

The idea is to distil all existing plans especially NP into one Master Plan for Town Centre



Ideas for branding/naming the project "One plan" ideas.



Suggested text for Consultation leaflets with suggested questions

Contents

Welcome

What is the purpose of this document?

Taking advantage of Chippenham's strengths

A framework for Chippenham and its people

The climate emergency

Six themes identified by the Town Centre Masterplan

1. Helping to deliver the vision within the draft neighbourhood plan

2. Movement -creating a better-connected town centre and pedestrian friendly streets
3. Improving open space and the environment and delivering a green river corridor through Chippenham Town Centre.
4. Creating a healthy and vibrant town centre
5. Bringing out the qualities in Chippenham's historic character and public realm
6. Identifying character areas and regeneration sites and framing their role in Chippenham

Delivering this plan

The relationship with other documents and strategies

What happens next?

DRAFT

Introduction

This document has been prepared at the request of the Chippenham Town Centre Partnership Board to commence engagement with the community over the development of a new and comprehensive Town Centre Masterplan for Chippenham.

It is designed to be an easy-to-read summary of possible options to be tested through a Town Centre Masterplan process to help boost Chippenham's economy, enhance the environment, and celebrate the town's heritage.

We hope you find it interesting, informative, and exciting. Every town including Chippenham has suffered through the COVID 19 pandemic with confidence in town centres being undermined and people less likely to go into town centres for goods and services. Along with wider economic headwinds and in common with many other towns Chippenham has experienced negative impacts on its local economy.

The Chippenham Town Centre Partnership Board believe that with the right interventions Chippenham can become an even better place - and this document provides some options as to how this could be achieved to start discussion and gain stakeholder views.

These options are based on a summary of a large amount of existing evidence that already exists and is informed in particular by the work that the Town Council has been progressing through its Neighbourhood Plan.

It seeks to draw this together to create one comprehensive options plan for Chippenham's central area.

What is the purpose of this document?

Chippenham is a wonderful place to live, visit and work. Yet nowhere is immune from the potential impacts of the changing ways people shop, the increasing unaffordability of homes especially for the younger generation and the climate emergency. The work so far on the Chippenham Town Centre Masterplan has taken a detailed look at the town centre and identified a number of options and opportunities to ensure that Chippenham can secure a bright, vibrant, and prosperous future for its residents, those who work here and its visitors.

The Chippenham Town Centre Partnership Board has prepared this draft options plan for consultation with the local community. A minimum period of 6-week consultation will follow where these concepts will be consulted on and if supported will be incorporated into a final document for approval. The consultation will also seek to listen carefully to the views of the community, make amendments and introduce new ideas and concepts where further work deems them deliverable.

Taking advantage of Chippenham's strengths

Chippenham town centre has a varied mix of building styles, with the area to the south of the river accommodating a higher proportion of more historic buildings. All of the town centre lies within a Conservation Area and the overall standard of the built environment in the centre is good. The main centre is characterised by reasonably narrow streets with the High Street being semi-pedestrianised creating an attractive environment for town centre visitors. The town centre also has a combination of the old and the new with the historic buildings sitting alongside more modern shopping centres.

The River Avon flows through the centre of Chippenham and although the river is not designated for nature conservation is still holds a high biodiversity value. It is well used for recreation with the sailing and canoe club providing the focus although the preferred activity is canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding rather than sailing with the river being more suitable for the former activities. Chippenham has a number of well-maintained parks, play areas and open spaces within the central area including Monkton Park which sits on the banks of the River Avon.

To the north of the river the majority of the buildings are post-war and vary in terms of their architectural quality. The presence of a greater number of vehicles detracts from the overall attractiveness of this part of the centre although it is still able to provide a positive contribution to the overall attractiveness of the town centre. Pedestrian movement in this part of the centre is affected by the dominance of the highway infrastructure affects ease of movement in this part of the centre.

Chippenham is well connected via road and train to London and Bristol sitting near to the M4 motorway and on the main train line between London Paddington and Bristol. The train line has recently been electrified resulting in London being just over an hour away and Bath around 10 minutes away by train.

The Town sits on the edge of the Cotswolds and provides a good base for visiting this important tourist area. Other nearby attractions include the great house and art treasures of Longleat, Bowood, Lacock Abbey, Sheldon Manor and Corsham Court.

Chippenham hosts a programme of established annual events, combined with a variety of unique special celebrations and activities. Events include the annual Pancake Races in the High Street on Shrove Tuesday, the popular annual Folk Festival, the annual Children's Fun Day occurring in August as well as the Chippenham Open Challenge Fishing Match on the River Avon. The popular Town Market with traditional and modern stalls occurs every Friday & Saturday in the Market Place, with ongoing craft shows, antique and book fairs.

[A framework for Chippenham and its people](#)

The Town Centre Masterplan will be a framework for Chippenham and its people. The outcome will be based on intensive discussions and consultations with the people of Chippenham of which this document and consultation forms part of. Once finalised it will be a document that will help to shape Chippenham's future. It will represent a consensus of views from a wide range of people who live in, work in, and visit and have an interest in Chippenham.

The main ideas in the Chippenham Town Centre Masterplan will come from the community and from a detailed analysis of the role and function of the town centre supported by existing published evidence. This summary is based on the initial analysis of the role and function of the town centre and existing published evidence.

The views of the people of Chippenham will be sought through meetings, a six-week public consultation, interactive exhibitions and face-to-face conversations. Meetings will also be held with key businesses, occupiers, and investors in the town centre to gather their views about their ambitions and aspirations and to make sure that emerging proposals reflect the commercial realities and opportunities in the town.

The climate emergency

The proposed themes identified for Chippenham Town Centre Masterplan all take account of the climate emergency and the need for our communities to respond to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Both Chippenham Town Council and Wiltshire Council have declared a climate emergency and have committed to taking accelerated actions, in line with the national and global momentum that is building in response to climate change. The Town Centre Masterplan provides an opportunity to set out an ambitious set of recommendations which seek to protect the environment, reduce the likelihood of flooding, and reduce motor vehicle movements through Chippenham while ensuring Chippenham remains accessible to all.

Six proposed themes identified for the Chippenham Town Centre Masterplan

1. Helping to deliver the vision set out within the draft neighbourhood plan

The Chippenham Town Centre masterplan should aim to help to deliver the NP vision

'To revive Chippenham town centre, serving as a centre for community activity, services, and retaining a mix of national traders and attracting more independent traders whose presence will embed its Market Town character. The town centre will be a vibrant meeting place for the community to shop, meet their service needs, interact, and enjoy their leisure time. The special historic character of the town centre will be preserved and enhanced'.

The TCPB / masterplan group should seek work with the NP steering group and develop site-based projects identified within the draft plan. The projects identified include:

[list of projects to be identified by Pillar leads and agreed with Place Board]

Question: Do you agree that the Chippenham Town Centre Masterplan (CTCM) should aim to assist in delivering the objectives of the draft Neighbourhood Plan?

2. Movement - creating a better-connected town centre and pedestrian friendly streets

- The road network in Chippenham town centre is congested with 'bottlenecks' in and around the town centre limiting pedestrian movement and encourages the town centre to remain fairly isolated from the majority of the town.

Question: would you like to see Chippenham town centre become a more pedestrian-friendly environment and if so what changes would you suggest are looked at?

- As the town expanded and grew, layouts built for the car age appeared, characterised by cul-de-sac layouts, and fairly disconnected streets. This can make for a place which is difficult to move around and a potential barrier to encouraging use of a diverse range of greener transport choices

Question: Should the CTCM look at whether it is possible to reconnect these streets and if so would you have any suggestions about changes that could be looked at to help achieve this?

- Public transport, pedestrian and cycling connectivity and links to the town centre could be improved to provide a modal shift away from the car in Chippenham.

Question: *Should a study be undertaken to determine where better public transport, pedestrian and cycling links could be provided?*

- Chippenham has excellent train links to London and Bristol, but improved access is needed to the station to capitalise upon this. This could include opportunities for new crossings over the railway to reconnect movement between the north and south of the town and other improvements around the Railway Station and Cocklebury Road area to attract further investment to this area.

Question - *Should such improved links to the station be looked into further to improve access to the station and encourage investment around the station and Cocklebury Road area?*

- Bus services in Chippenham currently have the worst reliability of all services in Wiltshire, however Chippenham's bus station on Timber Street is visited by a number of regular bus services connecting the town to Devizes, Hullavington, Trowbridge and Swindon, should these be improved?

Question: *Should bus services within Chippenham be improved?*

- A crossing of the River Avon, at the south end of Charter Park, could provide pedestrians and cyclists from the east of Chippenham with a more direct route to the west or vice versa.

Question: *Should the feasibility of a pedestrian and cycle bridge at the south end of Charter Park be investigated?*

3. Improving open space and the environment and delivering a green river corridor through Chippenham Town Centre

The river Avon and its frontage is one of the town's greatest amenities but is not being utilised to its full potential and access to the river should be improved. In addition, the Environment Agency have a major asset, a radial sluice gate, within Chippenham which is nearing the end of its design life and is increasingly causing operational issues. Flood risk in Chippenham is very dependent on this sluice gate operating correctly, and a large area of the town centre would suffer from increased flooding if it were to fail to open during a flood event. The Environment Agency are currently looking at a long-term replacement for this asset and have identified the opportunities there would be in working with others to look at wider improvements for this reach of the river that could provide a more sustainable, cost-effective solution, that would also provide ecological and amenity benefits, as well as encouraging future growth and regeneration. It is therefore proposed that a Chippenham "River-Green Corridor" should be created that provides better flood mitigation and improves the public realm through the town centre and provides a focal point for the town establishing links to the river from existing parks/green space to the northeast at Monkton Park south towards Pewsham. Additional links connecting surrounding new development to the town centre and the river corridor via green links should be sought.

Evidence: Falling crime: for every 10% increase in tree canopy cover there is a 15% decrease in violent crime and a 14% decrease in property crime, even when controlling for other socio-economic factors (21)

80% of overseas tourists, 74% of UK staying visitors and 70% of UK day visitors ranked “parks and gardens” as “important” or “very important” in their decision to visit or take a day trip.

Example of success elsewhere - The transformation of a canal towpath in London into a high-quality route for walking and cycling is estimated to have produced nearly £5.5m of benefit.

Question: *Do you think that the existing riverside environment should be enhanced to create a River Green Corridor that provides better flood mitigation and improves the public realm through the town centre.*

Question: *Should additional links be provided to the south to connect surrounding new development to the town centre and the river green corridor?*

4. Creating a healthy and vibrant town centre

Chippenham town centre has seen an increase in service uses (cafes, betting shops, offices etc) and a reduction in retailers whilst reducing vacancy rates, this is positive but as a result, Chippenham leaks the majority of shopping trade to other nearby centres. Business parks and out of town retail parks / supermarkets that have developed out of town and do not complement the town centre and have compounded this trend. Chippenham has a successful twice weekly market currently held on a Friday and Saturday.

Question: *Do you think steps should be taken to revitalise the shopping and leisure offer of the Town Centre and if so, what specific measures would you suggest might contribute to this? What are the unique characteristics of Chippenham could we use to attract people back to the town centre?*

The most recent retail study identifies that ‘Retail driven improvements in the centre are likely to be challenging on the basis of the current state of the UK non-foods sector and a general reluctance by a number of retailers to open new stores /expand existing floorspace. Recent improvements to retail offer may comprise a natural limit for what the town can achieve partly due to the continuing leakage of spend to competing destinations such as Bath, Bristol, Swindon Outlet Centre and Cribbs Causeway’ Given that Chippenham retains a large proportion of convenience and DIY / hardware shopping trips, but this is mainly to out of centre locations that takes trips away from the centre. Should Opportunities to re-dress the balance between the town centre and out of centre locations be explored?

Question: *Should service uses be further encouraged in Chippenham centre to support vibrancy?*

Question: *Should the twice week market be promoted more widely and complimented by a range of other events to draw into the town centre? If so what sort of events could be considered (farmers markets, craft/antiques, food and drinks festivals, arts events, and sports etc)?*

Question: *Can you think of any other opportunities to help attract people (both business and customers) to the town centre?*

With respect to leisure time, the Reel cinema on Marshfield Road attracts good numbers. Chippenham’s food and beverage uses are more popular during the day than in the evening. Both of these elements could be enhanced to encourage vibrancy and more visits and trips out in the

evening as well as during the day. It is important to use arts, culture, and leisure to promote Chippenham as an attractive destination.

There is therefore an opportunity to make the town centre a vibrant meeting place for the community to shop, interact and enjoy their leisure time.

Example of success elsewhere - Lambeth Council's evening strategy created a further 3,000+ jobs in food (not takeaway), entertainment and arts, while also increasing the public feeling of safety

Question: *Can you think of anything that could be done to enhance the experience of visiting the popular cinema may be through complimentary uses nearby or enhancements to access and the public domain?*

Question: *When it comes to Chippenham's food and beverage sector can you think of any steps that could be taken that would encourage you and people you know to use the facilities on offer more in the evenings?*

Question: *If we were to produce an evening economy strategy for Chippenham Town Centre, what should it include and what problems must it tackle?*

Question: *what type of new events or facilities might encourage you to visit the Town Centre in the evenings on a more regular basis?*

Chippenham does not currently attract cultural visits apart from a small percentage visiting Lacock Abbey and therefore a reason to come to Chippenham needs to be developed. The market could be supported as a focus for the town, providing a key visitor attraction and a source of local produce. The Town sits on the edge of the Cotswolds and could provide a good base for visiting not just the Cotswolds but other attractions such as the great house and art treasures of Longleat, Bowood, Lacock Abbey, Sheldon Manor and Corsham Court which are all within easy reach.

Question: *what improvements do you think are needed to the Town Centre to make it more welcoming and attractive to tourist visitors. Is there adequate tourist accommodation, enough things to do and are the Towns special qualities and heritage being effectively sold and its story told? If not what could be done to improve this?*

Question: *What steps do you suggest we take to promote Chippenham as an ideal base for exploring the riches of the wider area such as the Cotswold and various historic sites such as Bowood and Lacock Abbey?*

5. [Bringing out the qualities in Chippenham's historic character and public realm](#)

Chippenham had a great built environment with a historic centre that sits within the Chippenham Conservation Area that is also home to many listed buildings, but the centre isn't used or preserved to the town's benefit. The historic centre and riverside should be preserved, promoted, and enhanced. New development and public realm enhancements, including advertising and shopfronts should be sympathetically, sensitively, and sustainably designed to the highest quality that enhances the significance of heritage assets. Sites could be identified that could be regenerated to increase the attractiveness of the historic buildings and public realm.

The Upper Market Place continues to remain a car dominated, peripheral area of the town centre but functions as the southern gateway to the town. The area could be transformed though high quality and sensitive public realm improvements and possible pedestrianisation. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes an 'indicative parameters plan' showing areas to introduce as shared space for people driving, walking, and cycling. The masterplan could take this forward.

Example of success elsewhere - In Piccadilly, Stoke-on-Trent, a project making the area more pedestrian friendly led to 30% more footfall

In Coventry, new pedestrian areas were credited with a 25% rise in footfall on Saturdays.

Kelso implemented a new shopfront policy which contributed to a 28% increase in footfall.

The Peace Gardens in Sheffield reported a 35% increase in footfall in the city centre (Genecon, 2010) based on implementation of public realm strategy and a net increase in spending of £4.2 million.

Evidence: Boost to high streets: consumers are willing to pay between 9% and 12% more for goods and services in shopping areas with large, well-cared for trees. (20)

Question: *Should areas and projects within Chippenham Town centre be identified that could improve the attractiveness of the town centre's public realm?*

Question: *Should the Masterplan take forward the draft NP's proposal to transform the Upper Market Place area and assist in the delivery of the project?*

Question: *Are there specific areas within Chippenham Town Centre in particular need of public realm improvements – and why should these areas be prioritised?*

Question: *Should specific character areas be identified within the Chippenham Town Centre masterplan which are looked at in more detail for improvement?*

6. [Identifying character areas and regeneration sites and framing their role in Chippenham](#)

The Bath Road Car Park and Bridge Centre Site remains an opportunity to introduce new land uses into the town centre, which complements and enhances the town centre and secures completion of planned highways improvements. Uses could include leisure, shopping, residential and/or public car parking. The draft Neighbourhood Plan sets some general design principles and an indicative masterplan that is 'zoned' to inform any future masterplan for the sites including the concept of amalgamating the sites by rearranging/downgrading the gyratory; the amalgamated site shall be an extension of the town centre but have its own unique identity; a new public square will anchor the development; and permeability and connectivity to the town centre will be created through new pedestrian routes and site lines. The feasibility of the proposal could be taken forward within this framework and worked up to show deliverability.

Question: *Should the Bath Road Car Park and Bridge Centre Sites remain an opportunity to deliver new land uses into the town centre and should the partnership undertake additional feasibility work to support the deliverability of the site?*

Question: *Are there other sites or areas within Chippenham Town Centre that should be considered for regeneration?*

Question: *Should the Town Centre Masterplan identify character areas where different roles and character can be identified and planned for?*

[Delivering this plan](#)

The options and recommendations in this Town Centre Masterplan cannot be delivered by a single organisation. Delivery will be dependent on a range of different partners working together, including Wiltshire Council, Chippenham Town Council, Swindon and Wiltshire LEP, Natural England, the Environment Agency, private sector representatives, and the community.

The Chippenham Town Centre Masterplan will therefore be based on partnership and consensus between all these different stakeholders. Its recommendations will be informed by the views of the people of Chippenham which are being sought through meetings, interactive exhibitions and face-to-face conversations, the result of which will be a document that is for Chippenham and its people.

With projects and interventions tested and refined, the Town Centre Masterplan will be supported by a delivery plan that will influence future decision making, activity and funding. The Chippenham Town Centre Partnership Board will guide the development and delivery of this plan and the recommendations within it in a coordinated way.

[The relationship with other documents and strategies](#)

List more documents and programmes that have influenced this draft strategy.

The River Corridor Improvements project - the River Park project is an opportunity for a collaborative project between Wiltshire Council and the Environment Agency which aims to improve Chippenham's flood resilience and river environment. The project scope could include its relationship with the rivers, particularly the Avon, which runs through the middle of the central area.

[What happens next?](#)

We will look at all the responses we receive to the consultation and analyse them. We will write up a consultation report that will summarise the responses and make an assessment as to the support for issues and options put forward as well as considering thoughts and recommendations regarding other options and concepts put forward. More evidence work may need to be undertaken as a result. We will then frame a draft plan that will be subject to a further round of consultation.

Moving forward we recognise there is much more to do to make the Masterplan a reality and we will be working with partners and community groups to bring the projects the plan identifies to fruition. We will give regular updates on progress using our dedicated website and through press releases.

If you wish to find out more or just keep an eye on our progress, please visit our dedicated website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/