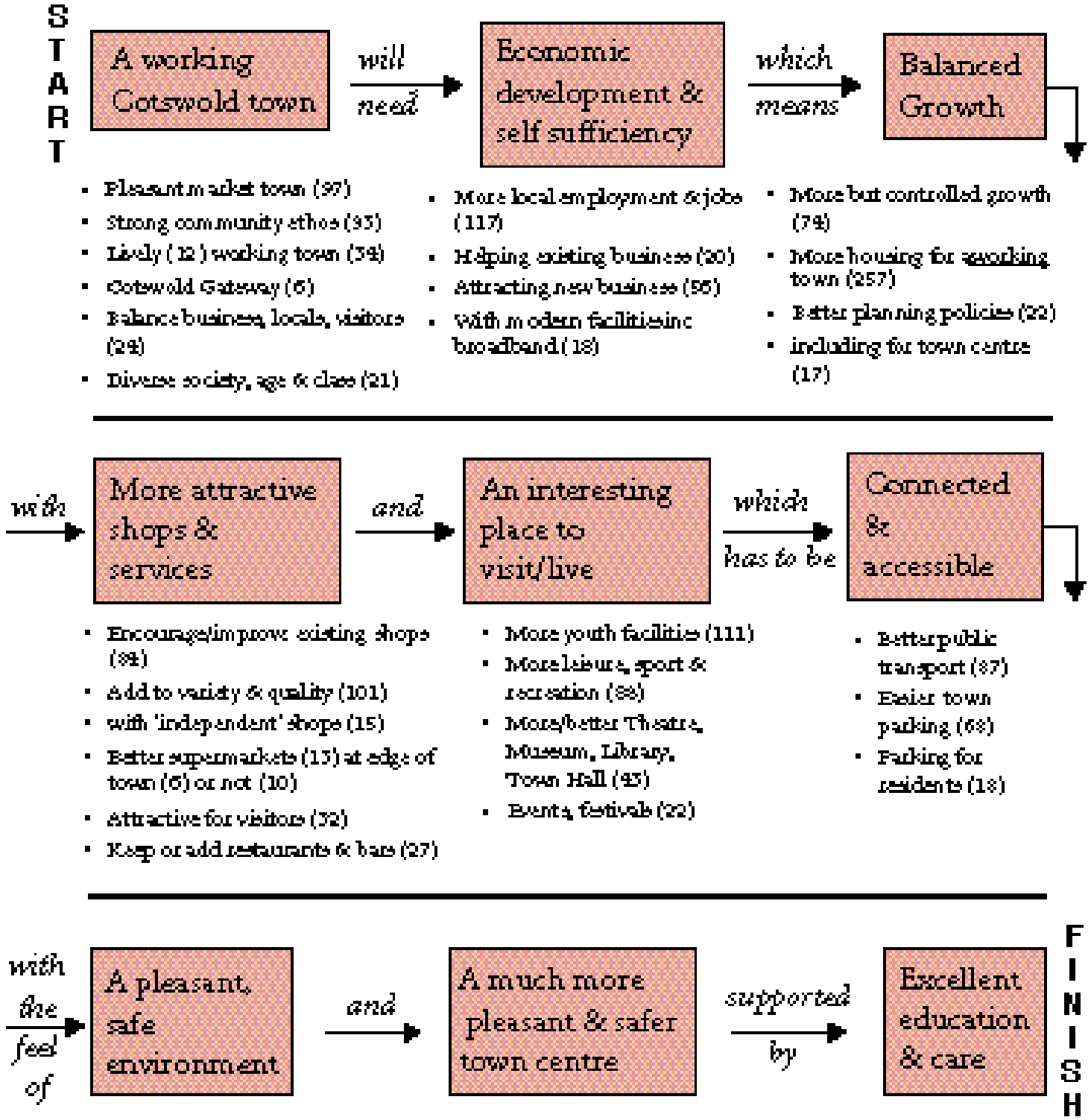
So can this vision for the Town be practical and is it supported by the people in the town? In Q 21 in the town survey over 900 households offered their views on the 'top 3 most important things regarding the future of Chipping Norton over the next 10 years'. Anything important could be mentioned. By taking the number of mentions for all issues we can create a picture of what the Town as a whole thinks is important - and can demonstrate how the Town supports the 'virtuous circle' set out by the Appraisal team. This 'vision from the people' is shown on the page opposite. Many of the important items mentioned are picked up in some detail in the different sections of the Appraisal report.

The 'Virtuous Circle'



Chipping Norton 2013 - A practical vision from the people of Chipping Norton

(numbers refer to mentioned as 'top 3 priorities' in survey Q21)



5 Business, commerce and tourism

'a nice place to do business'

To be a thriving and viable 'working Cotswold town' Chipping Norton has to be a place which is attractive and accessible for business and visitors - bringing employment and economic prosperity. It must also meet the needs of people who live and work in the town who want services and shops locally, but may be tempted to go elsewhere. The Appraisal drew together a number of wide ranging views on these issues - which are set out below.

Working people - here & elsewhere!

Chipping Norton is dependent for economic prosperity on much movement in and out of town - of local people going elswhere, and visitors using the Town and working here. In looking at data from both local businesses and the working people who responded to the town survey we know:

- Half of the population of Chipping Norton work in the Town, either in the town centre or on the several business parks.
- Similarly 50% of the workforce comes into the Town from outside.
- Meanwhile the rest of the working population commutes to places further afield, predominantly Banbury, Oxford and Witney.
- 75% of those working in the Town travel to work by car.
- A small proportion work from home.

The largest employer at the time of the Appraisal was Parker Knoll but events have moved the situation on and with the declaration of a 50% reduction of the workforce (200 jobs) and no great security for its future, education will become the largest employer. Whether measuring the workforce or the working population, the largest proportion of people in the Town work in public administration, education and health. The next largest category is that of the distributive trades and hotel and catering.

A mix of businesses and services

A business profile of the Town suggests it is a mixed economy with a wide range of retail, services, light manufacturing and computer-based industries.

Apart from two neighbourhood general stores, the shopping centre of the Town is gathered around the Market Place, along Topside, Middle Row and along West Street. The two supermarkets have their own carparks but parking for the other town centre businesses occupies the Market Place and two public car parks. Providing long-term parking for employees and shorter-term parking for customers and service users does put a considerable pressure on the available spaces and is seen by many as a major problem and an issue that could impede prosperity.

An attractive place 'to do business'

What was clear was that both residents and business people found the Town an appealing place to shop and do business. Because of its 'real town' feel (despite its small population) the Town does have the kind of facilities that make doing business easier – the existence of three banks, several accountants, solicitors, insurance companies, printing firms, graphic designers, are definite advantages. One requirement from the smaller and out-of-town businesses was for faster IT access. Issues of customer and employee parking were echoed as well as the availability of space for expansion and

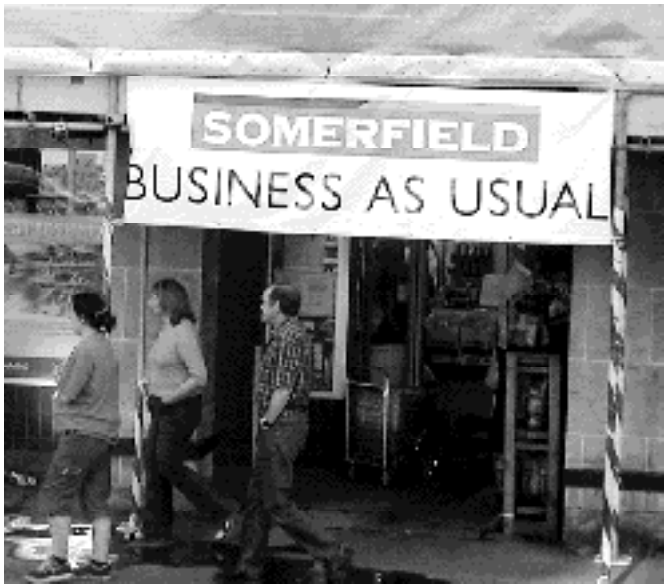
development, given that West Oxfordshire's plan allows for no more industrial growth in the Town. Town centre businesses were positive about increasing their number and range, particularly favouring an increase in specialist, individual and luxury outlets and workshops.

There was also a strong feeling towards the provision of starter premises and the encouragement of 'new' companies on the estates.

The Town centre - views of Town residents

The response from the household questionnaire showed that people used all the town centre services on a regular basis but that many did their main food shopping out of town, principally in Banbury. There was general appreciation for the range of shops but identification also of particular gaps in the retail provision – particularly shoes and especially shoes and clothes for men and for children. A number of niches remain unfilled though some of the suggested businesses have been tried but have not proved viable, or been supported sufficiently by local customers. At the time of this report there were only two empty shops in the Town. Many businesses have considerably extended and improved their premises.

While acknowledging that the Town cannot compete fully with larger towns with a greater number of 'high street multiples', residents echoed a need for outlets that were 'cheap' and 'affordable' as well as 'up-market' and 'high quality'. There was some criticism of both the town supermarkets (although substantial improvements have been made since the questionnaire was filled in) and several



mentions of 'out-of-town' and larger supermarket chains. By contrast there were also people who were vehement that they wanted 'no out-of-town supermarket'. Local shoppers divide between car users and those who walk - and so the demand for better and more controlled short-term parking close to shops was heard alongside comments that more people should walk from larger car parks.

Views from the Town Centre's businesses

Some members of the business community - particularly some town centre traders - had expressed disquiet in the past that their interests were not being sufficiently addressed by the Town Council and other public authorities. Alongside the Appraisal, but not formally as part of it, two meetings were held in the Town Hall in February and April 2002, chaired by local business people and with over 40 business people attending, including many with

town centre shops and businesses. A number of views were drawn out here. In particular:

- the importance of seeing Chipping Norton as a centre that brought people from wider than local villages

- the need to market the Town and its strengths as a tourist, cultural, shopping, and service centre

- continued need to improve and enforce town centre short-term parking, signage, lighting and security in main car parks

- ideas for more publicity and information through town guides, web sites, events, tourist office etc

- the need for a business directory and a proper business forum

- the case for better IT infrastructure

A lobbying group for 'Broadband for Chippy' caused sufficient registrations to trigger the 350 point set by BT for its installation and rollout to domestic and business users is promised for August 2003.

Views from the wider business community

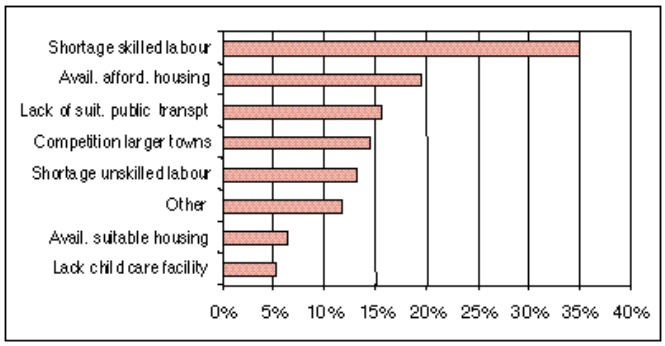
The Appraisal task group for Business, Commerce and Tourism was concerned that views of employers and other customers of the Town were not fully represented. They conducted a wider survey of the employers in Chipping Norton - with a questionnaire sent to most

- Unemployment is very low within the Town, as it is within the District.
- There is in fact a shortage of labour in several fields.
- In firms with 5 or less employees, 50% of the work-force is part-time.

local businesses and employers. 77 local employers responded - including large companies such as Owen Mumford, Ceta and some town centre businesses. Many respondents were operating outside the town centre and results showed that their needs are often different from the retail businesses within the centre. This wider employment group includes those on business parks as well as the schools, library, surgeries and hospital. One key issue raised was the difficulty of recruiting people - in an area of high employment and

Recruitment difficulties

Q12: If you have difficulty in recruiting staff what are the main reasons?



high house prices, and where public transport and the competition from larger towns is an issue (see chart above).

The importance of tourism and visitors

This has been a complicated issue in the past and has attracted some unhelpful media coverage. The Town lies within West Oxfordshire in the 'Oxfordshire Cotswolds' and is promoted under that branding. There is a Visitor Information Centre in the town and it is networked with the other centres at Woodstock, Stow and Burford. West Oxfordshire has made efforts to encourage the Town to look positively on tourism and has actively helped with funding for locally produced maps. There have, how-

ever been setbacks such as planning approval for the closure of a large B&B and a town centre hotel in 2002 which seriously reduced the number of overnight beds.

There are however, many examples of activity aimed at promoting the town relying often on the enthusiasm of groups of individuals.

Examples might be:

- the Christmas trees (Chipping Norton Society, individual retailers with Council support)

- Victorian evenings and other special events (various retailers and business people)

- local maps and information guides (Estate Agents, Chipping Norton Society)

- the campaign for better IT infrastructure

- Chipping Norton websites (local business enthusiasts and individual businesses).

Contrasting views on visitors

The business community clearly see the need for visitors and tourists to support the Town's prosperity. As an example the Theatre has around 20,000 audience members annually, who also use the Town's facilities, pubs and restaurants - and a high proportion, based on box office analysis come from outside the town boundaries. From the household survey we know that people would like to see more overnight accommodation for visitors and also the heritage sites within and around the Town protected. However, some respondents do not want to encourage some kinds of shops that contribute to the Town's prosperity. It may be necessary to give more recognition for businesses that attract visitors and allow the wider range of shops and services to prosper.

Clearly attracting visitors is of different levels of importance to different people. A stark contrast in the household survey shows:

- less than 2% of Town residents put 'attracting more visitors' as a high priority for the future - although they of course do want improved local shops and a pleasant safe environment.

- around 74% of the survey respondents who live in the villages put 'attracting more visitors' as a top priority for Chipping Norton to consider.

The need for finding the balance

Features of the Town which do attract visitors from further afield are its Theatre, its graceful eighteenth century town centre, its antique shops and art galleries, its position on the edge of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, its Museum and sports clubs, the nearby National Trust property at Chastleton House, the Rollright Stones, its music, the Rotary Club's annual Jazz Day and the use of both the Parish Church and Town Hall as venues for classical music. While these are all elements which might, and do, attract tourists and visitors, there is also a strong feeling, both from visitors, residents and business people that part of the Town's identity and charm is that it is not overtly a 'tourist spot' but a 'real town'. Maintaining this character while at the same time enabling the Town to benefit financially from its existing resources is a delicate operation which will need to be managed with great care.

Issues for action and response

***The key issues**: for Chipping Norton to thrive as a working Cotswold market town it must defend and develop its role as an economic centre of activity. The 'virtuous circle' set out in the vision will depend on the Town 'competing' against larger towns with better facilities and access. It will need visitors, local jobs, good retail and business services - and all of these must be attracted to the Town. Local people must be encouraged to use and support local businesses.*

There are a number of issues firmly on the table, whether raised as part of this Appraisal or not, including those points brought out earlier: marketing the Town and better information, attractiveness for business and visitors, IT infrastructure, easier access and parking. One further issue must be a focus on planning policy to encourage small and medium scale business expansion on appropriate sites - both in town centre and business parks.

***The need for a business voice**: there was general agreement from the business community in task group discussions that the Town needs to be promoted and the avowed attractiveness of the Town and its location, its scale and its sense of community are all attributes which have attracted people to settle and do business here. There were positive reactions in the responses to the idea of a town website, a business directory and a body to promote the Town, and some indication that the local authorities had not always been helpful in this. Chipping Norton has had a Chamber of Trade and Commerce in the past but historical issues in the relationships with local authorities have made local businesses wary of taking any major 'town' role.*

***A new agenda in 2003**: there is clearly a need for businesses of all kinds in the Town to have a major part in shaping the Town's future vision. Much of this will require better liaison between business, the Town Council, other public bodies and organisations. Many market towns have created different ways of achieving this - often with forums or partnerships led by influential business people in the town - and not by the public authorities. It is not for this Appraisal to suggest how this should be done. Recent developments, unconnected to the Appraisal project, may bring a new approach to the business connection with the town. These include:*

- a new Town Council which includes more people with active business roles in the Town

- a new Town Council Business Liaison Committee alongside a Publicity Committee

- a 'business breakfast' club that has had two successful meetings in the past months.

- the idea of a 'new beginnings' broad-based business group which could act as a discussion partner with the Town Council Committee.

6 Traffic and Transport

'less HGV pollution, better public transport, safer for cars and people'

Cars and public transport - a better balance?

Chipping Norton is an active rural town - used as a centre by some and as a home base by others. Access and connection are essential - with a real need to improve public transport as well as provide for parking of cars by residents and visitors. From the Appraisal respondents we know:

- there are 1.3 cars per household but only 17% are parked on the road
- 60% of the Town's residents use their cars to get to work
- 21% walk to work
- 75% of people who work in the Town get to work by car
- only 6% use public transport to get to work

Public transport in the future was seen in the Appraisal survey as important by many - with the key bus and train services to Oxford, Banbury and London top of the list, including the X8 bus connecting Chipping Norton to the main train line at Kingham for London, Oxford and Worcester, running 11 times daily. There was relatively less support for buses to Witney, Moreton, Stratford or the idea of a local community bus. A question not tested was the future demand for buses coming into Chipping Norton as a local centre for villages.

Future public transport

Q39: Which of the following services will be of most value to you in the future?

Highest ranked services based on regular or occasional future use

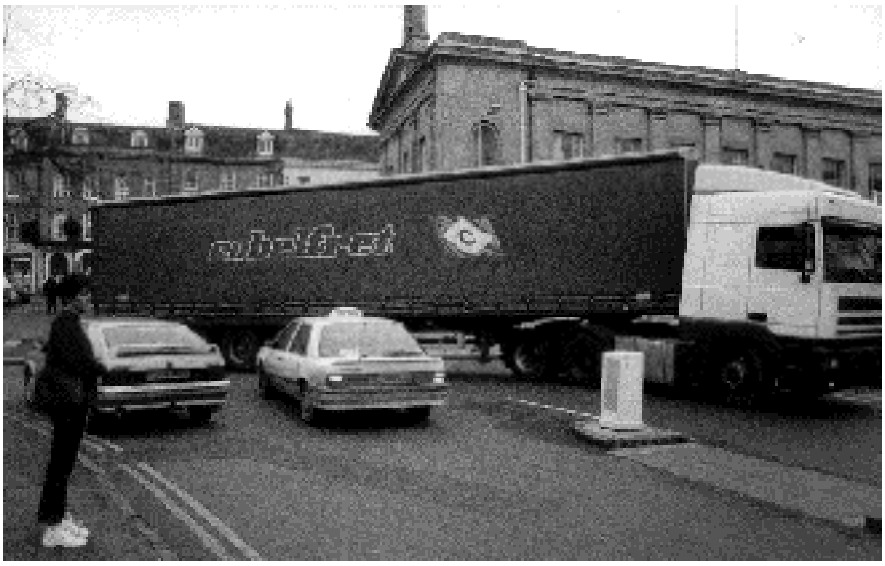
Bus to Oxford	58%
Train from Kingham or Charlbury	57%
Local taxis	55%
Bus to Banbury	41%
X8 bus to Kingham	38%

While people see public transport as important, use could be encouraged, according to the survey, by more frequent services (46%) lower prices (36%), later evening times (35%) and more reliability (35%). Given the apparent importance of taxis, which provide more flexibility, the idea of more 'taxis as buses' for particular regular local routes might be explored.

Issues for action and response

To improve public transport will continue to need pressure and lobbying from the Town and villages - as well as active encouragement to use public transport. Local users group CHART (Chipping Norton Area Public Transport Users Group) provides one voice to campaign for better public transport and could, along with the Town Council, take a more active lead in ideas for increasing use of public transport. The Cotswold Line (Train) Promotion Group (of which Chipping Norton Town Council are members) is aiming for faster and more frequent trains from Kingham. A County Council review of Chipping Norton area bus services is planned for 2004-5. Rural transport is also an active item for the West Oxford Strategic Partnership, and Oxford Rural Community Council - with potential funding available for rural schemes.

Solving the heavy lorry problem



758 HGVs go through the town every 12 hours - that's about one a minute

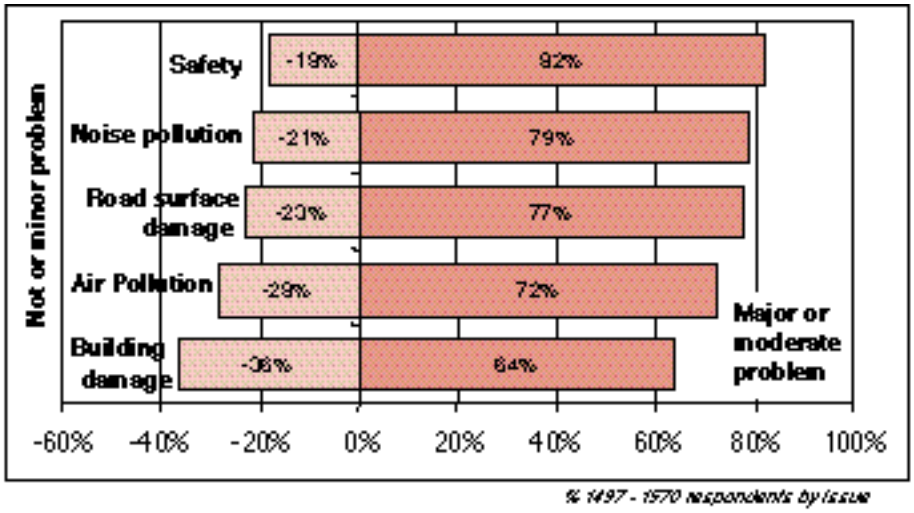
Chipping Norton remains on a major through route for commercial traffic including lorries up to the highest European size and weight. The A44 through the Town is routinely used by transcontinental carriers. The increase in HGV traffic through Chipping Norton and the associated pollution of all kinds have reached a point which appears to affect everything from safety to real pollution issues of noise, building damage, road surface damage and air pollution (see chart on survey findings). Reactions to this issue in the public survey were some of the strongest in the whole Appraisal with around 252 'unprompted' comments in a question about top priorities for the next 10 years. Amongst many other surveys, official air quality monitoring during 2002 and 2003 shows Horsefair as the worst place in West Oxfordshire - at 35 parts per billion of Nitrogen Dioxide (versus the target limit of 21ppb set by the Government for 2005).

Issues for action and response

The Town Council has been campaigning for axle weight restriction through the Town and hence an alternative route for HGVs. A lorry recommended route avoiding the A44 (along the A40) has had little impact. Other suggestions such as an upgraded diversion past the Rollright Stones have been made. Longer term proposals, for a total new bypass, to date have not gained much support but may need to be revisited. It is clear, however, that a coherent case for action can be made. West Oxfordshire Environmental Services may well designate Horsefair and the centre of town an Air Quality Management Area if pollution targets are not met. This may then lead to more urgent attention to the problem. A robust solution will almost certainly mean collaboration amongst a number of towns, villages and counties affected. Chipping Norton (through the Town Council) is part of a new such lobby group formed in 2003 (A44A) - and more concerted effort is needed to influence the Oxfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan and the Department of Transport to achieve real progress more rapidly. Efforts to produce evidence and a case for change must continue.

The problems caused by HGVs

Q42 It is known that HGVs/lorries are an issue for the Town. how would you rate the following factors?



% 1497 - 1570 respondents by issue

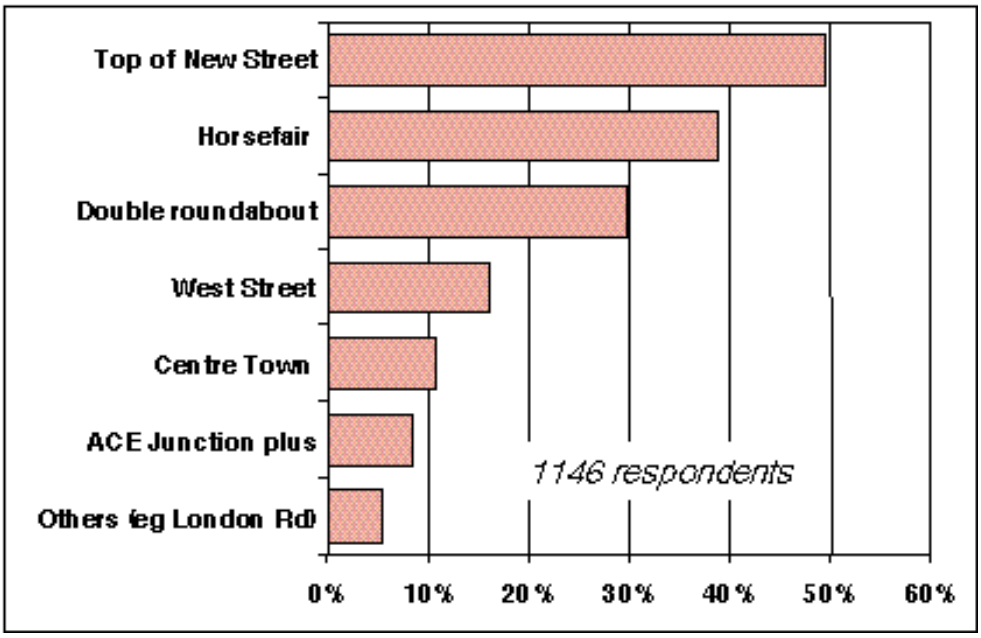
Controlling traffic and promoting road safety

For a busy market town, with increasing local and through traffic, issues of road safety and traffic control were addressed in the Appraisal and public questionnaire. Local people responded to an open question about road safety issues - with a number of specific concerns cited, unprompted, by many including speed (19%)

Road safety problem areas

Q43 Where in town do you think there are particular road safety problems?

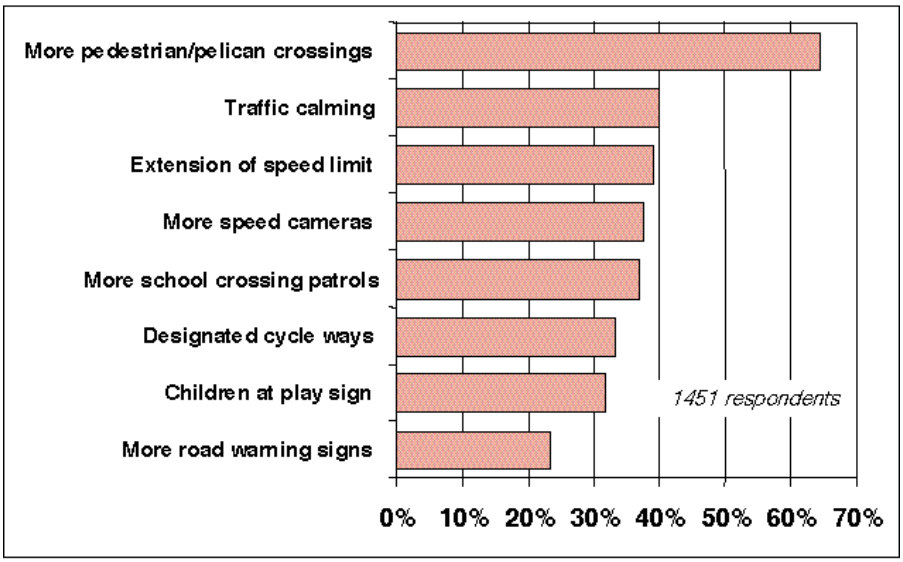
lorries (14%) parked vehicles (12%) and the dangerous state of paths and roads (6%). In the same question there were real concerns by both road users and pedestrians about some specific places - again unprompted. The key town points, shown on chart opposite, were the crossing at the top of New Street ('a nightmare'), the narrow section of Horsefair ('barely wide enough to push a pushchair') and the double roundabout by the



As a general call for action, there was strong support for a number of measures such as more pedestrian crossings and patrols, traffic calming, speed controls and signage (see chart below).

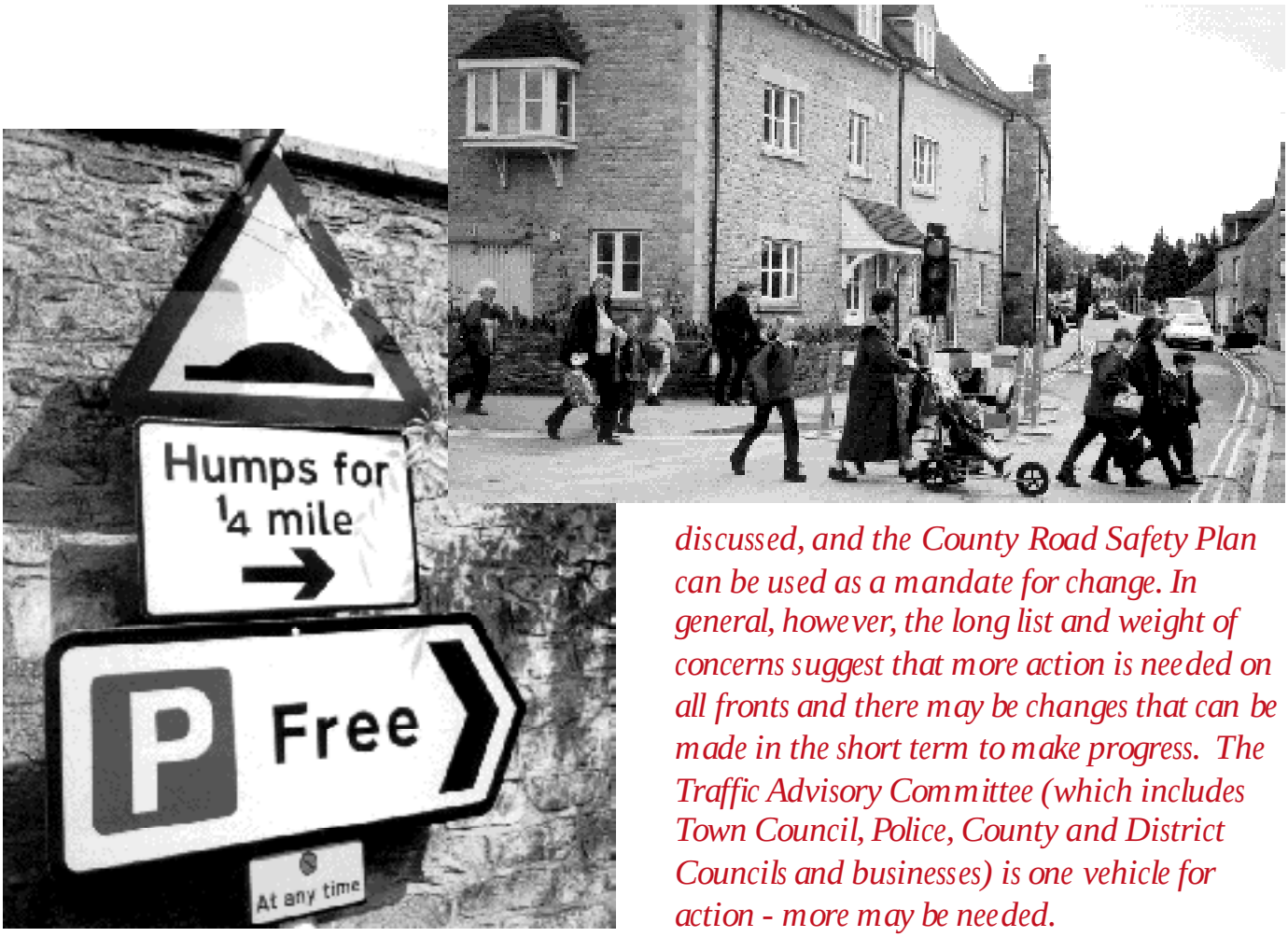
Safety measures supported

Q41 Would you support the following speed control or safety measures in any of the danger spots in town?



Issues for action and response:

Recent actions in 2002-3 on safety have seen changes to speed limit zones, pedestrian crossings, raised ways at the ends of Albion Street and pelican and zebra crossings in Burford Road. More action might be considered in the same direction, particularly with flashing speed warnings, cameras (in use!), more calming (for example along Churchill Road). A recent working group, in conjunction with the County Council Highways Department and WODC have looked at specific issues of road parking for residents and restrictions in dangerous areas. Again more action may be needed. Funding and schemes such as safer ways to schools continue to be discussed, and the County Road Safety Plan can be used as a mandate for change. In general, however, the long list and weight of concerns suggest that more action is needed on all fronts and there may be changes that can be made in the short term to make progress. The Traffic Advisory Committee (which includes Town Council, Police, County and District Councils and businesses) is one vehicle for action - more may be needed.



7 Health and social services

'information, access and joining up local services'

A wide range of local services

For a rural market town, Chipping Norton is relatively well served for health and social service provision. The Appraisal task group assembled a comprehensive list of local

services. There are two thriving GP practices and a community hospital under the control of Cherwell Vale Primary Care Trust - which has a minor injuries unit, recovery beds, and a maternity unit which is in fact run by Oxford's JR Hospital Trust. Many day and specialist services are available locally (both private and public). Residential elderly care currently includes Castle View home, funded mainly by Oxfordshire County Council's social services budget. There are private nursing home beds, and an elderly day centre run at Highlands by a charitable trust. The NHS Disability Trust and Penhurst National Children's Home provide other specialist services. As with other places, social service budgets have been squeezed over recent years - with some reduction in services. Three dental practices exist.

Community 'ownership'

The Town's history has been for the community to be reasonably self provided (including for example having its own Ambulance Station) - but obviously making use of major hospitals elsewhere in Banbury and Oxford for major acute treatment. The Town has also 'taken ownership' of services over the years, regarding them as part of the community - by providing both volunteer support (eg at Highlands), financial support from the community (eg nearly £500,000 since 1975 for the hospital and regular support for Penhurst and Highlands) and new community funded services such as the recent and successful Lawrence Home Nursing Team (a Charity) - which provides nursing at home for the terminally ill.

Views on local services

From the Appraisal 1687 local residents provided a view of the health and social services. They were almost entirely registered with the 2 town GP surgeries (45% West Street and 51% White House). More than 50% registered with a Chipping Norton dentist - the majority as NHS patients. Chipping Norton (including the respondents) has a larger proportion of elderly people than the national average. In general views are favourable. Over 76% agreed that local health and caring services were a major positive aspect of living in Chipping Norton (Q19). In a more detailed question (Q46 - see chart) the quality of health services locally are rated excellent or good

Q46: What is your overall view of health and care services locally?

Service	% Excellent or Good	% Satisfactory	% Poor
Overall quality of Healthcare	85	13	2
Overall quality of Social Services	47	42	11
Information about Health and Social Services in the area	40	46	14
Access to information related to illegal drugs and alcohol use	29	45	26
Access to info. for mental health needs [eg depression]	27	46	27
Public consultation on current and future services	22	42	37

1686 answered part or all of this question (98%)

by 85% - while with social services this drops to only 47% - perhaps a reflection on the budget and service cuts in recent years. More problematic are the poor ratings on information - especially on specific issues. 37% of the respondents were also concerned about poor public consultation on current and future services.

Quality of delivery of services.

Survey respondents commented on specific issues of quality of delivery (see chart) with generally positive ratings for access, willingness to help, respect for confidentiality and privacy and ease of booking appointments.

Opinions of service provision

Q47: For the local health and social services provided in Chipping Norton how would you rate the following?

Service	% Excellent or Good	% Satisfactory	% Poor	% Haven't Used/DK
Friendliness and willingness to help	74	19	2	5
Confidentiality and privacy	74	16	3	7
Physical access to GP surgeries	66	25	7	2
Ease of booking appointments	58	24	14	4
Physical access to dental surgeries	46	17	5	32
Waiting and timeliness of services	43	39	14	4
Home visits from health professionals	26	13	5	56
Availability of social services support	11	13	7	69
Home visits from social services professionals	8	8	5	78
Availability of home helps	7	7	6	80

1677 answered part or all of this question (95%)

Ratings dropped on the particular issue of waiting and timeliness.

Priorities for improving health services

The strong local support for the community hospital was reflected in the response to a question on major priorities for improvement - given that resources could be made available (see chart on Q48 opposite). 90% of the 1563 respondents mentioned keeping the minor injuries unit at Chipping Norton hospital and 75 % mentioned keeping and using the hospital for recovery and palliative care. There was significant support as well for more health checks and screening services locally (43%), the idea of a new multipurpose health centre (35%) and evening medical services (32%).

Service gaps, information and consultation

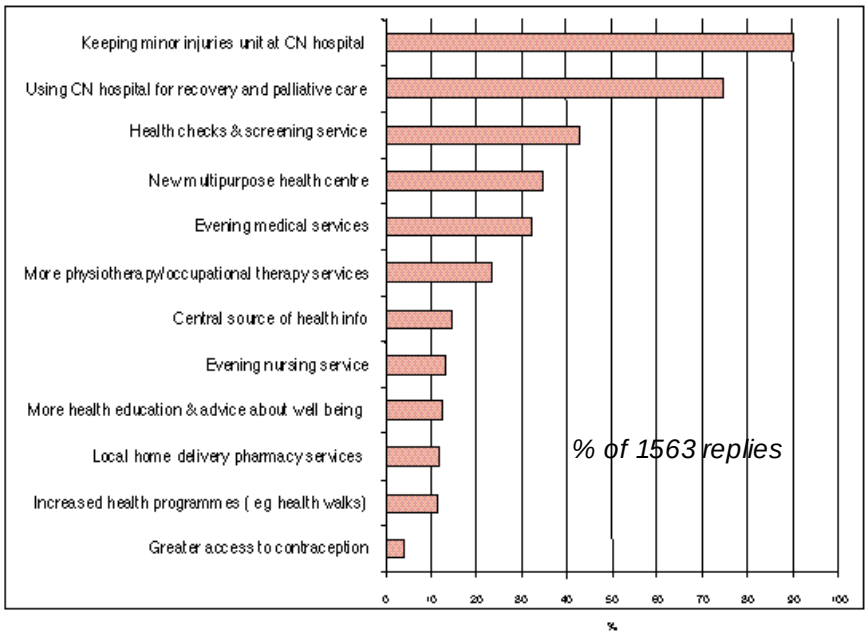
The task group identified a number of potential gaps in local service provision - mainly by polling professionals and those working closely with key care groups. Some of these gaps included areas such as:

- facilities for young disabled people
- more alternative therapies
- more physiotherapy available
- day clinics in specialist areas
- more screening and health checks and education sessions
- improved prescription home delivery services and other home services

The task group's main conclusion was that there was lack of public visibility for the range of services actually available in the Town - and little co-ordinated consultation on future health needs. There is no specific 'patient liaison group' in Chipping Norton although individual GP practices occasionally carry out patient surveys. The PCT, based in Banbury, does have a recently appointed Patient Advisory Liaison officer - but no specific focus on Chipping Norton.

Health service improvement priorities

Q48: Which of these health services improvements would you choose as a major priority for Chipping Norton residents (given that resources were available)?



Residential care as a major priority

On social services the number of responses was lower (only 1171) as fewer people are likely to have experienced the services or the need for them. Most significant was that a large 57% identified the need for local residential and nursing homes for older people as a major priority - followed by more home support services (47%) and social facilities for older people (45%). There were a number of suggestions for less bureaucracy and the return of a local social services office - removed in recent years to a central area location. Identifying needs for residential care is a critical issue in 2003 as the future of the one publicly funded home (Castle View) is under review - and this provides some strong local support for future needs.

Issues for action and response

Health and social services in Chipping Norton have always been valued highly and generally been considered good. The many recent reorganisations, reviews, and budget threats - often by regional or area bodies outside the Town's influence - have created feelings of local concern, in spite of improvements and investments being made. The next 3-5 years are likely to see more of this, and a critical issue will be the ability of the Town to influence the outcome in a balanced and beneficial way for local people. Local action groups and initiatives may be needed to make progress. Some examples are worth noting.

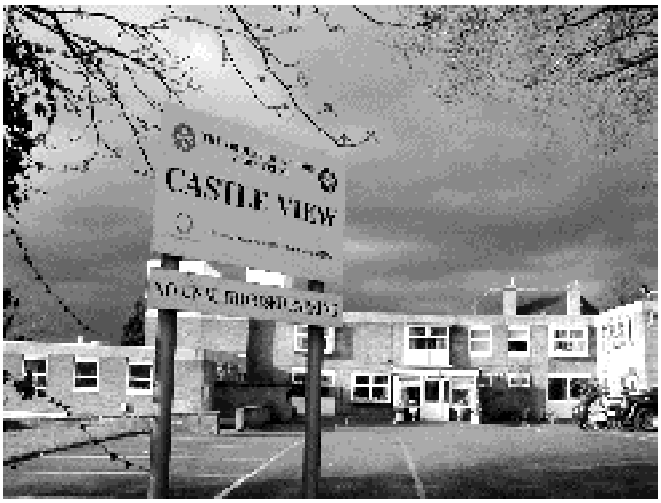
***Better information and consultation**: one key will be a better consultation and information service. An initial response to the Appraisal from the Chief Executive of Cherwell Vale PCT (which oversees local health services) was encouraging:*

> *'It is clear that local people hold the Community Hospital and its associated services in high regard so it was a pleasure to read many accolades about the health services in the area. Cherwell Vale PCT is committed to improving the health of local people so the constructive feedback, pointing out areas of concern, will be used to enable the PCT to consider different ways of working and contribute towards providing detailed information about local health needs.' (response letter April 2003)*

The PCT has established an area-wide Public Participation Group and Patient Advisory Liaison Officer (Juliet Long on 01295 819550). This group consists of local people who help in the planning of services and in bringing the PCT closer to the community it serves. Chipping Norton residents are welcome to attend meetings - but there may be a case for establishing a more proactive town-based group - in liaison with local GPs and the hospital - to continue work on identifying service needs, gaps and ideas for change.

***Future of Chipping Norton Hospital**: a current area-wide review (led by the PCTs) is looking at the future of Community Hospitals, including Chipping Norton - and will address everything from provision of minor injuries units, to use of*

beds and provision of specialist day services. The role of Chipping Norton is also complicated in that its well-liked maternity services are under the JR Trust in Oxford - itself under cost pressure. It will be critical for a local voice (including the Friends of the Hospital) to be included in this work.



New opportunities in intermediate and elderly care: *care for the elderly (including the future of the threatened Castle View residential home and the role for the hospital in 'recovery and recuperation' and care at home), is one initiative now being given some 'joined-up attention' in 2003 - partially as a result of the Town Appraisal. A local 'Stakeholder Group' involving all the relevant authorities has been established to look particularly at options for replacing Castle View and possible joint initiatives with the hospital at or near the Spring Street sites. The PCT are also reviewing the availability of care workers for Chipping Norton, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and nurses to be able to provide rehabilitation as near to people's homes as possible. The PCT Chief Executive said 'Chipping Norton Hospital is considered central to the provision of intermediate care and there is a great deal of enthusiasm to consider how the Community Services can link more closely with the developments being planned for Castle View.'*

Health centres and integrated health services: *Ideas for more and better primary health services will need local support - and will require the GP practices to work closely with other health services and the community. The new GP contract, being negotiated in 2003, is meant to provide better flexibility. On 'out-of-hours' services, the PCT Chief Executive hopes that GPs will 'support the development of a new integrated service that provides access to nursing care, therapy and medical advice' as a new system of delivering integrated out-of-hours services will be provided or commissioned by Cherwell Vale PCT. Any major initiatives such as a new health centre will need significant funding, a business case and local commitment from both professionals and the community.*

Proactive local initiatives: *many locally initiated groups have been created in Chipping Norton from the community - some with charitable status and considerable funding. Examples include the Community Awareness Drugs Group, Highlands day centre, the Drop-in Centre and most recently the successful Lawrence Home Nursing Team. All of these groups will have a role to play in future services - and in collaborating with publicly run services to achieve the best use of shared resources, sites, and public budgets. Other initiatives may well be forthcoming here as needs are identified.*

8 Housing and Development

"affordable housing and moderate growth"

Mixed housing for a working Cotswold Town

Chipping Norton is classified as a small town due for only limited economic and housing development. Much of the town centre is a conservation area and the Town borders on a protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. West Oxfordshire is also considered to be one of the most desirable areas of the country to live. There are just under 3000 households in Chipping Norton and a population of 6000. From the Appraisal 81% of respondents live in owner-occupied homes and 16% in rented housing (housing association, Council or private). Housing dates from the 16th to the 21st century, and ranges from bungalows, to ex-council family housing and starter homes to executive and retirement homes, small blocks of flats and sheltered accommodation. In the centre of town properties above shops have existing and potential residential use.

Moderate growth to continue

Over the last 10 years the growth in housing has been low to modest - an average of around 40 new dwellings each year or about 15% increase in total. Development has included the significant developments off the Over Norton Road and up Rowell Way - and many 'infill' housing developments using brownfield and often commercial previously-used land. The current plan for the next 8 years to 2011 is for similar modest growth, with the District Council asking for views on specific sites and the County Council consulting on future growth beyond 2011 to 2016.

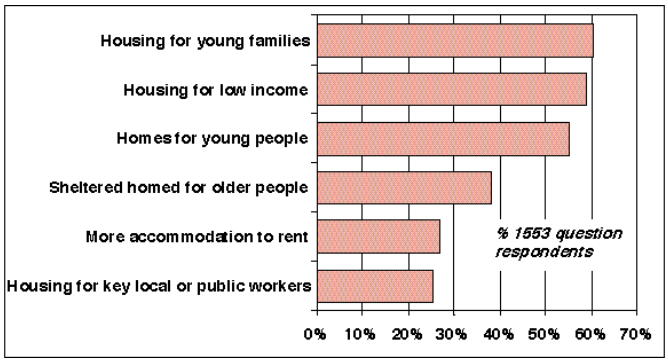
In the Appraisal response from 1600 residents around 55% said they would support the current moderate growth as 'about right' - but a further 33% would in fact support 'more growth' or 'more significant growth' if needed to keep Chipping Norton as a thriving town and meet housing needs. 14% said there was 'too much growth'.

Housing needs for a working community

WODC have recently conducted (in 2002) a District wide housing needs survey which revealed the demand for affordable housing. The Appraisal response from nearly 1600 residents gave a strong message in answer to the question 'What type of homes are needed in Chipping Norton?' (see chart). Housing for young people, young families and low income families (affordable) led the poll with over 50% of respondents ticking these categories. Also important were sheltered homes for the elderly (38%), homes for local or key workers (25%) and accommodation to rent (27%). Bottom of the list with less than 6% each were luxury executive and retirement homes, or holiday homes.

Housing needs

Q52:What type/s of home/s is/are needed in Chipping Norton?

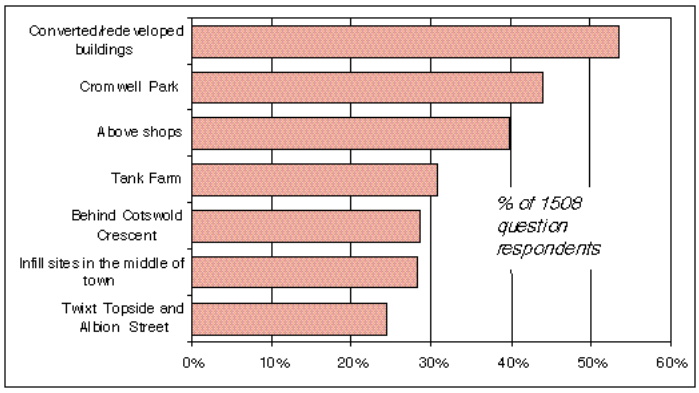


Affordable or cheaper housing also scored one of the highest number of unprompted comments (257 mentions) in Chipping Norton's priorities for the next 10 years (Appraisal Question 21) - with many comments about the needs of the young, families, starter homes, more rentals, and key workers.

Sensitive use of town space

Moderate or more significant housing growth will mean finding space that does not change the character of the Town or encroach on areas of outstanding natural beauty. While major expansion of the Town is unlikely Appraisal respondents were clearly prepared to accept appropriate sites - some of which, such as that behind Cromwell Park, are already allocated in the Local Plan for development. In answer to the question 'Would any of the following locations in your view be a good place for new homes?' 54% of the 1508 repondents ticked converted or redeveloped buildings in town, 44% agreed with Cromwell Park, and 40% ' above shops'. There was less support for using the burgage plots between Topside and Albion Street (24%) or sites in the middle of town (28%)

Good places for new homes



In the town centre burgage plots and other infill sites may also be convenient and desirable for employment use (such as small business units and workshops). The need here has been raised by businesses responding to the Appraisal.

Issues for action and response

Housing, and its affordability, is one of the key issues that will influence the future role for Chipping Norton as a market town. One view is that recent market forces and demographics are both pushing property prices up in and around the Town - as the Town becomes desirable as 'executive commuter territory' and as a pleasant retirement town. Recent planning applications for new developments such as The Green and Wards Road (luxury retirement homes), and the White Hart (private apartments) clearly demonstrate a view from developers of the market pressures. For Chipping Norton to remain as a balanced working town there will need to be planning policies implemented that:

- enforce affordable or key worker housing targets that the Government and West Oxfordshire District Council have allowed for in recent policy guidance - WODC's policy of up to 50% affordable housing in the latest Draft Plan is higher than national guidelines.

- release appropriate new sites for development

- ensure that town centre sites, which are also essential for the continuing commercial, retail and business hub of such a market town, are not simply released for residential development on a 'first come first served' basis. Comprehensive planning guidance is needed urgently.

Further 'windfall' opportunities for balanced residential, community, and commercial use - such as the possible sale of the Parker Knoll site in the London Road will need to be looked at with these needs in mind. There are also many sites owned by various public authorities that may be the subject of sale and change of use. In 2003 a special Property Development Group - chaired by the Director of Strategy at WODC and involving the Town Council and Oxford County Council - has been looking at key sites in the town. Chipping Norton Town Council has consistently stated their preference for affordable housing and have suggested further sites for development. They have also pushed for more planning guidance on developments in the town centre (such as the burgage plots) which was promised in a previous Local Plan but dropped. Proactive engagement with the District, the County and developers on these key issues will be needed.

9 Environment

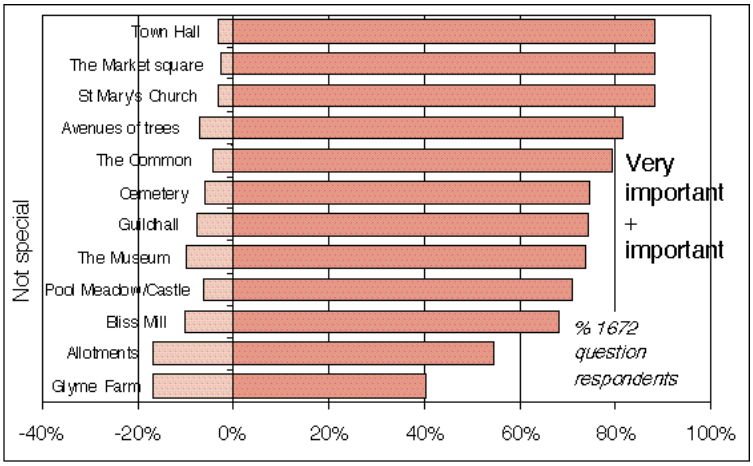
'Pleasant environment preserving our heritage'

The importance of preservation and protection

Chipping Norton town centre is designated a conservation area and has many listed buildings, including public buildings such as the Town Hall and the Guildhall. There are many buildings of historical and architectural significance such as shops and houses in the Market Square and Bliss Mill which is now private apartments. Similarly the surrounding area is partly in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there are a number of places special to the Town such as Pool Meadow and the Common down the Worcester Road.

It is clear from the Appraisal that residents are concerned about the preservation of the built environment, the conservation of old and historic buildings and open spaces. The 1672 responses (see chart) to Q55 ('How important is it to preserve and protect the following heritage and environmental features of Chipping Norton?') demonstrate the strength of feeling.

Preserving the Town heritage



On buildings the Town Hall, St Mary's Church and Market Square rated well over 80% as 'important' or 'very important' but with high ratings for other heritage sites such as the Museum and the Guildhall. On the wider environment the avenues of trees into town, Pool Meadow , the Common and the Cemetery all rate over 70%.

Issues for action and response

Given the importance of the environment to Chipping Norton as a pleasant place to live, visit and work, there need to be plans in place for the preservation and protection of heritage buildings and green areas. At the same time these assets must be available for people to enjoy and use - and where necessary provide modern amenities and cater for imaginative use in the 21st century. Responsibility for this is in the hands of many different public and private bodies. It is key that Chipping Norton Town Council, and in particular West Oxfordshire District through its Partnership and Agenda 21 take an overview for the Town. Some specific current issues are worthy of comment:

- The Town Hall - owned and run by the Town Council, is being refurbished in 2003. The Town Hall Committee, while wishing to preserve the heritage, will continue to seek different ways of using the facility for the town. Discussions in the past about substantial development (with Lottery support) could well be revisited

- The Town Cemetery - again run by the Town Council, has been extended with a major year of maintenance - and public consultation and communication for future plans will be important

- Pool Meadow, the responsibility of the Town Council and the Common, under the supervision of the Field Reeves, both need continued protection - but future plans may need to consider different uses and enhancement for the benefit of the Town

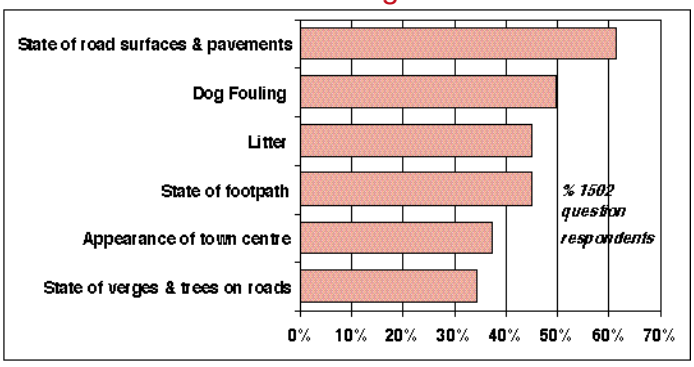
- The avenues of trees on the main roads into town - making a great 'entrance' to Chipping Norton are in some cases getting old and soon may be dangerous. Oxfordshire County Council are now liaising with the Town Council on a scheme to review future action - but it may well be left to the people of the Town to plan major replacements or maintenance - while public budgets continue to be constrained.

- The Allotments on Burford Road are under a Charitable Trust (with members of the Town Council as Trustees) but there may be questions on future viability if allotment use declines (the Memorial Wood has already been planted on old allotment land) - as a prime town site the Trustees may need to take a different view on future use.

A town centre to be proud of

Chipping Norton's town centre needs to present a best face to residents, visitors and those passing through. Everything from the 'street scene' to keeping everything clean, tidy and pleasant is high on the list to be an attractive market town. In the Appraisal people were asked 'Within the Town which of the following issues are of major concern to you?' 1502 people responded (see chart) with the biggest issues being those that are visible and are

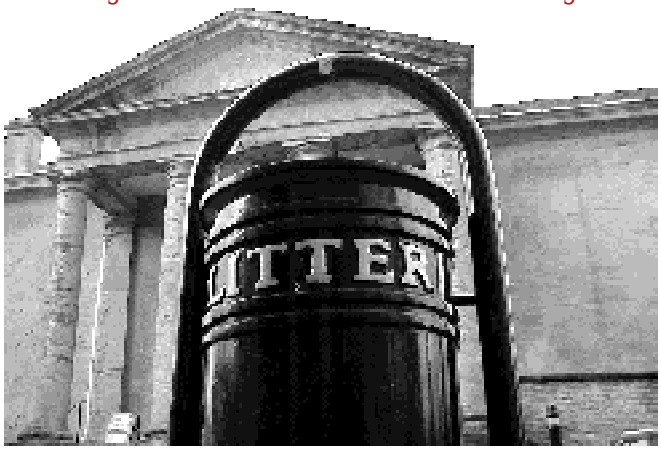
Issues causing concern



noticed by all: the state of road surfaces, pavements and footpaths; dog fouling; litter; appearance of the town centre; and the state of verges and trees on the roads. Other comments received in the survey covered a whole range of items around the town centre appearance such as shop buildings and fronts in a poor state of repair; lack of green areas and flower beds; untidy or broken fences and barriers; and unwanted or poor 'street furniture' such as poles and posts.

Issues for action and response

As a working town Chipping Norton's town centre has to be 'functional and practical' for all - visitors, pedestrians and car drivers, and inevitably these needs may sometimes cause conflict. The most recent town centre upgrade (1996) caused some arguments and much time in meetings -



and further plans for improving the general environment in the centre have suffered delay and lack of budgets. There is little excuse, however, for poor appearance and lack of attention to a 'pleasant street scene'. In Chipping Norton various individuals or groups have taken the initiative themselves - for example the Chipping Norton in Bloom competition and managing the Christmas trees and lights (the latter in recent years organised by volunteers from the Chipping Norton Society supported by the Town Council and individual town traders in the absence of any town centre or chamber of trade group).

Many heritage towns have set up town centre working parties or partnerships to make sure all issues are given attention. In Chipping Norton's case one major problem has been the 'divisions of corporate responsibility' for problems such as verges, trees, potholes and poles - ie not knowing who is responsible. Recent initiatives in 2003 have seen West Oxfordshire's 'street scene' project, the Chipping Norton Society's 'Clean up Chippy' ideas and the Town Council's intention to develop an inventory of outstanding issues. More co-ordinated and concerted attention across both public bodies as well as the business and residential community may be needed to make a step change in progress.

10 Law and order

'a safe and secure place to live and work'

Keeping the Town crime free

Chipping Norton and West Oxfordshire have been quoted as having one of the lowest crime rates in the Thames Valley Police area. In the Appraisal over 80% of 1500 respondents agreed that a 'peaceful and safe neighbourhood' was a major positive aspect that made them want to live in the Town. They also rated safety and security as the highest of their top 3 most important choices about Chipping Norton's future. With this background questions about crime and safety are really about 'keeping up the good work'. In a specific question (Q 56) in the Appraisal it is anti-social behaviour that concerns many with vandalism (76%) and drunkenness (48%) topping the list (see chart). Some concerns also over theft (43%) - although again there is little crime actually reported.

Feeling safe around town

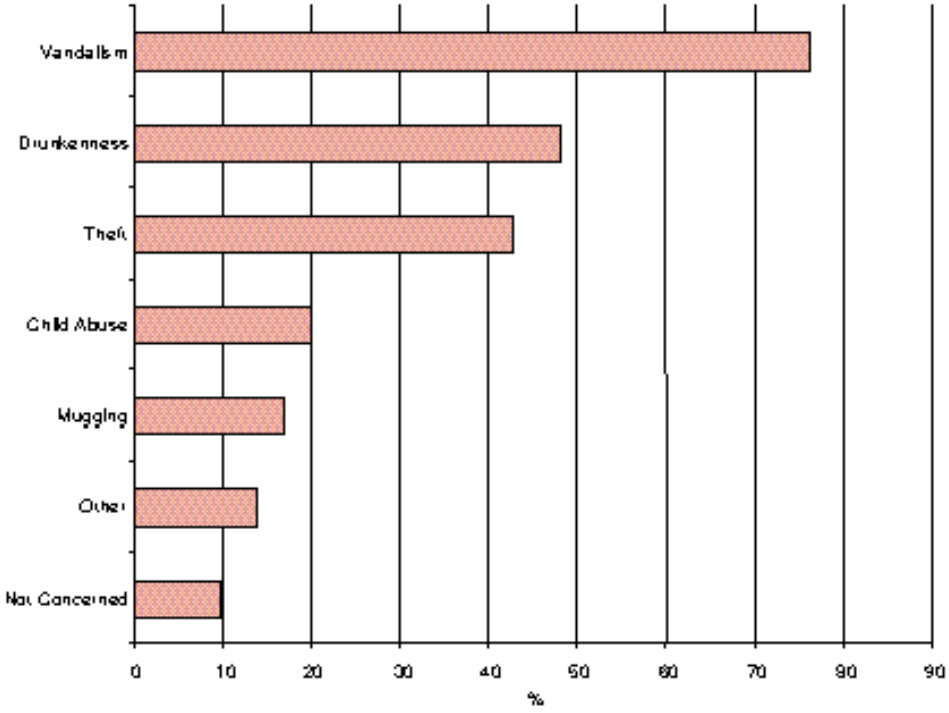
One question (58) allowed respondents to say where they might feel unsafe around town and why. This was an open question with responses from around 385 households. Interestingly nearly 25 % of respondents went as far as rejecting the question - saying there were no areas where they felt unsafe. There were some issues raised, however, by a significant percentage of households including

- poor lighting in key areas of town (23%)
- problems in car parks such as New Street late at night (nearly 20%)
- some feeling threatened by youths around the Town Hall and Market Square (9%)
- drunken behaviour causing discomfort to others in town centre (9%)
- some issues with skateboarders (5%)

Several other 'hotspots' around town were mentioned by various respondents.

Concerns about crime & anti-social behaviour

Q56: which of the folloing crimes & anti-social behaviour concern you in Chipping Norton?

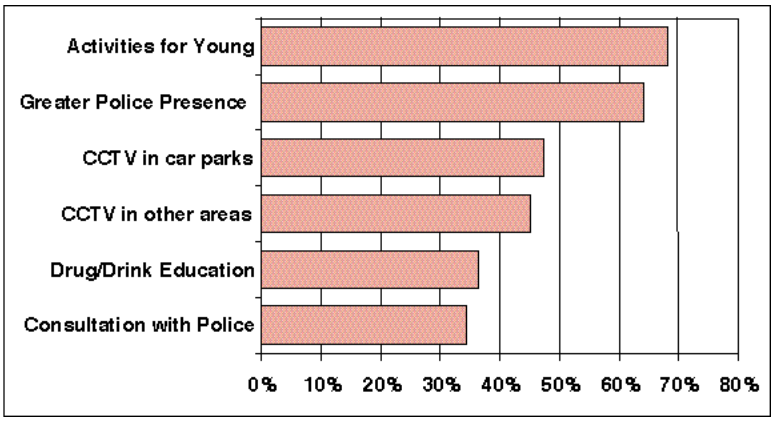


Specific measures needed

When asked about specific measures that could be taken to help with crime or antisocial behaviour prevention or feeling more safe around town there was some strong consensus from the 1553 Appraisal respondents (see chart). Top of the list was the need to find activities for young people to do (68%) - or places for them to meet and socialise.

Measures to combat crime etc

Q57: Do you think that any of the following measures are needed?



Other responses indicated that there was also a strong lobby for greater police presence (64%) and CCTV in car parks and other areas (around 46% each). On the other han, however there was relatively lower support for Neighbourhood Watch schemes (28%) or better street lighting (23%).

Issues for action and response

With Chipping Norton's relatively low crime the issues are about perception, prevention, reassurance and finding different solutions for youth activity. Places for youth to meet (clubs, cafés, skateboard facilities etc) remain an issue and need to be addressed as a more general issue for the Town. On more specific issues there continue to be concerns about the lack of visible police presence when needed and either a real or perceived ability to respond to problems. Police have recently increased the 'on the street' community beat time and have made considerable investment in schools liaison and education. Several changes in personnel in charge and reduction in 'hours open' at Chipping Norton police station all contribute to a perception of lack of attention to the Town. Police in the past have had liaison meetings with the Town Council and public - but perhaps this has not been made a visible and regular feature in the Town. This may need more formal attention in the future. Similarly there could be higher priority given to

'hot spots' through CCTV and other measures. West Oxfordshire District Council have been promising to roll out CCTV schemes tested in Witney - these clearly need to be a priority for Chipping Norton.

11 Learning, culture and recreation

'an attractive centre for thriving schools and learning, cultural diversity and better facilities'

Education and learning for a rural town

Chipping Norton, being at least 12 miles from the nearest larger town, acts as a hub for education and learning for a population of 6000 in the Town and at least that again from local villages. Based on results the Chipping Norton schools have maintained a high position in the Oxfordshire state schools list. From the Appraisal we also know that over 94% of primary and 90% of secondary school children use local state schools. There is one comprehensive 'community' school which currently has a good 6th form - although some sixth formers choose to go to Oxford or Burford for a different option. The comprehensive school takes around 50% of its pupils from surrounding villages - many of whom use subsidised bus transport. A wide range of local adult learning opportunities are provided by Oxfordshire County Council's Adult and Community Learning Service through the Chipping Norton Community Education Centre. Day and evening courses, Saturday workshops and one-off sessions are delivered at CN School, the CEC's Computer Centre and in other community venues in the Town and surrounding villages.

Priorities for the future, according to the Appraisal respondents were clear:

- keeping the 6th form at CN School - 72%
- improving standards and results - 56%
- reinforcing the community ethos - 51%

(top 3 from Question 60 - 1194 respondents)

Similarly when asked about more education facilities the 930 respondents put at the top of the list:

- after school clubs - 49%
- adult evening classes - 43%
- holiday play schemes - 30%

When pressed on what kind of adult learning courses people would use more of in the future those highest on the list were

- sport and fitness - 40%
- arts and crafts - 33%
- computer skills - 33%
- practical skills - 33%
- health and wellbeing - 26%

When asked what might be reasons for not attending adult education - apart from 'not interested or not appropriate' the top reasons were cost (24%) and inconvenient timing (37%).

Issues for action and response - schools

Chipping Norton currently justifies a critical mass for local school education - with two primary schools, both of which are at or near capacity, and the rural comprehensive school with around 1100 pupils and a sixth form. Additional class room space is being built in 2003 and an additional class intake at Chipping Norton School is being planned. Medium term plans for the Town here are critical:

- firstly capacity at nursery school and private play groups may be an issue given Government commitment to schooling for 3-4 year olds

- secondly with schools at or near capacity but continued growth planned for the Town there is a real chance that places will not be available for parents to choose the local schools - causing long (10 miles or more) commutes or discouraging families from moving to Chipping Norton

- thirdly, the viability of the 6th form may be under threat over time as schools try to meet more diverse choices and needs - and smaller 6th forms may become difficult to support at high academic choice and standards. Again if Chipping Norton students need to go elsewhere for the 6th form then there will be a significant loss. Solutions here may be to gradually attract more students from elsewhere to come to Chipping

Norton's 6th form - or perhaps schemes that allow this school to complement 6th form curricula with other schools locally.

-fourthly, as funding increasingly goes to specialist schools, Chipping Norton School's plans need to develop accordingly - providing both general and specialist needs that attract local students. Currently the School receives funding as a Training School and is applying for specialist status in Performing Arts.

Plans for schools are under the remit of Oxfordshire County Council and the Learning & Skills Council - and the local community, Councillors and Governors in Chipping Norton will need to ensure that their voice is heard to support growth plans for the future.

Issues and actions for response - adult education and other provision

Most authorities agree Chipping Norton is well-served for nursery and adult education, and so comments on the need for more provision were interesting. Currently, the majority of adult education evening courses take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and daytime provision is restricted by the limited availability of suitable accommodation. Appraisal results suggest that there is sufficient local demand for an extension of evening and daytime adult learning opportunities, which would justify the necessary input of extra resources. One observation in the task group is that take-up of existing provision could be improved with more publicity and awareness about the facilities and courses. Measures to improve publicity would be useful - and this could involve not just the providers but interest groups, local clubs and societies, Town Council and Parish Councils in the villages. On after-school and holiday schemes there has been an increase in recent years - and West Oxfordshire District Council have taken a number of initiatives - particular as the new Leisure Centre has provided good physical facilities in town. Consultation with the local community in Chipping Norton on further ideas and plans could be beneficial.

Diverse cultural and recreation facilities

Chipping Norton has a wide range of cultural, arts and sporting clubs and societies - with nearly 100 listed in the local register published by the Chipping Norton News. Again, these are both for people from the Town as well as tourist visitors and users from surrounding villages. A variety of buildings and facilities are used including the Library, Town Hall, the new Leisure Centre, Greystones, the Theatre Chipping Norton, local schools, church halls and some club buildings. There are also active and well-known festivals and events such as the Chipping Norton Music Festival, Chipping Norton in Bloom, Jazz Day and Oxfordshire Artsweeks. The Theatre Chipping Norton attracts over 20,000 people to live and film performances over the year. The past 3 years has also demonstrated the Town's ability to mount special events such as the Millennium evening and the Golden Jubilee celebrations in the town centre amongst others.

Use of local facilities

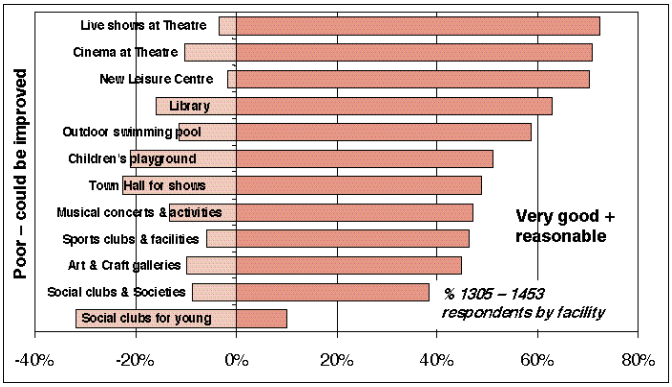
In a poll of local sports and social clubs done as part of the Appraisal, over 30 clubs replied; most reported plans for growth, and the most significant general issue was around better public meeting places and physical facilities. Appraisal respondents commented on their use of some the Town's facilities with over 40% saying they made frequent or occasional use of the Theatre, the Library, the new Leisure Centre, sales in the Town Hall.

Approval ratings of facilities

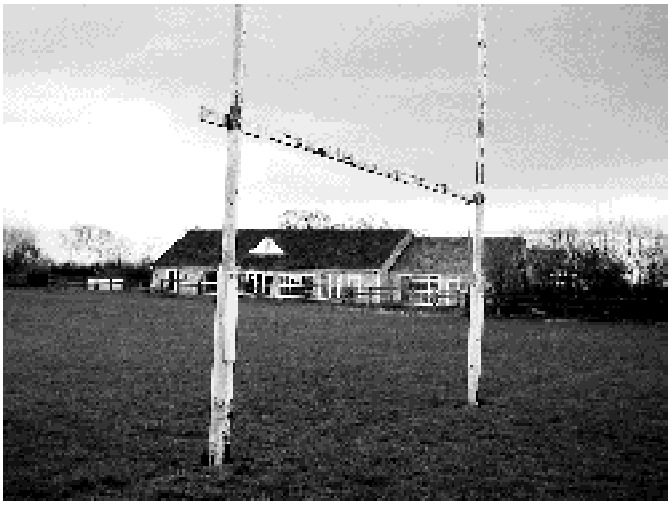
When asked to say how well they rated the various culture and sports facilities (see next chart) most were rated good or reasonable.

Sports & cultural facilities

Q64: What do you think of the following sports & cultural facilities?



Particularly strong were the ratings for live shows and cinema at the Theatre and the new Leisure Centre with over 70% 'approval'. The Library and the Outdoor Swimming Pool also rated highly (around 60% good or reasonable) and many other facilities scored well with many people.



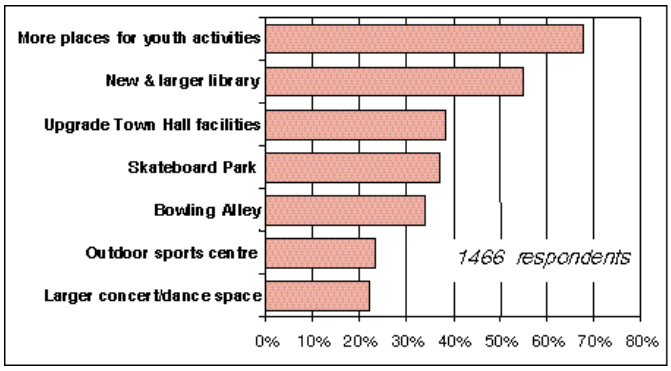
However, in the same question some of the areas for attention become obvious. If we look at the percentage of respondents who identified 'poor - could be improved' the facilities that score worst are

- social clubs for young people (32% said poor and very few said good at all)
- Town Hall as a venue for shows (22% poor)
- children's playgrounds (21% poor)
- library (15% poor)

Where and how to improve facilities

The areas for improvement were reinforced when the Appraisal asked 'What major improvements /additions fo facilities in the Town would you consider to be very important?' Given a list to select from (see next chart)

Improvements to town facilities



again the most important item was more *places for youth activities* followed by a *new and larger library*, an *upgrade to Town Hall facilities* and a *skateboard park*.

The final question in the appraisal was open-ended, asking for suggestions for improving sport, recreation or cultural facilities in Chipping Norton. There were many suggestions. The task group picked out in particular the ideas around

- the skateboard park
- an all weather sports pitch
- park and play facilities
- holiday facilities
- meeting places for young people

and finally the need for lots more publicity for all the existing activities and clubs.

Issues for action and response

It seems from this Appraisal that Chipping Norton has a sound base from which to develop as a truly excellent rural 'hub' for culture and sports activity of all kinds. The Theatre, the new Leisure Centre and other new sports facilities (such as the Rugby Club extension) have all demonstrated that a mixture of community, local public authority and Lottery investment can make a real difference - and enhance the reputation of the Town as a place to live in or visit. There is also a strong community commitment to supporting such developments and, it seems, using them. The next few years could see a significant further upgrade of facilities and increased activity - it will, however, require collaboration in the Town, co-ordinated proposals for more investment and the ability to attract funding, and better marketing and publicity for the use of Chipping Norton's outstanding facilities. Some of the particular areas for response are noted here:

*- **the Theatre and performing arts**: the Theatre has an ambitious 3 year plan to expand its work - with particular attention to working around the community in other facilities - including villages. 2003 will see new seats and a new sound system. This involves private funding, strong marketing, and significant financial support particularly from West Oxfordshire and South and South East Arts. Links with Chipping Norton School's performing arts specialist status bid and the activity of other local groups must aim to develop a co-ordinated approach.*

*- **sports development and a sports forum**: new facilities, whether skateboard park or all-weather pitch - will need concerted effort from the community, the Town Council and interested clubs. One idea might be a sports and recreation forum for the Town and the area - to help make some of the priorities happen.*

*- **modern library facilities**: the current library is too small for this town, and there are considerable opportunities for a bigger, better, and more appropriate facility. Discussions have been held around new town centre developments that might include a new library - this could also be linked with other community facilities. While the County Council is primarily responsible, local community influence and ideas to create the momentum might achieve more rapid progress*

*- **Town Hall redevelopment**: as mentioned elsewhere, the Town Hall Committee has supported refurbishment in 2003. Ideas for the future might involve finding more significant external funding and other imaginative schemes to widen the use - while preserving the heritage of the building. Plans for more concert use or use by young people could be part of this.*

*- **places for young people and use of community space**: finding and providing suitable places for young people to meet must be a priority. The closure of the British Legion Club has highlighted this issue. The Town Council, in conjunction with the County and District, have an overview of all the sites in the Town - and some creative proposals with third parties for new facilities may well attract funding from outside - both private and public.*

*- **marketing the Town**: publicity for the Town as a whole may be worthy of discussion. Events such as 'Organisations Day' have shown how showcases can be made of what is available in the Town - but more extensive marketing and publicity may reap benefits for all. The Town Council in partnership with clubs, societies, and/or businesses may be a vehicle here.*

In taking stock of all these issues, the Town Council may need to look at how its various committees (such as the Town Hall, Recreation, Publicity and Business Liaison committees) take on a remit that looks more broadly at the plans for the Town, its facilities and its image. It will also need to see how the Town can take advantage of the West Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership in taking forward these issues.

12 Youth views

'more facilities and voice for youth as part of the community'

Engaging with young people

Throughout the Appraisal process we have endeavoured to consult with the young people of the Town to find out what it is that they like or dislike about Chipping Norton and also to encourage them to give some ideas about what they would want for the future of the Town.

It was very encouraging to discover that 6% (nearly 100) of the total numbers of respondees in the main Town Appraisal Questionnaire were in the 11-17 age group.

To gain a more focussed picture of what the young people think, the Youth Centre accepted an invitation to an Appraisal workshop, where the youngsters devised their own questionnaire which was subsequently taken into the local primary schools (including 3 of the surrounding villages) and 400 under 11s completed the questionnaire. This same Youth Centre group also completed a vox pop video, gaining opinions from youngsters on the street and also giving their view of the Town. A further questionnaire was devised for the year 10 pupils at Chipping Norton School through liaison with the School Council Committee. This produced 131 responses. Meetings have also been held with the young skateboarders to listen to their points of view.

An OCC Living and Learning Grant has been awarded to our young people which means that issues raised in the Youth Centre at Chipping Norton School and primary schools in some villages can be pursued by the young people through projects of their own choice and direction.

What young people said

Looking at the responses from the main household Town Appraisal questionnaire, 85% wanted more facilities for Youth and 75% felt that a bowling alley would be a good idea. On Education 77% wanted to keep the 6th form at Chipping Norton School and 48% wanted to improve standards in the School.

43% felt the need for more 'after-school' clubs and 36% suggested that post-vocational courses would be a good idea.

In response to the question of certain measures needed for the town (Q57) it is no surprise to learn that 'more to do for young people' comes top with the presence of CCTV seen as a good idea.

Furthermore the opinions of the 11s - 17s on the future requirements of the Town produce some interesting comments:

Adult Learning
- Sport and Fitness is top requirement at 44%

Housing
- Even within this age group a greater need for rented accommodation is identified

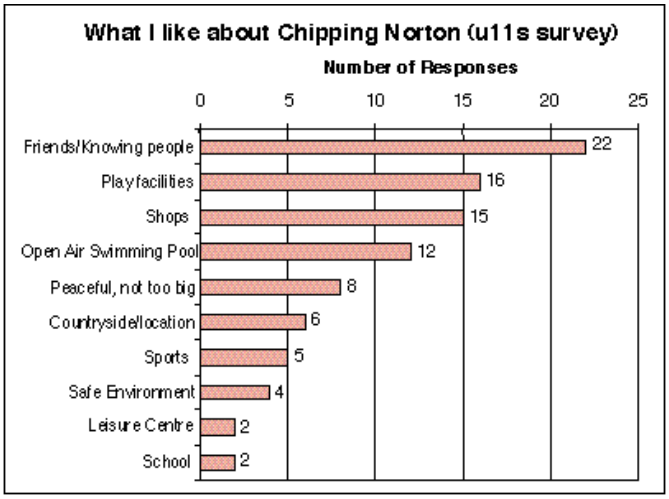
Transport
- Buses to Witney/Charlbury/Kingham station are identified as a good addition to the transport system

Growth
- 86% of the young people think that the growth of the Town is about right or should be greater

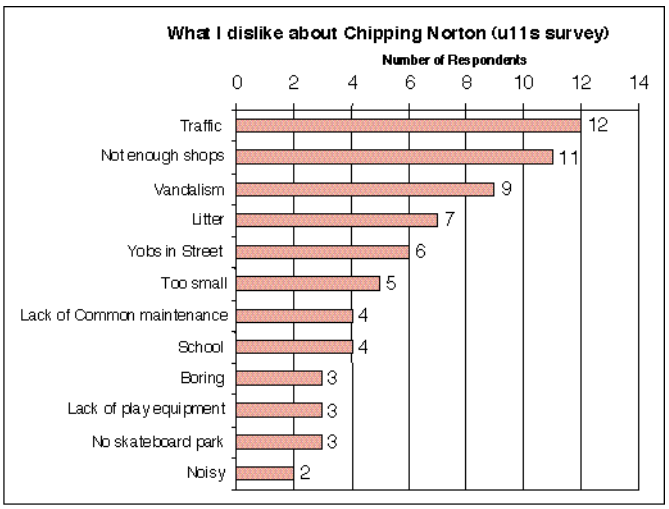
U11s likes and dislikes

When it comes to the opinions of the youngest members of our community they have some very definite ideas about what are their likes and dislikes. A sample of the first 66 responses gives a snapshot of their likes and dislikes.

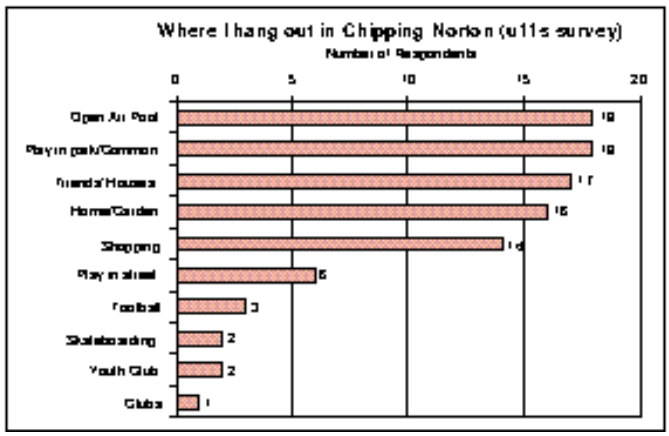
Our under-11s rate the friendliness and 'knowing people' as top of their positives about the Town with 33.3% saying this, whilst the play facilities, the shops and the open air swimming pool also rank high on their list.



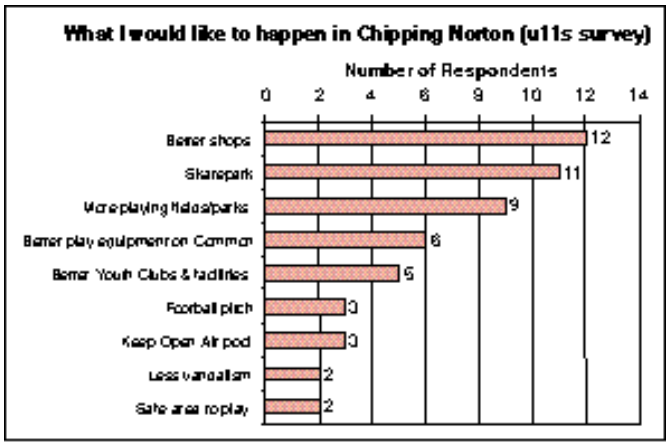
As far as dislikes are concerned, it seems that traffic problems in the Town do affect our youngsters too, as they rank this a number one dislike at 18.2% with the lack of range of shops (mostly clothes shops for kids), vandalism, litter and 'yobs in the street' as coming very close behind.



Looking at the facilities within theTown that the youngsters tend to use, and where they tend to 'hangout' in Chipping Norton, then the Outdoor Swimming Pool tops the poll along with the Common – both showing a 27.3% return.



Not so many of this age group seem to partake of skateboarding, yet this activity ranks very highly amongst what the youngsters would like to see happen in the Town in the future with a skatepark scoring 16.7%, but more popular was the provision of better



shops, such as Toys'R'Us and Argos, KFC or even a Woolworth's which ranked first with 18.2 %. The children also featured the desire for more playing fields and parks in the Town (13.6%) and better equipment on the Common (9.1%).

There was comment made about the 'long grass on the Common making it hard to play football' – something which the Town Council will need to take on board.

Year 10s online

The questionnaire given to the year 10 students (aged 14-15 years) at Chipping Norton School, was devised to be answered online. The students were asked to rate a list of 10 suggested items on likes and dislikes about the Town. A further question gave a range of venues and activities asking the students to choose where they went and what they did. The responses represented 134 completed forms from students in Chipping Norton and the villages in the catchment of the Chipping Norton School.

They voted for the following positive features about life in the Town:

1 Leisure and recreation facilities	71.6%
2 Shops	59.7%
3 The countryside	36.6%
4 Emergency services and hospital	29.9%
5 Entertainment and leisure facilities	26.9%
6 Youth Centre	23.1%
7= Schools	21.6%
7= Local sports clubs (Football & Rugby)	21.6%
8 Facilities for the disabled	8.2%

When it comes to their dislikes about the Town they chose from the following features in order of most disliked: -

1General lack of facilities for young people	72.4%
- ice skating, skateboarding, bowling - have to travel	
2 Nothing to do/nowhere to go	67.2%
3 Public transport	50.0%
- lack of services and cost	
4= New housing developments	35.8%
- lots of new building but nothing for young people	
4= Lack of good places to play sport	35.8%
- adventureplayground	
5 Shops don't cater for young people	34.3%
6 Police	24.6%
7 Traffic levels and speed	22.4%
- dangerous	

The final aspect of life in Chipping Norton that the young people were asked to make a choice about was regarding where they went in their spare time and what they did.

Here again is a summary of the results in order of popularity:

1 Go to friend's home	85.1%
2 Stay at home	70.1%
3 Leisure Centre	54.5%
4 Down town	51.5%
5 Recreation grounds etc hang out	41.0%
6 On the streets	37.3%
7= Kebab van	30.6%
7= Bike rides	30.6%
8 Youth Centre	18.7%

This provides an interesting overview as to what the average 14/15 year old values in the Town. Whilst some of the facilities offered are well used - eg the new Leisure Centre would appear to have been a great success as a facility - there is obviously a shortfall in what these young respondents would ideally like to have available to them.

On analysing the text answers as to what the young people would want to see developed in the future in the Town then most of the 15 year olds would like to see the shops improved, especially for clothes or to have a MacDonalds or a Pizza Hut (10 mentions). The provision of a skatepark, bowling alley or a Youth Club or café/snack bar were also significant (9 mentions).

Improved transport to the villages was also regarded as something worth developing (5 mentions).

It is reassuring that most of our young people feel that Chipping Norton is a safe place. Any mention of feeling unsafe was in the context of the Town Centre after the pubs close down and also 'when there are druggies on the street'.

Issues for action and response

It would seem that despite the fact that within the Town we have a rich assortment of facilities for young people – our uniformed organisations: Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides, a very thriving ATC, youth organisations connected to the churches, Chipping Norton Youth Centre, successful Youth Sports teams and many extra-curricular activities offered by the schools - nevertheless there are still a number of young people who do not feel 'connected'.

The overriding impression is that there needs to be a Youth forum and some further liaison between The Recreation Committee of the Town Council and other agencies who might offer expertise in realising some of the ideas that the young people have. It will be important to link up with those wider influences which have the power to affect some of these projects that have been suggested. Oxfordshire County Council have development plans for the Youth Service and a programme for Transforming Youth. We already have the OCC Living and Learning Award as a financial basis for the young people to take a project forward. WODC's Leisure and Recreation department is another group to keep in mind in any future Youth Plans, as is the Divisional Youth Committee and the Connexions Service, and the West Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership (Young People). Wycombe Leisure too may well be important players when discussing future development of facilities for the young people of the Town. These are all the agencies which could form part of an action group to focus on the needs of our young people. A project which could be realised if there were the corporate will, would be to establish a skatepark for our young people. It certainly seems to have the approval of many of the youngsters. Furthermore, perhaps we should also be looking at the need to keep the Open Air Swimming Pool open since it features so strongly in the pastimes of our young people.

13 Village voice

'a rural hub - a place to meet, shop, work and enjoy'

A rural centre for visitors and villages

Chipping Norton has traditionally had a role as a rural hub - with its status as a market town going back centuries. Today its role as a hub remains but is subtly changing. Roughly 50% of people who work in Chipping Norton come from outside - but 50% of town residents go to work elsewhere. Many other visitors use the Town - from tourists to people passing through, and the economic prosperity of the Town depends on this role as a centre. The town centre acts as a trade centre for retail shopping - for local villagers who may choose here rather than a larger town - perhaps for convenience and ease of the 'quick stop' in a pleasant centre. Local business and health services are here, school children commute here, and there are a whole range of cultural, leisure and sport activities available.

This Appraisal polled people mainly resident in the Town, but in the survey 149 people from 69 households who live in local villages completed the questionnaire - providing a valuable insight into how Chipping Norton can grow and thrive as a rural centre. The responses were mainly obtained from questionnaires circulated in the villages - and so were not necessarily biased towards people who used Chipping Norton. They were split:

Kingham, Sarsden, Churchill, Cornwell, Chastleton	52%
Rollright, Over Norton, Heythrop, Salford	20%
Spelsbury, Chadlington, Dean	7%
Long Compton, Hook Norton, Swerford	6%
Enstone, Tews, Bartons	3%
Not known	12%

The profile of these people was similar to the main town residents.

Using the Town

The villagers who responded in the main did not work in Chipping Norton (only 5%) - working mainly from home (31%) or commuting less than 25 miles away (31%) or more than 25 miles (10%). Most of them did however come to Chipping Norton at least weekly. 55% of them used the town's supermarkets for the main shop - and were strong users of the chemists, bookshops, hardware stores, butchers and flower shops in Chipping Norton. They also used the Wednesday market and Farmers Market often or occasionally. Similarly as a service centre they use Chipping Norton most for

- doctors' surgeries
- post office
- banks
- hairdressers
- takeaways
- dry cleaner
- vet
- opticians
- petrol

A number of the questions reveal the views these people have of Chipping Norton:

Chipping Norton's priorities for the future (Q20) - villagers rated very highly in their top 3 choices 'attracting more visitors to the town' (74%) and 'providing more modern leisure facilities' (68%) as well as 'keeping the community spirit' (54%) all much higher than town residents.

Why shop in Chipping Norton? (Q29) - the villagers chose to shop because of 'supporting local shops' (54%), 'saving time' (48%) and 'saving transport costs' (40%)

Access and parking (Q33 and others) - most use cars to get to town and mainly park in the marketplace (30%), the supermarket car park (22%) New Street or Albion Street (12%). There was strong support for enforcing the 2 hour parking limit (36%), more 30 minute parking (20%), more rear access from Albion Street (36%) and encouraging people to walk from car parks (25%). Only 8% come by bus but 32% would support more village bus routes.

Using Chipping Norton for services - views on health, housing and growth were very similar to people in the Town, and on education there was strong support for the Chipping Norton School 6th form, more school places and the community ethos.

Concerns about traffic and lorries (Q42) - in spite of not living in the Town villagers rated the HGV problem very highly on noise, air pollution and safety and damage to road surfaces

Using culture and sports facilities (Q63) - the Theatre, the Library and the Leisure Centre were the most used Town facilities, and as with Town residents on Q64 they gave favourable ratings for all three.

More facilities in the Town - there was strong support (more than in Chipping Norton) for a new and larger library and places for youth activity - suggesting that villagers value such facilities in the larger town - missing in their villages.

Issues for action and response

In a recent survey of users of Chipping Norton's open air pool over 44 local villages were represented - just one example of how the Town is seen as a rural centre for the surrounding area. Many businesses, organisations, clubs and service providers in Chipping Norton aim to attract visitors from outside the Town - with the local villages being a priority target. And when they do use the Town, visitors do rate the services and the 'community ethos'. There are clearly opportunities to build on this attractiveness in the future - as a provider of essential services as well as a centre for social, cultural and sporting activity. The paradox is that few residents in the Town (less than 2% of town residents response to Q20 on future priorities) rate as a priority 'attracting more visitors to the Town' - perhaps shying away from the spectre of an overrun tourist town.

The Town Council and other organisations in the Town may wish to consider how to plan and market the amenities and services in a balanced way for those both in and outside the town boundaries - perhaps linking more with surrounding villages to gain their views and support for new developments that will benefit all parties. There may also be other opportunities for 'joined-up planning' with villages - such as for affordable housing, public transport and health service planning - and the West Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council may be appropriate bodies for the Chipping Norton Town Council to take this further - although many of the surrounding villages cross county and district borders. There may be a case for some form of town and village partnership (such as that for local schools).

14 Putting vision into action

So how are the results of the Appraisal to be taken forward following the completion of the main project? Some of the key steps are outlined here.

Public exhibition and feedback

With the main findings nearly complete, there was an exhibition for the public in the Town Hall over 3 days in May 2003. This included a display of survey results and findings, an ecological map of the area produced by County Ecologist Craig Blackwell and a video from the 1960s concerning the traffic problems in the Town. Around 400 members of the public came as well as around 30 official guests at a private reception from the District and County Council, the police, school and other bodies. Feedback from almost everyone, both verbal and written, expressed great interest, positive views about the exhibition but many comments echoing the same concerns - particularly about heavy goods vehicles through town! The exhibition is being made available for use around the Town - for example at Chipping Norton School and the ACE centre, as well as with County and District Councils.

Published report and consultation

This report, published in September 2003 is being made available to a wide range of organisations - both public and private, and a short summary is being given to every household. As part of wider communication, meetings are being held with officers and elected members of West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council over the summer - to present both the report and the exhibition. Similar consultation with other bodies such as Police, health authorities and businesses is likely.

Taking forward actions in Chipping Norton

The Town Appraisal Steering Committee was asked by the Town Council in 2002 to carry out this work. With the project finished the Town Appraisal report is available to all in Chipping Norton as an agenda for taking issues forward. The report also goes to the new Town Council, recently elected in May 2003, for comment and adoption since response and action will be theirs to determine. They will also need to decide any appropriate committees or project teams to take high priority items forward.

Collaboration and partnership

The Town Council itself has limited delegated power or financial resource. Many areas for action will involve other parties - notably West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, the Learning & Skills Council, Cherwell Vale Primary Care Trust, Thames Valley Police, SEEDA as well as individuals and members of local organizations and businesses whose interest is practical and whose involvement will be vital. Many market towns have formed both formal and informal partnerships to help make things happen - involving the right people but not necessarily led by the public authorities. Some of these may form models for how Chipping Norton takes its own future in its hands.

Progress continues

People in the Town do not wait for things to arise from this Appraisal - and indeed there are many current initiatives in the Town which are happening, both because of, or completely independent of, the Appraisal. They are, however, all dealing with some of the important issues raised. They include for example:

- formation of a new lobby group of towns and villages about traffic on the A44
- more evidence about HGV issues - including pollution monitoring in Horsefair by the District Council, and the County's local transport review
- new planning guidance on affordable housing
- a locally chaired review of the future options for Castle View residential home
- a joint town and district review of planning issues for public buildings
- Town Council involvement in issues on the future of Parker Knoll and its site
- a successfully launched, privately run town website
- the Broadband for Chippy campaign
- establishing a Town Council business liaison committee
- District plans for CCTV in Chipping Norton

There will no doubt be many more - with many people and organisations committed to achieving the vision of a thriving Cotswold working town.

What happens next ?

- ***Draw up action plan***
- ***Prioritise issues for prompt action:***
  - ~ Reduction of HGV traffic
  - ~ Affordable housing
  - ~ Additional youth facilities
  - ~ plus some "quick wins"!
- ***Lobby! Lobby! Lobby!***

Vision into action timetable

mid 2003

Publication of Report together with household leaflet summarising key findings

Appraisal exhibition at WODC & OCC offices & Chipping Norton School [September]

Presentation and discussion with West Oxfordshire and County Council leaders and officers

late 2003

Town Council produces realistic Action Plan based on key issues in Report with a timetable for action agreed in consultation with partner organisations and influential bodies [see list below]

Youth Appraisal identifies and engages in key action projects for young people to undertake [as part of OCC Living and Learning Grant Award]

Exhibition & public consultation on Action Plan

early 2004

Town Council reports initial progress at Annual Parish Meeting and outlines action points for following year

Who do we need to influence & work with ?

There is now a growing variety of national, regional and local organisations who can determine the future of small communities like Chipping Norton whilst making wide reaching decisions that cover large areas which are frequently beyond the immediate borders of West Oxfordshire or Oxfordshire. A Town Appraisal gives such organisations the considered views of a local community; evidence that they themselves would not have the resources or commitment to gather within the communities constituting their area. We need to lobby them actively so that they accept our Appraisal Report and work with us on an Action Plan for our town.

Business partnerships – NORBIS, TVBAC
Cotswold Line Promotion Group Virgin and Great Western Trains
Cotswold Wardens
Cotswolds AONB [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty] Partnership
GOSE – Government Office of the South East
LSC – Learning and Skills Council for Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire
National Government Departments
OCC – Oxfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire Community Partnership
Oxfordshire NHS Ambulance Trust
Oxfordshire NHS Disability Trust
PCT – Cherwell Vale Primary Care Trust
Public Utilities – Gas, Water, Electricity, Telephone service providers
SEEDA – South East England Development Agency
SEERA – South East England Regional Assembly
Thames and Chilterns Tourist Board
Thames Valley Police Authority
The Connexions Service
The Countryside Agency
West Oxfordshire Local Strategic Partnership
WODC – West Oxfordshire District Council
Wychwood Project
Wycombe Leisure

Acknowledgements and Contacts

Steering Committee

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Eve Coles
Don Davidson
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Keith Ruddle
Jill Thorley
Michael Fletcher (Town Clerk)

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Warwick Tompkins
Shirley Toulson
Simon Towers
Karen Trogstad
Charmaine Tyack
Peter Tyler
Diane Waller
Stephen Weston
Elizabeth Whitaker
Stephen Williams
Tim Wilson
Georg Wissinger
Trevor Witts
Ann Wooby
Vera Woodward
Coralie Wright

Survey and questionnaire participants

1753 town and village residents
400 under 11s in a youth survey
131 Year 10 students
77 local businesses
35 local clubs and societies

Representatives from public bodies

West Oxfordshire District Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Cherwell Vale Primary Care Trust
NHS Disability Trust
Thames Valley Police
CN Community Education Council

Data Processing and Printing

Warwick Network Limited
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Further information

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