Notice of Meeting

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Executive

Thursday 23rd March, 2023 at 5.00 pm

in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury

Note: This meeting can be streamed live here: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/executivelive
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Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday, 15 March 2023

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) on 01635 519052, e-mail: sadie.owen1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire COUNCIL

To:	Councillors Lynne Doherty (Chairman), Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Ross Mackinnon, Thomas Marino, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

Agenda

Part I

Pages

1. **Apologies for Absence** — 7 - 8
   To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).

2. **Minutes** — 9 - 14
   To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 9 February 2023.

3. **Declarations of Interest** — 15 - 16
   To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

4. **Public Questions** — 17 - 20
   Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

5. **Petitions** — 21 - 22
   Councillors or Members of the public may present any petition which they have received. These will normally be referred to the appropriate Committee without discussion.

Items as timetabled in the Forward Plan

Pages

6. **Local Transport Plan Consultation (EX4337)** — 23 - 84
   Purpose: the purpose of the report is to notify the Executive of the work carried out to date on the new plan and the initial public consultation that has taken place on the strategy document.

7. **Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centre Strategies (EX4325)** — 85 - 188
   Purpose: the report provides an overview and context of the two Town Centre Strategies that have been developed for Thatcham and Hungerford by a consultant team led by Hemingway Design, commissioned by the Council in 2022. The Strategies have been developed in collaboration with residents, stakeholders and Thatcham

and Hungerford Town Councils. The report also outlines the next steps for delivery of the Strategies and seeks endorsement to take them forward.

8. **Renewal of the BBOWT partnership for Countryside Management (EX4313)** 189 - 274
Purpose: to set out the current arrangement we have with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) for the management of the council's countryside assets and to seek approval for the continuation of this arrangement for a further 10 year term.

9. **Response to Referred Place Motions (EX4327)** 275 - 308
Purpose: over the last 18 months a number of motions proposed at Full Council meetings have been referred to and discussed at other groups and Boards dealing with functions of the Place Directorate. The purpose of this report is to provide details of actions taken and proposed responses to each of these seven motions.

10. **Motion to Council - Defibrillators (EX4329)** 309 - 318
Purpose: the report sets out the response to the motion tabled by Councillor Abbs at the 8 July 2021 Council meeting, which called on West Berkshire Council to: adopt redundant telephone boxes and install defibrillators, make residents aware of their locations, provide guidance on how to use them to nearby residents, ensure that they are added to the national database used by emergency services, and undertake ongoing maintenance.

11. **Achievements and Progress Report - West Berkshire Council Strategy 2019-2023 (EX4342)** 319 - 350
Purpose: the report highlights Council's achievements in delivering the Council Strategy 2019 - 2023. The report articulates the progress that has been made against the Council's core business and priorities for improvement.

12. **West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023 - 2027 Consultation Feedback - Summary Report** 351 - 380
Purpose: for Members to note the feedback received from the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy that will inform the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027. The updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 shall be considered for approval at the Council meeting in May 2023.

13. **2022/23 Performance Report Quarter Three (EX4291)** 381 - 402
Purpose: to provide assurance that the core business and council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 are being managed effectively, and where performance has fallen below the expected level, present information on the remedial action taken and

the impact of that action.

14. **Statutory Consultation on Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2023 (EX4298)** 403 - 432
Purpose: to review the published hackney carriage fare scale in light of a request from the Taxi Trade to modify the tariffs and to determine the consultation process that must be undertaken if the Executive resolves to vary the current table of fares.

15. **Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement (EX4332)** 433 - 442
Purpose: to update on the revised capital costs for the Newbury Sports Hub, following the Judicial Review, which can be delivered at cost certainty for £3.878M and progress into a Delivery Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services to complete the scheme.

16. **Contract Award for Leisure Management Contract (EX4221)** 443 - 462
Purpose: the paper seeks Executive approval to award the Leisure Management Contract following a tender process.

17. **Contract Award - Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract (EX4294)** 463 - 468
Purpose: the paper seeks Executive approval to award the Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract, following a tender process.

18. **Members' Questions** 469 - 470
Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Councillors in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

19. **Exclusion of Press and Public**
RECOMMENDATION: That members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information of the description contained in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 specified in brackets in the heading of each item. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution refers.

Part II

20. **Contract Award for Leisure Management Contract (EX4221)** 471 - 494
(Paragraph 6 – information relating to proposed action to be taken by the Local Authority)

Purpose: the paper seeks Executive approval to award the Leisure Management Contract.

21. **Contract Award - Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract (EX4294)** 495 - 502
(Paragraph 6 – information relating to proposed action to be taken by the Local Authority)

Purpose: the paper seeks Executive approval to award the Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract, following a tender process.

Sarah Clarke
Service Director: Strategy and Governance

West Berkshire Council Strategy Priorities
Council Strategy Priorities: **PC1: Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes** **PC2: Support everyone to reach their full potential** **OFB1: Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire** **GP1: Develop local infrastructure to support and grow the local economy** **GP2: Maintain a green district** **SIT1: Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships**

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Sadie Owen on telephone (01635) 519052.

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Executive – 23 March 2023

Item 1 – Apologies for absence

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2023

Councillors Present: Lynne Doherty (Chairman), Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Ross Mackinnon, Thomas Marino and Richard Somner

Also Present: Councillors Lee Dillon, Adrian Abbs, David Marsh and Tony Vickers

Members and Officers Present Remotely: Councillor Alan Macro

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillors Joanne Stewart, Howard Woollaston, Jeff Brooks and Erik Pattenden

Officers Present: Sarah Clarke (Service Director Strategy & Governance), Paul Coe (Service Director Adult Social Care), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources), Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) Eric Owens (Executive Director – Place), Lizzie Reeves (Project Manager - MC, OS), and Nicola Thomas (Service Lead – Legal & Democratic)

PART I

79. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Howard Woollaston, Jo Stewart, Jeff Brooks and Erik Pattenden.

80. Minutes

Councillor Lynne Doherty opened the meeting with reference to the devastating earthquakes that had hit the south eastern area of Turkey on the border of Syria in the early hours of Monday morning, noting how shocked and saddened all had been.

Councillor Doherty reported that West Berkshire Council had an outstanding record in supporting displaced people and pledged to continue to do so by contributing as appropriate to any national response.

Councillor Doherty commented that should any residents wish to provide individual support, the Disaster and Emergency Committee had launched a Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal bringing together 15 charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently. Councillor Doherty urged individuals to follow the advice of the Charity Commission to ensure that contributions were made safely.

Councillor Doherty reported that West Berkshire Council had updated its website with details of how to contribute should residents wish to donate.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

81. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

82. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions is available from the following link: Transcription of Q&As.

83. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

84. Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2023/24 (C4320)

Councillor Lynne Doherty noted that Agenda Items 6, 7, 8 and 9 were all due to be debated and approved at Council on 2 March and as such, it had been agreed with Councillor Lee Dillon that Members of the Shadow Executive would only raise issues of clarification at the current meeting.

Councillor David Marsh queried the net yield on the commercial property investments. Councillor Ross Mackinnon reported that the gross income before costs was approximately £3.2m, and that net benefit to the council tax payer was £1m.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed and Councillor Richard Somner seconded the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 6).

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendations to Council for approval.

85. Medium Term Financial Strategy (C4303)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed and Councillor Lynne Doherty seconded the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 7).

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendation to Council for approval.

86. Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2023/24 to 2032/33 (C4315)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 8).

Councillor Tony Vickers queried why there were few projects beyond 2026/27. Councillor Mackinnon responded that the Capital Strategy had been revised to now cover a 10 year period and aimed to provide a more reliable estimate as to when the capital schemes would be built. Councillor Mackinnon commented that further schemes would come to the fore in the future which would then be included within the Strategy.

Councillor David Marsh queried whether a visitor information centre had been included within the budget, given Councillor Woollaston's previous support of such a project. Councillor Mackinnon agreed to clarify following the meeting.

Councillor Marsh noted that there was a budget of £200,000 towards the Newbury Town Masterplan for 2023/24 and then nothing further. Councillor Mackinnon explained that the £200,000 was for 'quick wins', and that as a long term scheme, future projects related to the Masterplan would be subject to capital bids as for any other scheme. Eric Owens, Executive Director of Place further added that funding schemes were also being sought from alternative third party sources.

Councillor Marsh queried how much of the £669,000 2022/23 allocation toward the Sovereign joint venture project had already been spent, and whether the £334,500 for 2023/24 was extra funding. Eric Owens commented that planning applications relating to the project had been processed through the system and approved. Councillor Mackinnon was unable to quantify the amount that had been spent in the current year.

Councillor Marsh queried how the panel that determined CIL bids was composed. Councillor Mackinnon responded that the panel was a mix of Officers and Members of the Executive, and that each bid was scored in accordance with the CIL criteria.

In response to Councillor Marsh's question, Councillor Graham Bridgman declared an interest, as Director of a company that had been awarded CIL funding from the Council, but noted no involvement in the CIL panel or in preparing the CIL bid.

Councillor Adrian Abbs commented that recording a nil amount in any of the columns of the table could lead to the wrong conclusion and queried whether anticipated percentages should be included instead.

Councillor Dominic Boeck seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendations to Council for approval.

87. Revenue Budget 2023-24 (C4314)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed and Councillor Lynne Doherty seconded the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 9).

Councillor David Marsh referred to the £30,000 allocated toward Sports Hub running costs and queried whether the fact that it was recorded from September onwards suggested that the Hub would be up and running by then. Councillor Mackinnon agreed that this was a fair assumption.

RESOLVED that: Executive refer the paper and recommendations to Council for approval.

88. Capital Financial Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23 (EX4301)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 10), and noted that there would need to be £7.3m of re-profiling in the forthcoming year. Councillor Mackinnon commented that the trend to re-profile was not uncommon and referred to page 222 of the Agenda pack, noting that the re-profiling for 2022/23 was similar to previous years.

Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that he was happy to second the recommendation and noted that the paper reflected some of the important spending that the Council had committed to across the district in relation to education schemes.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the forecast outturn position on the 2022/23 capital programme.
- In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members are asked to approve:
  (a) £7.3 million of planned expenditure to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 (project details in Appendix B).
  (b) £39k of Council funding (i.e. debt funding) proposed to be brought forward from approved expenditure for financial year 2023/4 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix B).
- In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members are asked to note:
  (a) £239k of external funding to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix B).

89. 2022/23 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three (EX4300)

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 11).

RESOLVED that: Executive note the forecast £1m overspend. The overspend is after taking account of provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of

budget setting, and amendments expected to be made before year end. Without this provision, the forecast would be an over spend of £7.7m.

90. Contract Award for the North and East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Schemes (EX4266)

Councillor Richard Somner introduced and proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 12), which confirmed the award of the contract to Hope & Clay Construction Limited, and was delivered in partnership with the Environment Agency and Thatcham Flood Forum with contributions from Thames Water and Thatcham Town Council, whom Councillor Somner thanked. It was noted that the pre-tender estimate had been substantially higher than the winning tender, but that the contracted company was very reputable.

Councillor Tony Vickers commented that he was pleased with the outcome, and whilst surprised with the amount of the winning tender given the current high inflation, hoped that it would set a trend for future contracts.

Councillor Adrian Abbs queried the amount of funding submitted by each of the partnership participants. Councillor Somner agreed to forward further information following the meeting.

RESOLVED that: Executive note the report.

91. West Berkshire Council Central Energy Contract Procurement Strategy (EX4299)

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter introduced and proposed the recommendation within the report (Agenda Item 13), which recommended a switch from the existing L6 trading basket to an L12 trading basket and to inform Crown Commercial Services prior to the 15 March deadline.

Councillor Adrian Abbs queried whether the Council had tested the market to ensure good value. Councillor Ardagh-Walter agreed that it would be prudent to test the market at some point in the forthcoming twelve months, however there had been insufficient time given the March deadline.

In response to a query from Councillor Tony Vickers, Councillor Ardagh-Walter commented that the Council was not yet at the stage of having surplus energy to sell on.

Councillor Richard Somner seconded the recommendation and acknowledged that the situation would require regular review, but appeared the right decision to be making.

RESOLVED that:

- Executive grants authority for the Council to switch from its existing L6 trading basket to the L12 trading basket by informing CCS before the identified 15 March 2023 notification deadline.

92. Libraries Review Report (EX4106)

Councillor Lynne Doherty explained that the report (Agenda Item 14), would not be debated as it was scheduled to be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission in March. The paper would return to Executive at a future date.

93. Members' Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions is available from the following link: Transcription of Q&As.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN …….

Date of Signature …….

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Executive –23 March 2023

Item 3 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Item 4:

Public Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 23 March 2023.

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

A. **Question submitted by Ian Hall to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships:**

"Is it appropriate for a councillor who lives outside the West Berkshire Area to be allowed to vote on matters for an area where he /she no longer lives?"

B. **Question submitted by John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships:**

"If a conservative councillor failed in his duty to do case work or answer emails as in the case of one of Clayhills councillors would he / she be sacked and a by election called?"

C. **Question submitted by Richard Almond to the Portfolio Holder for Leader of the Council:**

"Can you tell us how the Household Support Fund that West Berkshire Council has been given by the Government has been spent here to help people in need of financial support and, following the announcement of more funding to come, how will this be used?"

D. **Question submitted by Paul Morgan to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"Can you please provide a full breakdown of what Capital (upfront) costs and Revenue (ongoing) costs has been spent (and allocated) on the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) to date, i.e., in the financial years 2020 to 2023 and what further funds has been allocated for the PPS for Capital (upfront) costs and Revenue (ongoing) costs (please provide a year-by-year breakdown) for the next 10 financial years, i.e. 2023/ 24 to 2032/33."

E. **Question submitted by Paula Saunderson to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside:**

"Some Councils are considering or are involved in banking land to provide credits for developers to off-set the needs of the Nutrient Neutrality Directive and Biodiversity Net Gains which cannot be achieved on-site, so is WBC involved in such provision locally from their own or other lands?"

F. **Question submitted by Alan Pearce to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development:**

"It appears the construction of the Monks Lane Sports Hub has been delayed. The number one priority of the Playing Pitch Strategy is the 'Relocation of the single sized adult grass pitch at Faraday Road' and 'This site will be available before any construction work starts at Faraday Road'. The EX4219 London Road Industrial Project Refresh is proposing to have the 'Playing field site redeveloped for employment use' by 2026. It appears the only potential replacement for Faraday Road is Monks Lane, and currently there's been no

Item 4:

Public Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 23 March 2023.

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

public consultation regarding moving Faraday Road to Monks Lane. Would now be a good time to carry out that public consultation?"

G. **Question submitted by Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"What is the cost to the Council of providing temporary accommodation for the residents of the Four Houses Corner Gypsy and Traveller site while it is being refurbished?"

H. **Question submitted by Lee McDougall to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"Has the Council subsidised (such a reduced rates for pitch hire) or contributed financially to any senior men's or women's football team since June 2018 and does it plan to in the future?"

I. **Question submitted by Vaughan Miller to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development:**

"York House has huge potential for local charities to provide and enhance their services. Why has the council decided to auction off this vital asset?"

J. **Question submitted by Denise Gaines to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care:**

"Can I ask the executive member for Adult Social Care "what progress has been made into the review of the future of the Notrees care home?""

K. **Question submitted by Ian Hall to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"As football matches and rugby matches will be played on separate days, why do the tax payers of West Berkshire have to pay for the construction of what will surely be to be a duplication of social facilities post match, when these are already at the Rugby Club?"

L. **Question submitted by John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships:**

"Is bullying endemic in the conservative party?"

M. **Question submitted by Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside:**

"How many representations did the Council receive on the Regulation 19 consultation on the draft Local Plan?"

N. **Question submitted by Lee McDougall to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"Reports from a local children football team suggest that in poor weather children's matches at Henwick are cancelled to save the pitch for mens Sunday

Item 4:

Public Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 23 March 2023.

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

League football, who still play. As mens football pitch hire rates are double those charged for children's football, is the Council sacrificing local children's access to sports facilities for financial gain?"

O. **Question submitted by Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"What is the Council's assessment of the 'impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics' resulting from the delay in completion of the refurbishment of the Four Houses Corner Gypsy and Traveller site?"

P. **Question submitted by Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside:**

"How many Council Officers are assigned to the review of the representations on the Regulation 19 consultation, and when is this review expected to be to have been completed?"

Q. **Question submitted by Simon Pike to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"What are the reasons for the delay in completion of the refurbishment of the Four Houses Corner Gypsy and Traveller site?"

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Executive – 23 March 2023

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Local Transport Plan Consultation

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Richard Somner
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	8 March 2023
Report Author:	Alec Gore, Transport Policy Team Leader
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4337

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to notify the Executive of the work carried out to date on the new plan and the initial public consultation that has taken place on the strategy document.

1.2 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a set of documents that the government requires all local transport authorities to produce under the Transport Act 2000. These set out our priorities and strategies for maintaining and improving all aspects of the local transport system over a set period of time. The current LTP3 runs from 2011-2026. LTP4 will run from 2024 to 2039 in line with the Local Plan period. This consultation process allows for public engagement and for respondents to feedback at each stage of the project. We can then refine our draft strategy before final inclusion in the document.

2 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive note the report and the recent consultation that has taken place to help shape the future of travel and transport across the District.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Department for Transport funding was provided to all local transport authorities to update their LTPs.
Human Resource:	N/A

Legal:	There is a statutory duty on the Council to produce a LTP under the Transport Act 2000[1]. The consultation will have been completed before the pre-election period.			
Risk Management:	N/A			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	The proposal relates to the Local Transport Plan (LTP4).			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:	X			Reduced carbon emissions
Health Impact:	X			Improved air quality
ICT Impact:		X		N/A

[1] Transport Act 2000, S108-109

Digital Services Impact:		X		N/A
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Protecting and enhancing our environment
Core Business:	X			Protecting and preserving our environment as we work towards carbon neutrality Supporting our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan Supporting the uptake of low emission vehicles
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	This report concerns the public consultation on the draft Local Transport Plan Strategy. Other stakeholder bodies are also being consulted. Members and internal stakeholders were involved in workshops during the development of the consultation material with the Transport Advisory Group receiving updates at each step of the process. The public consultation took place online via our Consultation and Engagement Hub. The timeline is: • Start date: 2023-02-08 • End date: 2023-03-22 • Results 2023-06-30 In seeking the public's views on our draft plan, we want to know if they think that we are focussing on the right areas, and if there is anything we might have missed. A summary of the responses that had been received at the half-way point of the consultation is presented in Appendix B.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report has been requested by the Portfolio Holder in order to notify the Executive of the work on the development of a new LTP to date (see draft strategy consultation document at Appendix A) and the public consultation that has taken place.

4.2 Initial feedback at the half-way point of the consultation indicates that there is widespread support for the proposed priorities and highlights access to public transport, pedestrian facilities and clean air as being the top 3 most important transport considerations for the respondents. Appendix B provides an

4.3 A full report on the consultation and the final proposed LTP will be reported to Full Council in due course and will then seek a decision to adopt.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

As a Local Authority, we have a statutory duty to publish a Local Transport Plan (LTP), which contains a strategy and an intervention plan. We must also update the Plan to keep it relevant.

Background

5.1 We have made good progress in delivering our current LTP, which was adopted in 2011. However, there have since been major changes that have impacted on transport:

(a) The 2021 Census has shown us that the number of people living in West Berkshire has increased, as has the number of people aged 65 years and over.

(b) The Covid-19 pandemic brought significant changes to how we live and work, including being able to work from home, and accelerated changes in online shopping.

(c) There is also a greater importance being placed on emissions from transport and that of walking, cycling and leisure time for how it helps our physical and mental wellbeing.

5.2 We are revising the LTP, making it relevant to the challenges and opportunities we face today and providing a modern transport system for West Berkshire.

5.3 Our draft LTP focusses on the following priorities, and the fifteen objectives that will help to achieve them:

- creating places for people
- providing sustainable access for all
- decarbonising transport
- supporting sustainable growth

How we developed our draft plan

5.4 Over the past year, we have worked to understand travel patterns, trends and emerging opportunities. This includes changes up to 2020, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in propensity to access services digitally.

5.5 How we travel is influenced by how close we are to the services we need, e.g. shops, doctors and schools, why we need to travel, and the quality of transport and digital infrastructure to allow us to get to where we want to go. Our draft LTP takes into account the different travel needs of the people who live, work and learn in our district, and we have grouped the district into the following three place types:

- Newbury and Thatcham
- Rural areas and villages
- Eastern area

5.6 We have also been mindful of the work that has been taking place on the Local Plan Review (LPR) and the impact on transport resulting from proposed developments, e.g. at Sandleford and North-East Thatcham. Colleagues in Development and Planning and Highways Development and Control have been engaged with and Transport Assessments (TA) for the LPR undertaken. These involved modelling likely impacts and possible mitigation using our transport models.

5.7 Strategic road and rail corridors, e.g. mainline railway and M4, which play an important role for businesses and residents, will also be considered in the LTP.

6 Other options considered

6.1 There has been a delay within the Department for Transport (DfT) in issuing the guidance on writing Local Transport Plans. This has meant that our progress in developing our LTP has been without the benefit of the confirmed guidance. The option of delaying the public consultation on the LTP Strategy until we had the DfT guidance and possibly until we had the full document including the long-list of options for interventions, was considered. It was decided that it was important to keep the momentum that had built with progress so far and that there was a desire to get the public input at this stage and not wait.

6.2 Officers and our consultants have therefore worked diligently to have the LTP Strategy ready for consultation in this early spring period. The feedback from the consultation will then be considered alongside the guidance on LTPs from DfT and changes made as a result as appropriate before further consultation is planned.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The Portfolio Holder is asking the Executive to note that a new Local Transport Plan is being developed and initial consultation has taken place.

7.2 We have sought the public's views on our draft plan. We want to know if they think that we are focussing on the right areas, and if there is anything we might have missed. The initial feedback shows there is widespread support for the proposed priorities.

7.3 A full report on the consultation and proposed final LTP will be taken to Full Council in due course and will then seek a decision to adopt.

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation Draft of the Local Transport Plan February 2023

Appendix B – Summary of consultation responses at half-way point

Background Papers:

8.1 The draft LTP sets out how the priorities and objectives can be achieved for each place type, by taking the individual needs of the communities into consideration.

8.2 The supporting evidence document can also be found online.

8.3 The LTP has been developed in parallel with the emerging Local Plan, and is also supported by a number of strategies designed to help deliver the priorities, including:

- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle Strategy
- Bus Service Improvement Plan

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☒

Wards affected: The Local Transport Plan is a district wide plan and will therefore impact on all wards across West Berkshire.

Officer details:

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APPENDIX A

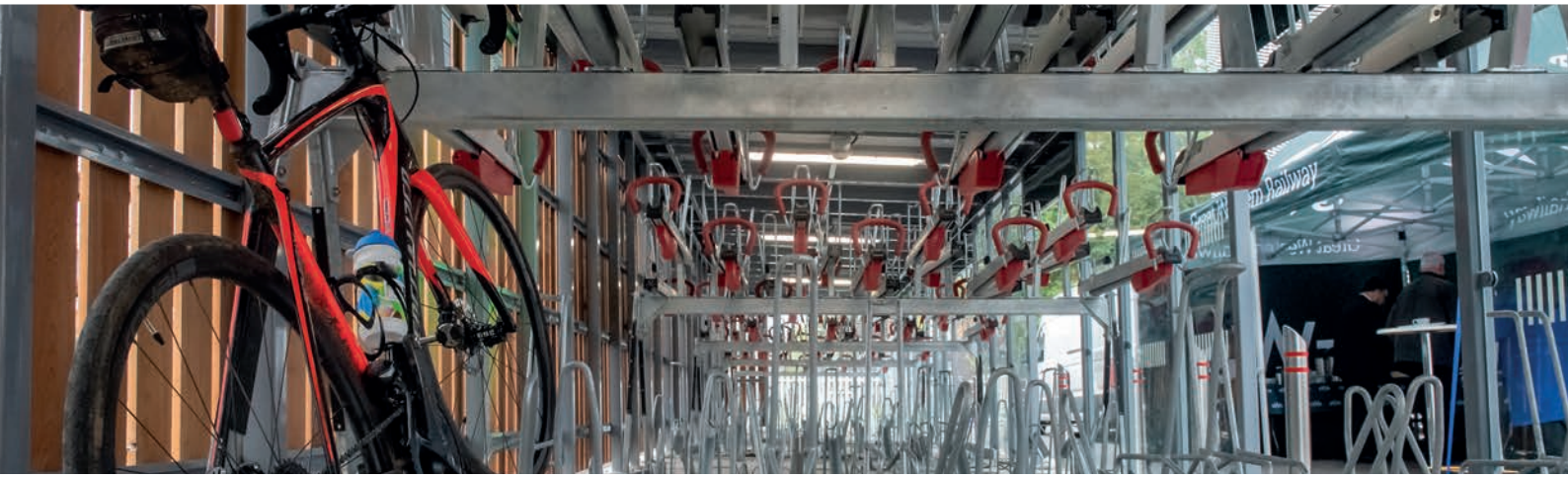
Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy Document
Consultation Draft February 2023

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Produced in partnership with

Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy Document (2024-2039)

Consultation Draft - February 2023







West Berkshire Council

Introduction

1.1 West Berkshire is a varied district with range of different transport needs for residents and visitors. From the bustling centre of Newbury, strategic road and rail routes passing through the district to the rolling hills and rural living in the North Wessex Downs AONB.

1.2 The existing framework for all aspects of transport and travel to support a stronger, greener, healthier and prosperous West Berkshire is set out in Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3).

1.3 Good progress has been made delivering the LTP. There has been significant transport investment over the last decade, including Newbury town centre regeneration, bus and rail station upgrades, electric vehicle charge points and strategic cycle routes.

1.4 Travel within West Berkshire is also being made more sustainably. From 2011-2020 (prior to COVID-19 pandemic) traffic volumes on main routes had remained stable, air quality had improved significantly and public and shared transport use had been growing.

1.5 West Berkshire and how residents access services is also changing. People are living longer and the population of West Berkshire has increased by 5% in the last decade. Digital access is increasingly changing travel behaviour. There have been significant changes in the online retail and services sectors over the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has also drastically increased the number of people who work from home and how people live their lives.

1.6 The negative impacts that can arise from transport are also better understood. Transport is one of the largest polluting sectors in the UK and there are local and national commitments to improving the environment and reducing emissions that the LTP4 will need to help deliver.

1.7 Work to understand travel patterns, trends and emerging opportunities has been progressing over the last 12 months. This has led to the development of this ambitious, but realistic, draft strategy that we are now consulting on to understand **your views**.

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West Berkshire LTP3 Delivery and Case Studies

2.1 West Berkshire Council has a strong track record of delivery and a significant amount of new transport infrastructure to improve a range of travel choices has been implemented since 2011. These include:

- **Market Street Redevelopment.** £50 million investment to enable residential and retail units off Market Street and a brand-new Newbury Wharf Bus Station opened.

- Production of and securing £2.6million funding towards West Berkshire **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**, to improve frequency and bus stop facilities.

- **Railway Station upgrades**. In partnership with rail operators and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) these include a £7m upgrade of **Newbury station** to improve access and interchange and current £4m **Theale** Railway Station upgrade to improve accessibility and facilities across the station.

- **Cycle Improvements.** New cycle lanes on the A4 through Newbury and Thatcham, improved crossing facilities, parking restrictions and road safety improvements along the A4 Western Avenue and production of a West Berkshire Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP).

- **London Road Industrial Estate Regeneration, Newbury.** A £4 million regeneration scheme with a new junction onto the A339 for access. This is part-funded through the Local Growth Fund via the LEP.

- **Public Electric Vehicle Charge Point** Installation, including Lambourn High Street, Pangbourne Station Road, Thatcham Gilbert Court and locations across Newbury.



Newbury Bus Station (left) and NCN 422 (right)

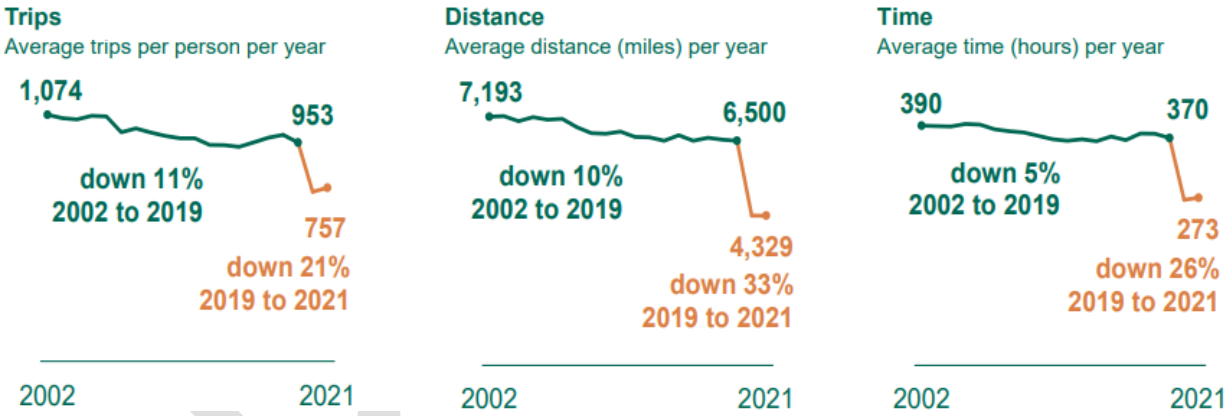
Looking Forward

3.1 Going forward, transport strategy and investment will need to consider and be adaptable to changes in society, technology, policy and the environment.

3.2 A new Local Plan that will guide **future development** in the district is currently being produced. The draft Local Plan includes a requirement for over 9000 new residences to 2039, with draft allocations at Sandleford Park in Newbury and at north-east Thatcham. Additional development will change travel demands, but also provides opportunities to extend public transport service, provide new mobility options and walking and cycling facilities to new standards, all of which can also improve facilities and travel options for existing residents.

3.3 Improvements in **technology and digital access** have changed how people travel, with shifts in the retail (home delivery, click and collect) and services (banking, local authority services etc) sectors have led to significant travel behaviour change over the last decade.

3.4 The **COVID-19 pandemic** changed how people went about their lives almost overnight. There was a major shift to home working and remote access to services, which has further accelerated changes in travel. The changes seen during and since the pandemic are also a unique example of how significant shifts can occur in a short space of time. The long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel are not yet fully established, but initial data suggests an acceleration of already falling travel and less longer distance trips being made.



Change in average trips, distance travelled and time travelling per person (2002 -2020)
Source: National Travel Survey Fact Sheet, 2021

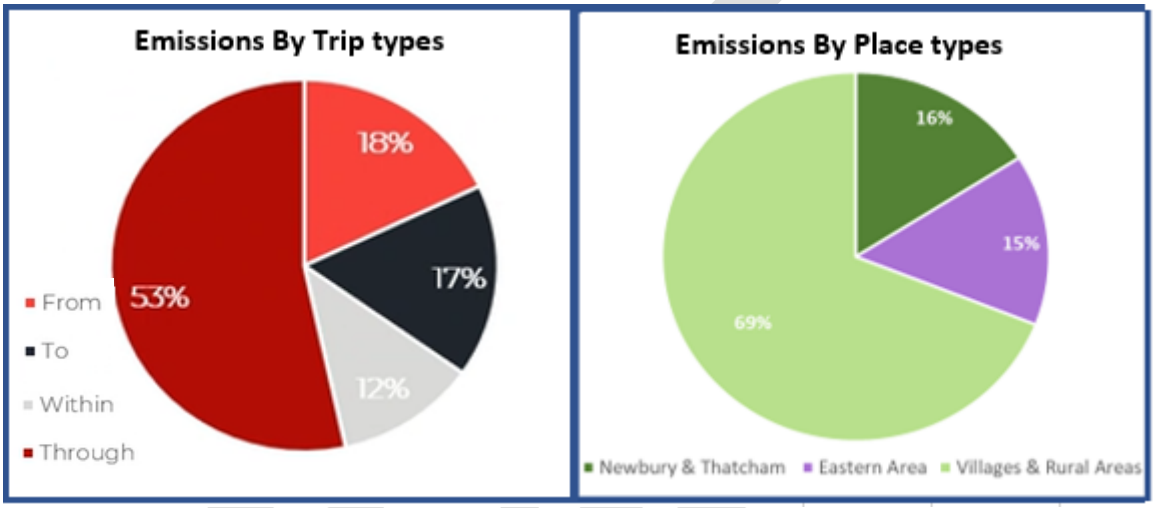
3.5 Although **car ownership** has increased over the last decade, each car is now used less, and fewer younger people are learning to drive. In future, people may consider alternative ways to access a car, such as the sharing of resources which is now commonplace in some other sectors (such as Air BnB).

3.6 New LTP guidance is being developed by the Department for Transport. The draft guidance recommends that LTPs have a greater focus on Places and the contribution of transport investment to achieving wider vision and objectives. Authorities will also be required to assess the impact of their LTP on carbon emissions.

Reducing the Impact on our Environment

4.1 West Berkshire Council has a strong record of responding to green issues. In July 2019 the Council unanimously declared a **Climate Emergency** and commitment to becoming carbon neutral. The Councils Environment Strategy highlights the role that the council, it's partners and residents have in responding to this challenge.

4.2 Transport accounts for **54% of total carbon emissions** in West Berkshire. Over half of these are due to through trips, such as those on the A34 and M4. For trips which start and/or end in West Berkshire, the contribution varies by place type. The **rural areas account for two thirds of emissions**, compared to 15-16% in Newbury and Thatcham and the Eastern area.



Breakdown of total emissions by trip type (left) and by place (right)

Source: West Berkshire Carbon Analysis, WSP, 2023

4.3 Electric vehicles will have a role in reducing emissions. However, analysis by the Local Government Association suggests that even with optimistic EV uptake scenarios, **at least a 20% reduction in travel will be required** to keep on track with carbon reduction targets. This will mean being bolder, and prioritising investment to reduce emissions to a greater extent than ever before. This will require changes in individuals' lifestyles, travel choices and implications to the state, but will also provide new opportunities in terms of new jobs, economic savings and wider benefits to the health service through health and wellbeing

4.4 The LTP strategy is a vital component in reducing emissions and the transition towards achieving net zero. An action plan will be developed following consultation and the carbon impact of those interventions assessed as part of the production of the final LTP.

4.5 This draft Local Transport Plan strategy sets out ambitious aspirations. This includes for 50% of trips in Newbury and Thatcham to be made by walking and cycling, growing the network of shared vehicles, giving people affordable ad-hoc access to vehicles, and supporting the roll out of electric vehicle charging facilities across the district.

4.6 Transport also has impacts on air quality, noise and wildlife and the LTP can help to reduce negative impacts and support the legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Vision and Objectives

5.1 The LTP will be Vision led, with the strategy and interventions developed around delivering on the local priorities for West Berkshire.

5.2 A draft Vision has been developed from national, regional and local strategies and refined through engagement with officers and elected members in West Berkshire Council.



Overview of how National, Regional Local Policy and Strategy have informed the LTP4 Vision

5.3 This draft vision sets out the identified local priorities that the LTP will support, these are:

- **Creating Places for People**
- **Providing Sustainable Access for All**
- **Decarbonising Transport**
- **Supporting Sustainable Growth**

5.4 A number of objectives have been identified for each of the priorities. These objectives, set out below, also provide targets that the progress of the LTP can be measured against.

Places for People

5.5 We want to put people's health and wellbeing at the centre of the strategy. Central to this is **Vision Zero**, for no one to be seriously or fatally injured on the West Berkshire highway network. **Safer residential and school streets** will also create quieter and better places to live and ensure children and young people can walk and cycle to school safely.

5.6 Although the private car still has its place within West Berkshire, we want to **reduce the dominance of vehicles** in centres where change can support vibrancy and the local economy.

5.7 All of these changes will contribute to **increasing physical activity**, providing benefits to people's health, improved mental wellbeing, better concertation levels and productivity.

Sustainable Access for All

5.8 The LTP will seek to support **improved digital connectivity**, and facilitate the role of technology in helping people to access services and transforming the transport system.

5.9 To give people choices about how they travel, we will increase **access to public transport and shared mobility**. To make door to door journeys easier, the LTP will seek to enable **seamless interchange between travel modes,** particularly at bus and railway stations and improve the attractiveness of **public transport vehicles.** These changes will help to enable everyone to move around on an attractive and integrated sustainable travel network.

Decarbonise Transport

5.10 The strategy will support the **transition of the transport sector to net zero** through a combination of infrastructure improvements and behavioural change. Supporting this is the objective for **50% of trips in Newbury and Thatcham to be made by active travel.**

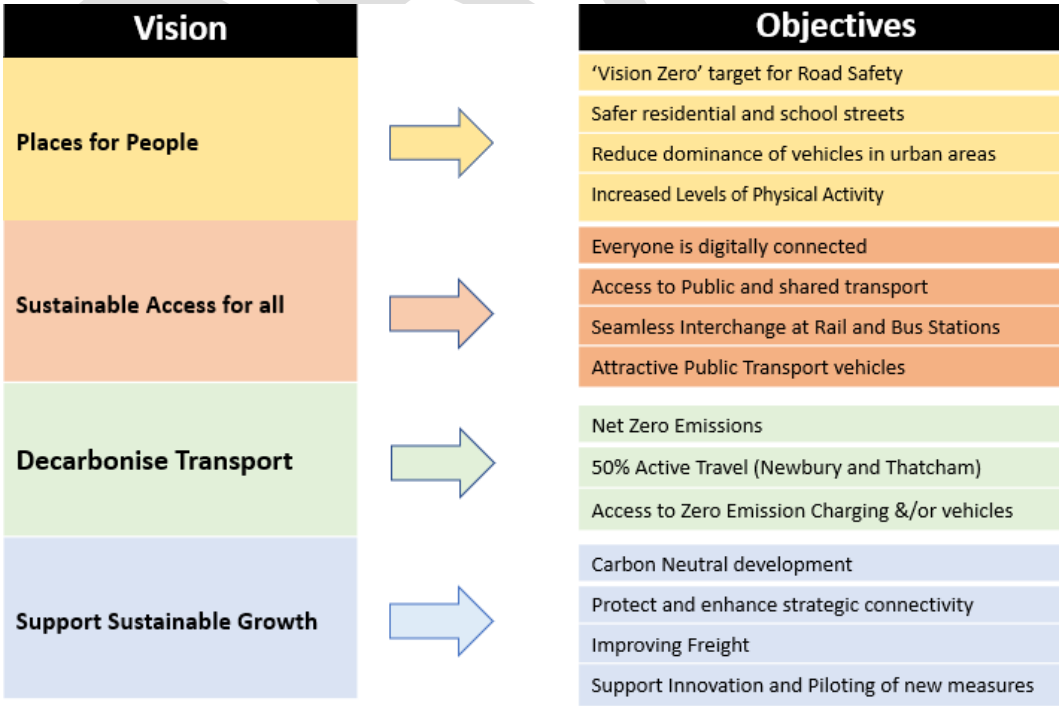
5.11 Recognising that walking and cycling is not feasible for every trip in West Berkshire, for longer distance journeys and where public transport is not available, we need cleaner fuels and the LTP will support widespread **access to zero emission charging facilities and vehicles**.

Support Sustainable Growth

5.12 Four objectives have been identified to support sustainable growth, including **carbon neutral development** which means new development should not add to current carbon challenge.

5.13 The movement of people, goods and services in and through the district is vital to the economy and the LTP aims to **protect and enhance strategic connectivity**. Alongside this, the LTP will support **improving freight,** including the transition to more sustainable modes and the management of freight in and through urban centres, such as Newbury and Thatcham.

5.14 The LTP will also **support innovation and the piloting of new measures**. This can give people first-hand experience of the benefits that new measures can bring, enabling greater public involvement and more dynamic and cost-effective ways of delivering new interventions.



Draft Vision and Objectives for West Berkshire LTP4 strategy

A Place Based Strategy

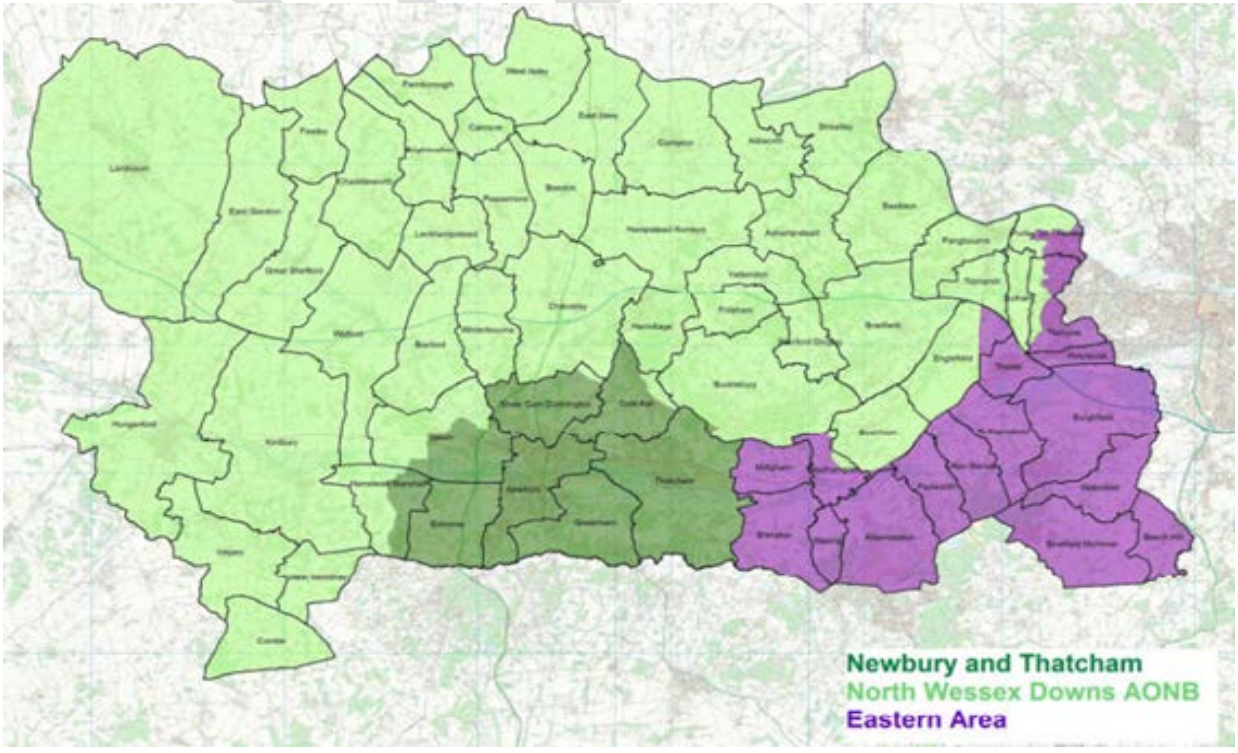
6.1 The way people travel depends on a range of factors such as proximity to services, trip purpose and the standard of digital and/or transport infrastructure. These factors typically are heavily influenced by the 'place' that people live in.

6.2 The development of the LTP has considered the variations in population and travel patterns across the district. It has also considered existing and emerging strategies to ensure the LTP is well aligned with the emerging Local Plan. This has led to the identification of a number of different functional areas of West Berkshire, proposed as the following **place** types;

- **Newbury and Thatcham** urban areas where 44% of West Berkshire residents live. The majority of trips made are to and from Newbury or Thatcham.
  It is the area with the highest levels of walking and cycling and the lowest car ownership. This area also includes the most significant new development proposals.

- **Rural areas**, including villages and the town of Hungerford falling within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Includes 74% of the district area and 36% of the population. There are a number of local service centres, railway stations in the south and east of the AONB area and the highest levels of working from home.

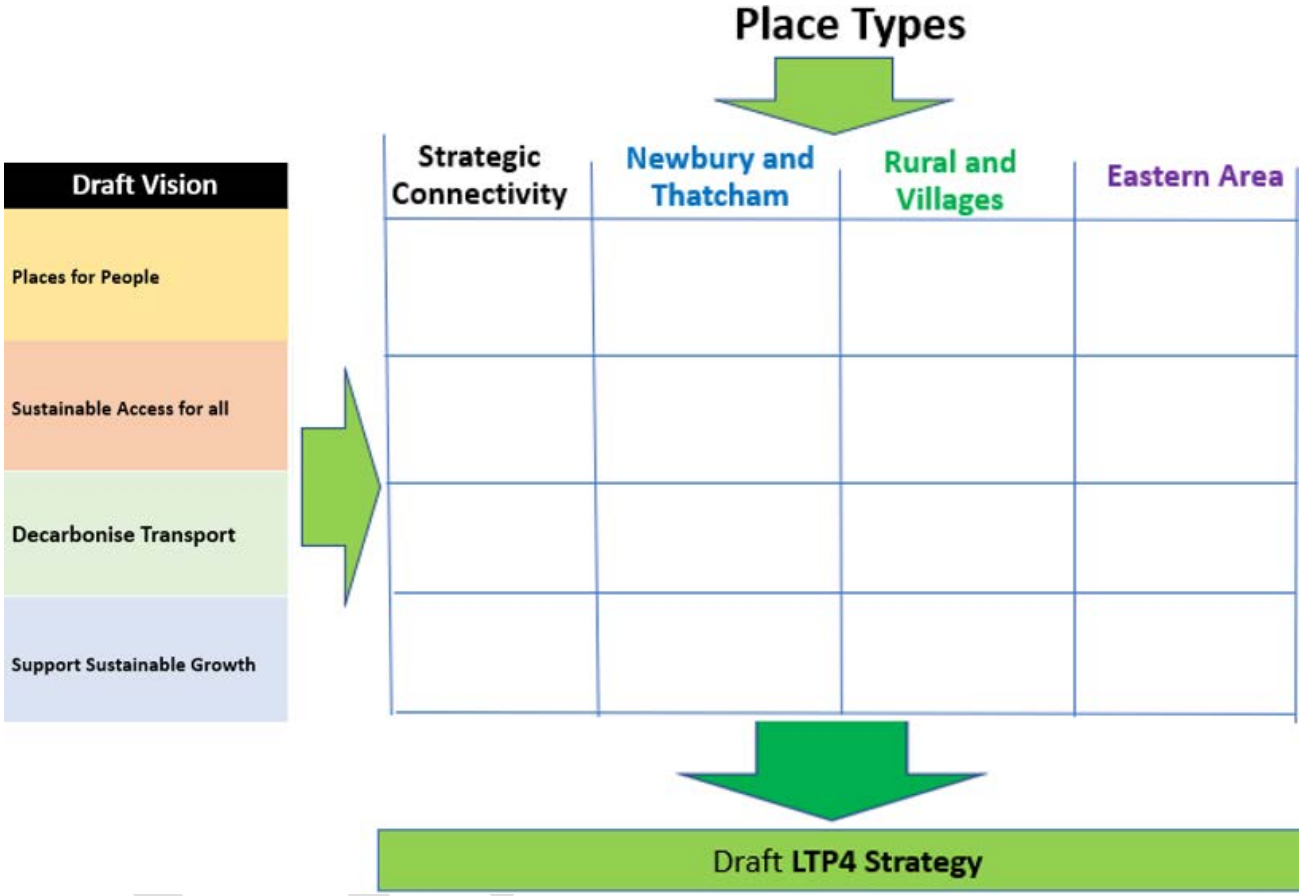
- **Eastern area** of the district, including Theale and Calcot, accounting for 20% of the population. Parts of the Eastern area are within the Reading Travel to Work area and a third of trips are to Reading. This area has the highest bus usage in the district.



Proposed Places in West Berkshire LTP4

6.3 There are strategic road and railway corridors that run through West Berkshire. Recognising that these play an important role for residents and business in each of the above places in West Berkshire, it is proposed that **Strategic Connectivity is also a 'Place Type'** that the LTP strategy will be developed around.

6.4 The draft strategy has been developed by considering how transport can help achieve the vision and objectives in each of the identified place types. This approach ensures that the strategy and interventions reflect the differing needs and opportunities in the different places across West Berkshire.



Considering how the Vision is achieved in each place type to develop the draft LTP strategy

6.5 The following sections set out the transport evidence, and draft strategy for

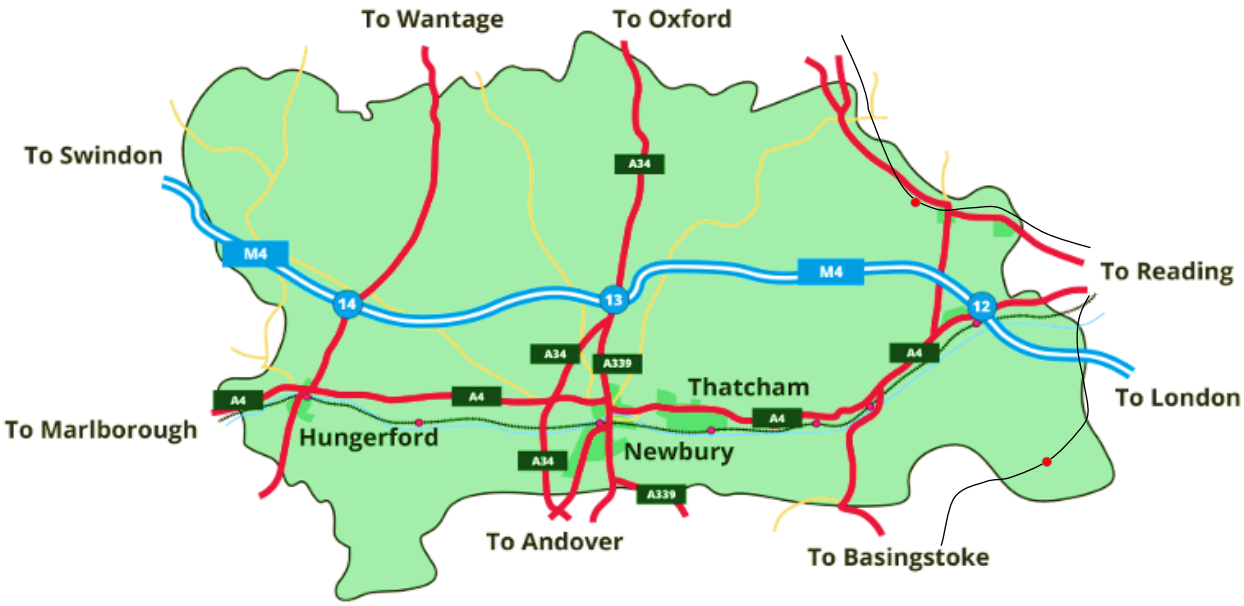
- **Strategic Connectivity**
- **Newbury and Thatcham**
- **Rural areas**
- **Eastern area**

Place Based Evidence and Strategy

Strategic Connectivity

7.1 Strategic road and rail links that are vital to business, freight movement and residents' ability to access jobs and amenities. The strategic routes through West Berkshire also influence the strategic connectivity to the adjacent England's Economic Heartland (EEH) and Western Gateway sub-national transport body (STB) areas.

7.2 The primary strategic corridors running east to west are the M4 and Great Western Mainline. Measures to improve strategic connectivity, including electrification of the railway and SMART motorway enhancements from J3 to J12 of the M4, are underway.



Overview of strategic transport connections in West Berkshire

7.3 Demand had been growing on these corridors over the last decade, but has reduced since the COVID-19 pandemic. If travel demand grows in future, including any expansion of London Heathrow and/or western rail link to Heathrow, it could put further pressure on these routes.

7.4 The A34 provides a road link for freight between the ports on the south coast and the 'Golden Triangle' in the Midlands. It is the busiest non-motorway trunk road in the UK with 12,000 HGV flows daily; and HGV flows also now above pre pandemic levels. The A34 corridor can suffer from congestion, which could be alleviated by transferring freight onto other modes, and a lack of lorry parking and facilities.

7.5 There are, however, some negative emissions and noise impacts associated with the M4 and A34. When collisions occur, traffic can be displaced onto local networks not suitable for the volumes and type of traffic that uses the Strategic Road Network.

7.6 In addition to the Strategic Road Network, the A4 running east to west connects to Reading in the east and Bristol in the west. The A339, running north to south, connects M4 J13 to Basingstoke and the M3 in the south. Both routes also serve important interurban bus travel.



Freight Movements in West Berkshire (Source: West Berkshire Freight Strategy 2014)

7.7 Rail services from Newbury and Thatcham provide direct connections to London Paddington. Local stations on the Reading to Taunton Line at Aldermaston and Midgham and at Mortimer on the Reading to Basingstoke line provide connections to Reading, with interchange to other rail routes including improved travel opportunities created by the Elizabeth Line.

7.8 The Great Western Main Line also runs north-south along the eastern edge of West Berkshire area, with well-utilised local services stopping at Tilehurst, Pangbourne and Goring and Streatley.

7.9 Going forward, the following proposals would help address the identified issues and support improved strategic transport connectivity.

Strategic Connections Strategy

Sustainable Access for all

- Service Improvements to stations on the Great Western Main Line
- Enhance bus frequency to every 15-minutes between Newbury-Thatcham-Reading
- Delivery of new and improving existing regional cycleways, including extension of Eling Way from Hermitage towards Newbury and from Hampstead Norreys to Compton
- Support development of Mobility as a service (MaaS) applications

Decarbonising Transport

- Work with partners to reduce noise and environmental impacts of M4 and A34

Support Sustainable Growth

- Theale Strategic Rail Freight Terminal
- A339 Newbury to Basingstoke and Junction and Safety Enhancements

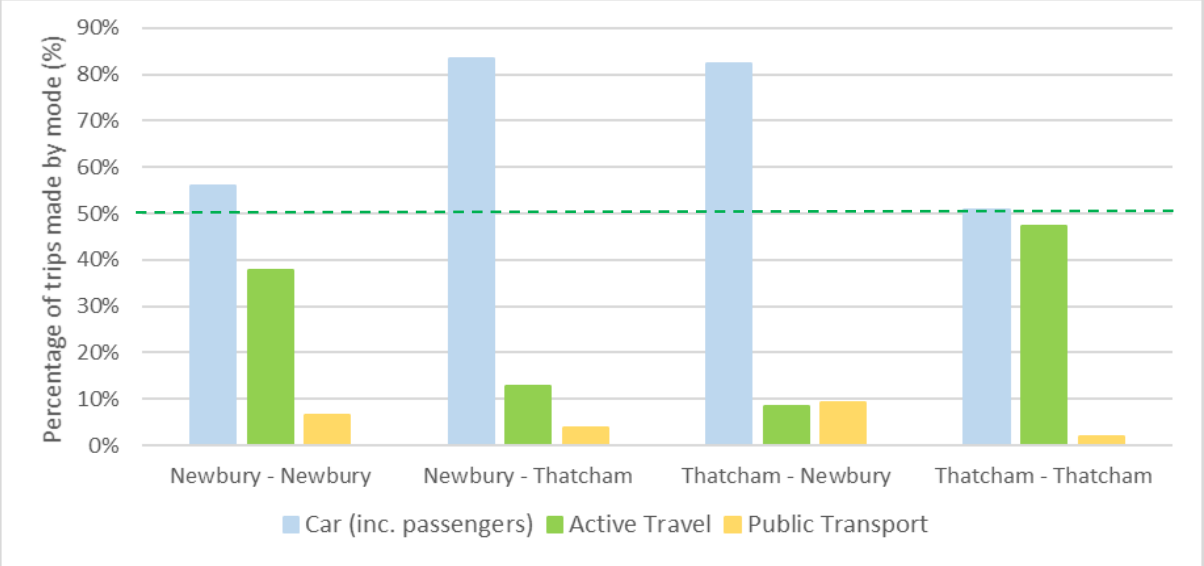
Newbury and Thatcham

8.1 Newbury and Thatcham are the **largest urban areas** in West Berkshire and home to 44% of the district's population. Within the towns there are multiple schools, retailers, services and major employment sites including Vodafone Headquarters, Newbury Racecourse, Stryker, West Berkshire Council and West Berkshire Community Hospital. These jobs and services not only provide for local residents, but also those from a wider catchment including rural communities to the south in Hampshire.

8.2 The A339 is the busiest highway route through Newbury, with traffic volumes more than double the next busiest road and delays occurring at some junctions during peak periods. Reflecting the historic urban environment there is **little to scope to build additional highway capacity** within these towns so future travel enhancements will need to be achieved through increasing sustainable travel and maximising the efficiency of the existing network.

8.3 50% of employment trips made by residents are to a destination within Newbury and Thatcham. Walking and cycling accounts for a third of these trips, rising to almost half within Thatcham, but just 10% of trips between Newbury and Thatcham.

8.4 Although walking and cycling levels are below the 50% target identified by government in Gear Change and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the short distances mean modal shift to active modes is feasible and suggest that with the right interventions a target of **50% of trips to be made by walking and cycling** is achievable.



Travel Choices for internal trips in Newbury and Thatcham

Source: Census Travel to Work data 2011

8.5 The West Berkshire LCWIP identifies Newbury and Thatcham as **core walking zones** and east-west routes between Newbury and Thatcham and a north-south route in Newbury as the corridors with the **highest potential number of active travellers**. Nearby Greenham Common also provides a popular traffic free environment for leisure cycling and gateway for new and lapsed cyclists that improved active travel networks should also connect into.

8.6 Accounting for 50% of employment trips to London and 25% of trips to Reading, public transport has an important role in enabling residents to access destinations outside of the district. There is a new bus station in Newbury and three railway stations including Newbury, Newbury Racecourse and Thatcham. Patronage at all three railway stations had been increasing from 2009- 2019, albeit have decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic.

8.7 Access and Interchange at Newbury station has recently been upgraded. Facilities at and access route by sustainable modes to Thatcham are more limited.

8.8 There are commercial and supported bus services in Newbury and Thatcham, with bus accounting for up to 10% of trips. Reading Buses operate services between Newbury, Thatcham and Reading seven days a week from early morning until late evening. However, other bus services are less frequent, with two hourly or daily services connecting Newbury and Thatcham with surrounding villages and rural areas.

8.9 Car ownership is lower than the rest of the district with approximately 1 in 6 households in Newbury and Thatcham not owning a car, rising to 1 in 4 in some areas. This suggests owning a car is not as essential as in other parts of the district. A third of households own two or more cars. However, national data shows each individual vehicle is being used less, and with a growing ability to also access some services digitally, sharing of resources and shared mobility is likely to become increasingly attractive. There are currently a handful of car club vehicles within Newbury, from which a network could be developed.

8.10 In time there could also be scope for a wider mobility aggregator providing a single point for a range of mobility choices across the Berkshire area.



Electric Vehicle Charging and Car Club Vehicle

8.11 Electric vehicle uptake in the district is above the national average and there are a number of publicly available EV chargers across Newbury and Thatcham. There are, however, locations with limited off-road parking where on-street provision is likely to be needed to support increased EV uptake. This could be aligned with provision of shared electric vehicles.

8.12 Looking forward, the **Local Plan Review** includes significant new development at Sandleford Park, south of Newbury, and at north-east Thatcham. Although these will create new travel demands, improvements to transport infrastructure within, to and from these developments can improve and expand existing active travel, public and shared transport networks.

Strategy for Newbury and Thatcham

Places for People - 50% of trips in Newbury and Thatcham made by walking and cycling

- Improve attractiveness and safety of walking and cycling routes to schools
- Improve access to cycling, including on street micro mobility (cycle/eCycle /eScooter) hire scheme and greater access to storage facilities
- Create quieter residential areas and safer environments for pedestrians and cyclists
- Test and trial access changes prioritising pedestrian and cycle movements, thus reducing the dominance of car traffic in urban centres
- Improve walking and cycling links from Newbury and Thatcham to Greenham Common and to the Eling Way
- Zero pedestrians and cyclists fatally or seriously injured in Newbury and Thatcham.

Sustainable Access for all

- Zero emission public or shared transport within 400m of every house in Newbury
- Expand car club network into Thatcham
- 15-minute bus frequency between Newbury and Thatcham
- Upgrade of interchange facilities at Thatcham station and provision of electric shared mobility and EV charging facilities at Newbury and Thatcham railway stations

Decarbonise Transport

- Zero emission buses in Newbury and Thatcham and along the A4 to Reading
- EV infrastructure aligned with expansion of shared mobility network and in areas with limited off-street parking
- Reduction of traffic movements in Newbury and Thatcham

Support Sustainable Growth

- Provide zero and low carbon travel options within new strategic developments in Newbury and Thatcham, including contributions towards enhancing bus services
- Create a high-quality active travel link between Sandleford Park, Newbury Town Centre, Thatcham Town Centre, north-east Thatcham and railway stations
- Improve operation of and reduce impact of freight in Newbury and Thatcham town centres
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity and/or reduce maintenance costs through new approaches to delivery.

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Eastern Area

9.1 The Eastern Area is the second largest place type identified and includes 20% of the district's population.

9.2 The areas adjoining Reading are typically more urbanised, particularly Calcot and Theale, with a higher density of residential houses, healthcare, education, retail and employment services.

9.3 Although a few local amenities are located to the north of A4, residents typically have access to a wider range of amenities south of A4 due to its proximity to other larger villages including Mortimer, Aldermaston, and Burghfield Common. There is also greater interaction with settlements outside West Berkshire that residents may travel to for services and vice-versa. There are however few local amenities to the north of the A4.

9.4 The A4 is the main transport corridor running east through this area connecting Newbury, Thatcham, the Eastern Area and Reading. Bus services run half-hourly along the A4, with delays occurring in vicinity of M4 J12 and access to Ikea. Broadly parallel to the A4 corridor are the NCN 4 and Newbury to Reading railway line. At the western end of the A4 the destination for travel is Newbury and Thatcham, but this shifts to a greater draw to Reading as you travel east along the A4.



M4 Junction 12 with A4 Junction and pedestrian/cycle bridge over M4 in background

9.5 There are four railway stations in the Eastern area, including Midgham, Aldermaston, Theale and Mortimer. There is also a station serving Tilehurst, although this is over the district boundary within Reading. With approximately half a million trips in 2019, Theale and Tilehurst are the busiest of these stations, and where improving interchange and walking and cycling access would have the biggest benefit by encouraging seamless sustainable journeys.

9.6 Mortimer, Aldermaston and Midgham railway stations have comparatively modest usage, albeit usage had decreased by less during the COVID pandemic than the two stations closest

to Reading. Mortimer also serves a larger rural catchment, albeit interchange facilities are limited.

9.7 Over 50% of households in the Eastern area have access to two or more cars. Car is the most dominant mode choice for commuting, with car usage from the Eastern area higher than for those residents in rural areas of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

9.8 Reading is the most common employment location outside of the district, accounting for almost a third of trips. Parts of the Eastern Area fall within the Reading city region and are served by a number of frequent bus services. Reading Buses provide services from Mortimer, Calcot, Purley-on-Thames and Tilehurst. These services operate from early morning until late evening seven days a week. Service 26 (Reading – Calcot) operates a 24-hour service.

9.9 Despite the relatively close proximity to Reading, a low level of trips is made by sustainable modes with public transport accounting for 20% of trips. In comparison, approximately 30% of trips from Newbury and Thatcham to Reading are made by public transport. Trips could be captured outside the urban areas with improved interchange and upgrading public transport corridors through the eastern area and into Reading.

9.10 Similarly, parts of the Eastern Area are within cyclable distance to much of Reading and cycle route improvements to the A4 and A329 are identified as strategic cycle corridors in the in Reading Area LCWIP.

9.11 Theale, Burghfield Common and Mortimer have sites allocated for housing development as part of the Local Plan which could support and enhance local transport networks.



A340 The St at Aldermaston (Left) and Theale Rail Station (right)

Strategy for the Eastern Area

Places for People

- Reduce the dominance of vehicles and support improved public realm and place making improvements in local centres.
- Improve attractiveness and safety of walking and cycling routes to schools.

Sustainable Access for all

- Improve interchange hubs at railway stations, including potential for shared mobility vehicles, EV charging, secure cycle parking, bus interchange at Mortimer station and pedestrian and cycle links from Calcot to railway stations.
- Collaborate in supporting partners and innovators in developing new solutions for decarbonising transport, including with existing and emerging proposals for Reading.
- Support extension of the Reading local cycle network, including the A329 sustainable travel corridor, and local connections into existing and planned strategic cycle routes.
- M4 / A4 interchange hub offering transfer onto sustainable travel choices (to Reading).
- Improvements to bus journey times on A4 across/in vicinity of M4 J12.
- New Demand Responsive Transport services to serve villages in the south-east of the district.
- Secured cycle parking, adapted cycle parking and motorcycle parking at local destinations.

Decarbonising Transport

- Support provision of EV infrastructure in areas with limited off-street parking, particularly around Theale, Mortimer and Burghfield Common.
- Promotion of peer-to-peer electric charging networks
- Support operators and adjacent authorities with the transition to Zero emission buses

Sustainable Growth

- Theale strategic rail Freight Interchange
- Attractive and permeable walking and cycling links, access to public and / or shared transport and EV chargers to support carbon neutral developments.
- Trials of new measures and / or network changes to accelerate the process for expanding the active travel network and decarbonising the transport network.

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Villages and Rural Areas

10.1 The Villages and Rural areas include the North Wessex Downs AONB to the north, northwest and southwest of the district and is home to 36% of West Berkshire's population.

10.2 The rural nature is reflected by more limited services and facilities. The services, shops and amenities that do exist are typically located in villages, such as Lambourn, Hungerford and Pangbourne and to a lesser extent Kintbury and Chieveley.

10.3 Travel destinations are similar across most of the area, with 60% of employment trips to locations within West Berkshire. The exception is Pangbourne and Streatley just a third of trips are within the district, with 20% of trips to Reading and over 10% to London.

10.4 A quarter of commuting trips start and end within the same ward. Walking and cycling accounts for 30% of these local trips. Footway provision can be missing on approach to these areas and improvements to these, alongside improving pedestrian rights of way could improve access and the attractiveness of recreational walking.

10.5 Cyclists and many horse riders use vehicle carriageways, particularly in the surrounds of Lambourn, which has a large racehorse training and rehabilitation centre. Vehicle speeds can be intimidating to some users; there may be opportunities across a large rural road network to reduce speeds and / or traffic volumes to provide attractive routes for walking, cycling and horse riding.

10.6 The M4 and A34 run through the AONB area, providing excellent connectivity to the strategic road network, particularly for those living in the vicinity of junction 13 (Hermitage/Newbury) and junction 14 (Lambourn) on the M4 and on the A34 respectively. With good highway access and most households having access to two or more cars, the private vehicle is likely to remain the most popular means of transport for residents in these areas.

10.7 Reducing the environmental impact of travel will be primarily through cleaner vehicles. With low population density, it will be challenging to deliver a viable charging network, and there will be a need to provide more innovative ways of increasing access to EV charging.

10.8 Digital access and home working are most prevalent in this part of West Berkshire. The 2011 census data also showed that in certain areas in the AONB, up to 15% of people worked from home in 2011. Home working levels have increased significantly since then, (over 40% across West Berkshire in the 2021 census) and is the most realistic alternative to vehicular travel for work.

10.9 There are two rail corridors through the area with stations at Hungerford and Kintbury on the Reading to Taunton line and at Pangbourne and, just outside the district, at Goring and Streatley on the Reading to Oxford line. These stations typically have an hourly service with at least 2 services per hour in the peaks. Rail patronage had been steadily increasing over the last decade. Improving interchange facilities and the first and last mile of trips could further help to encourage the use of rail within these local areas and help patronage recover following the COVID-19 pandemic.

10.10 There are, however, limited bus services with services at best every 2 hours to some of the villages. There also services by community transport operators. The potential role of DRT is being investigated and could offer a service in western rural areas between Hungerford and Lambourn and north-eastern areas.

Strategy for the villages and Rural Areas

Places for People

- Actively support key villages – Lambourn, Hungerford, Chieveley
- Revise speed limits, where appropriate, and develop educational campaigns on improving safety on rural roads.
- Trial of events, temporary highway changes and/or access measures to support the vitality of rural villages and local centres.

Sustainable Access for all

- Maximise the potential of rail through improved interchange, including a turning facility at Pangbourne Station to support buses on the A329 between Pangbourne and Reading.
- Improved facilities and interchange at Hungerford Station.
- Upgrade of public transport fleet to reduce emissions and provide mobile office capability.
- Shared mobility/shared journey options in all villages.
- Upgrade of footways connecting main local centres.
- Trial of 'green Lanes', including locally led proposals for safer walking and cycling access to public transport, schools and expanding the network for walking, cycling and horse riding.
- Secured cycle parking, adapted cycle parking and motorcycle parking at local destinations.
- Trial of Demand Responsive Transport services connecting local centres to the wider public transport network.

Decarbonising Transport

- EV charging and shared mobility at rural hubs, starting with Lambourn and Hungerford, and explore expanding into other areas such as Chieveley and Streatley.
- Promote peer-to-peer charging networks.
- Seek measures to reduce noise pollution associated with the M4 and A34.
- Continue improving rural broadband and digital connectivity.

Sustainable Growth

- Improve active and shared travel and zero emission vehicle facilities supporting appropriate and sustainable new developments.
- Retain access to and enhance the safety of A34 and M4 junctions.
- Seek enhanced rail service frequency to at least 30-min frequency to Pangbourne, Goring and Streatley, Hungerford and Kintbury stations.

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APPENDIX B

Summary of consultation responses at half-way point

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Draft LTP4 Strategy
Initial Consultation Responses

An analysis of the demographics of the initial 193 respondents, their postcodes, their views on the LTP update and current travel options, and their degree of agreement with its priorities and objectives, and the strategy proposed for each of the areas.

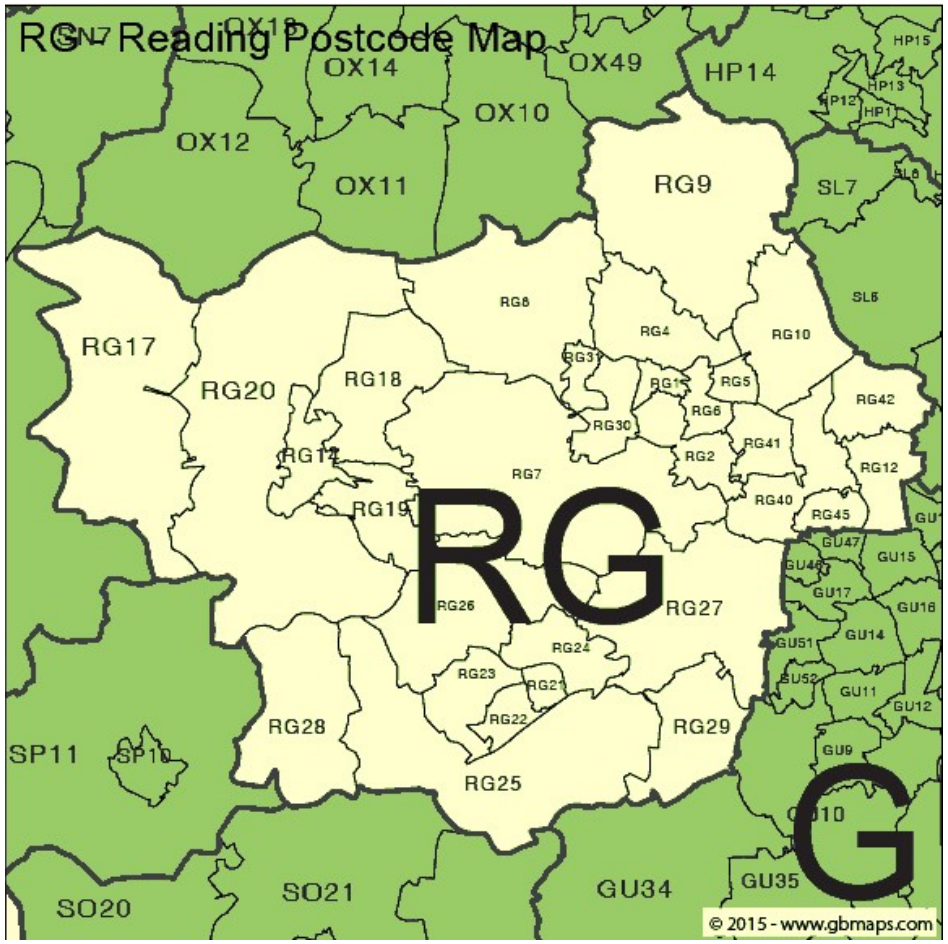
West Berkshire COUNCIL

About the Respondents

- 95% residents of West Berkshire
  - 74 members of Community Panel
  - 12 asked to be added
- Gender
  - 51% male
  - 44% female
  - 5% didn't say
- Age
  - 44% over 65;
  - 40% aged 45-64
  - 10% under 45
  - 6% didn't say
- Ethnicity
  - 90% identify as White;
  - 1% Asian
  - 1% Black or other ethnic group
  - 8% didn't say
- Health and disability
  - 22% have a disability, long-term illness or health condition
- Carers
  - 13% are primary carers of elderly or disabled person

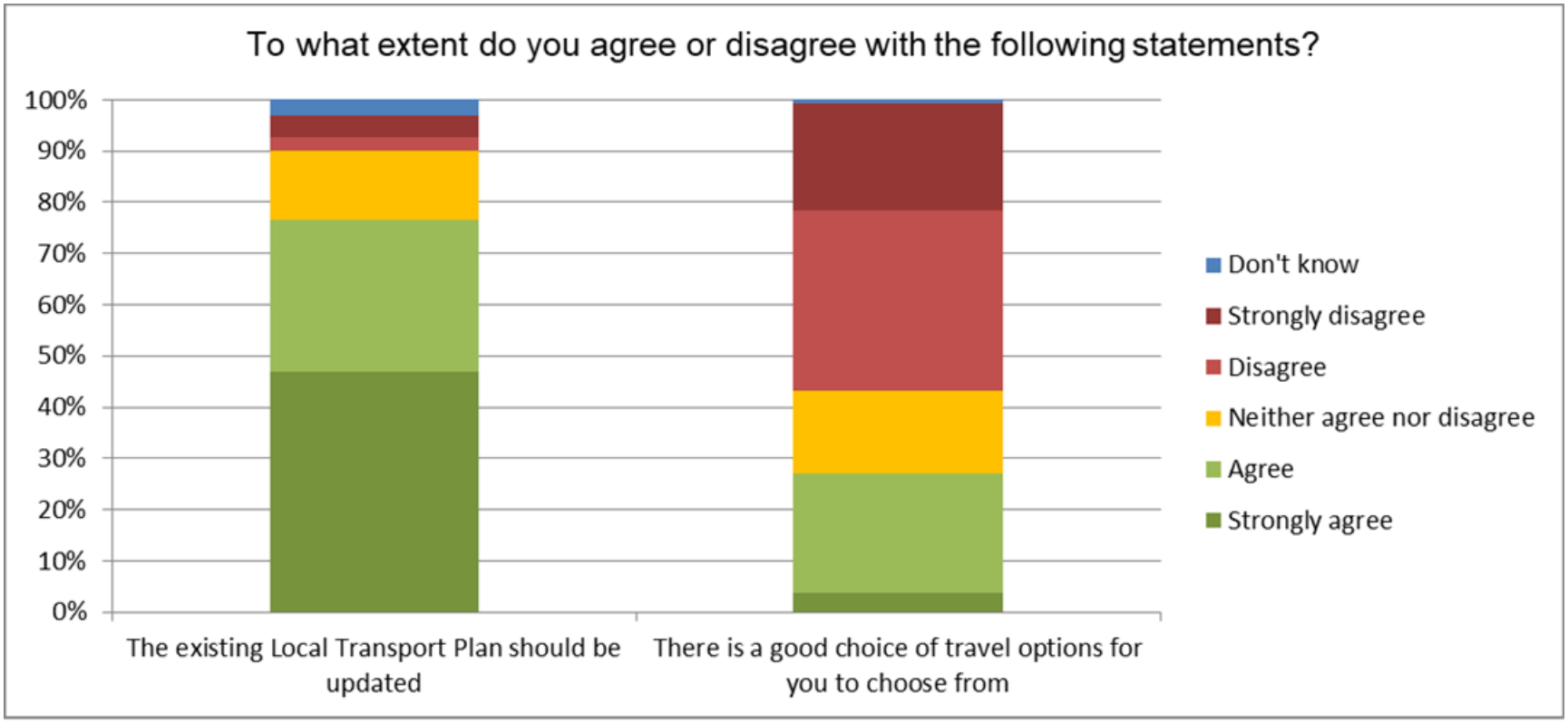
Where the Respondents Live

- Postcode areas (west to east):
  - RG17 12%
  - RG20 8%
  - RG14 36%
  - RG18-19 16%
  - RG7-8 19%
  - RG30-31 10%



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On LTP Update and Travel Options

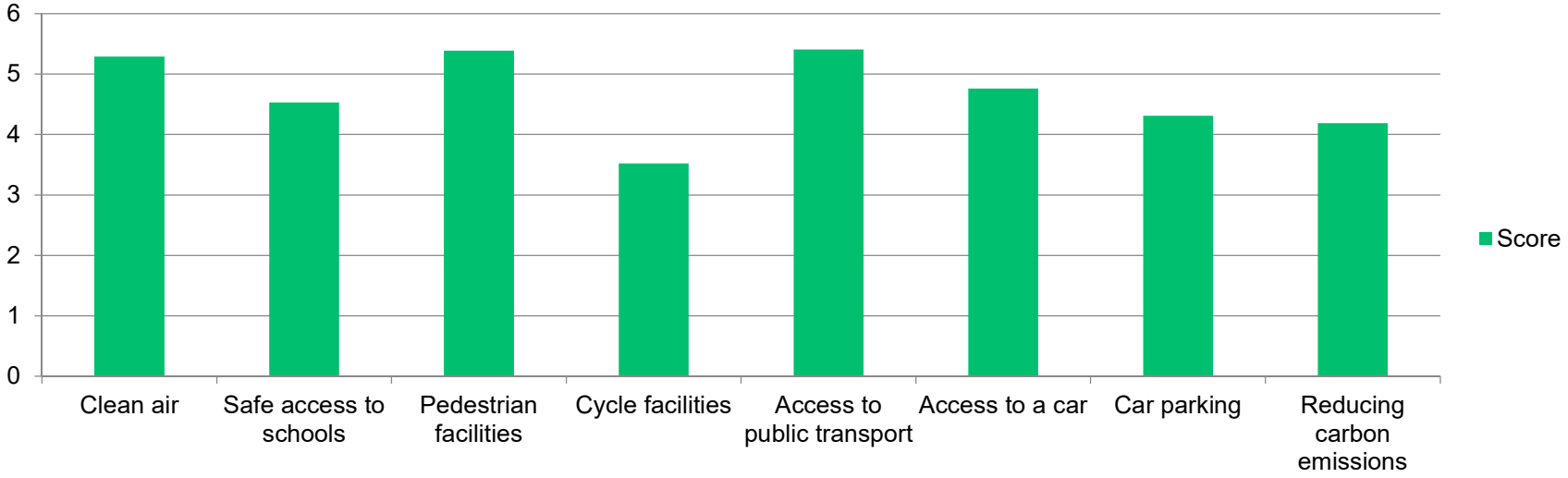


- 77% agree that LTP should be updated
- 56% disagree that there is a good choice of travel options in West Berks

West Berkshire COUNCIL

On Transport Considerations

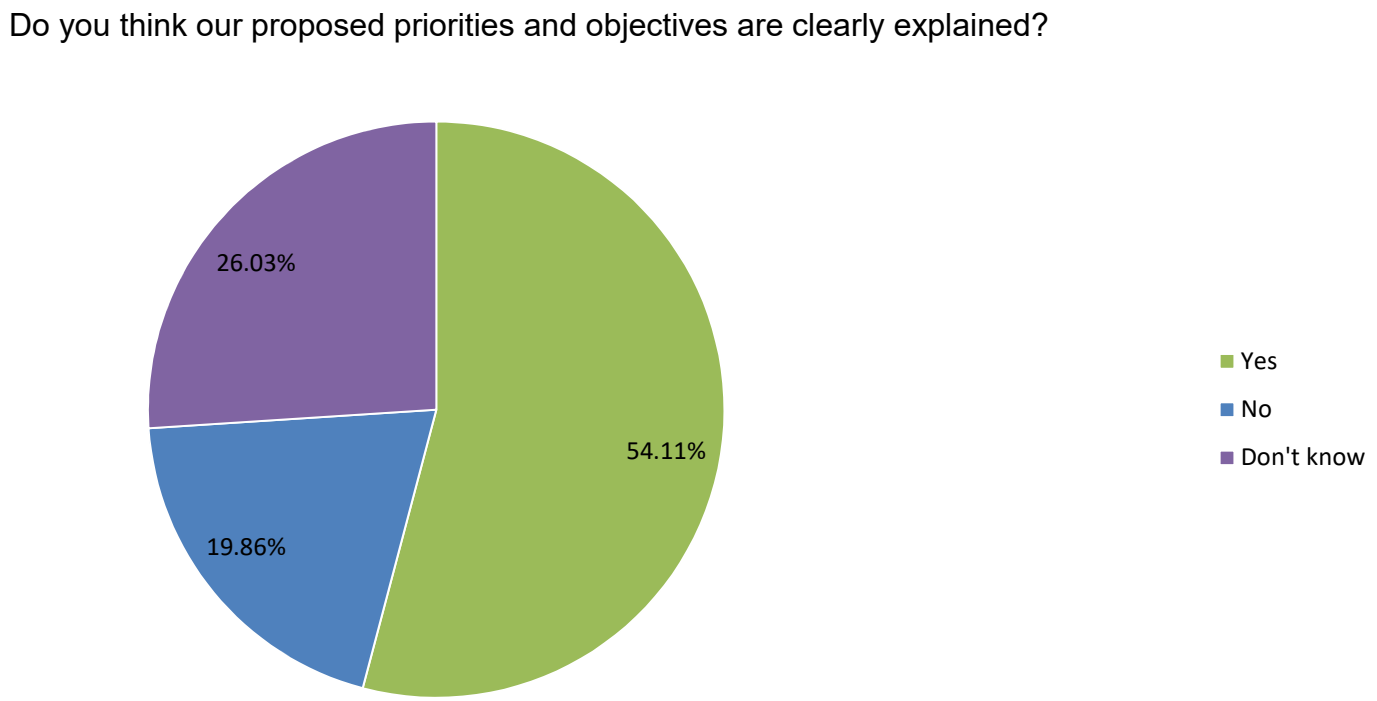
How important to you are the following transport considerations? Please rank your answers from 1 (most important) to 8 (least important). If a consideration is not important to you at all, please exclude it from your ranking by marking it as N/A.



- Top 3 transport considerations are:
  - Access to public transport
  - Pedestrian facilities
  - Clean air

West Berkshire Council

On the Clarity of Proposals



- More than half (54%) think that proposed priorities and objectives are clearly explained

Comments – Clarity of Proposals

There is no measurable criterion on most of the strategy priorities, which will make it impossible to decide whether it was successful or not.

It is too long, too wordy and repetitive making it opaque

You need a summary with definitions, including the definition of "Sustainable", and subheadings such as, 'Walking', 'Driving', 'Cycling', Road Maintenance', Road Building, 'Buses', 'Community Buses', 'Trains', to break issues down to what the public thinks about when they think about transport.

Publish more, to a broader public

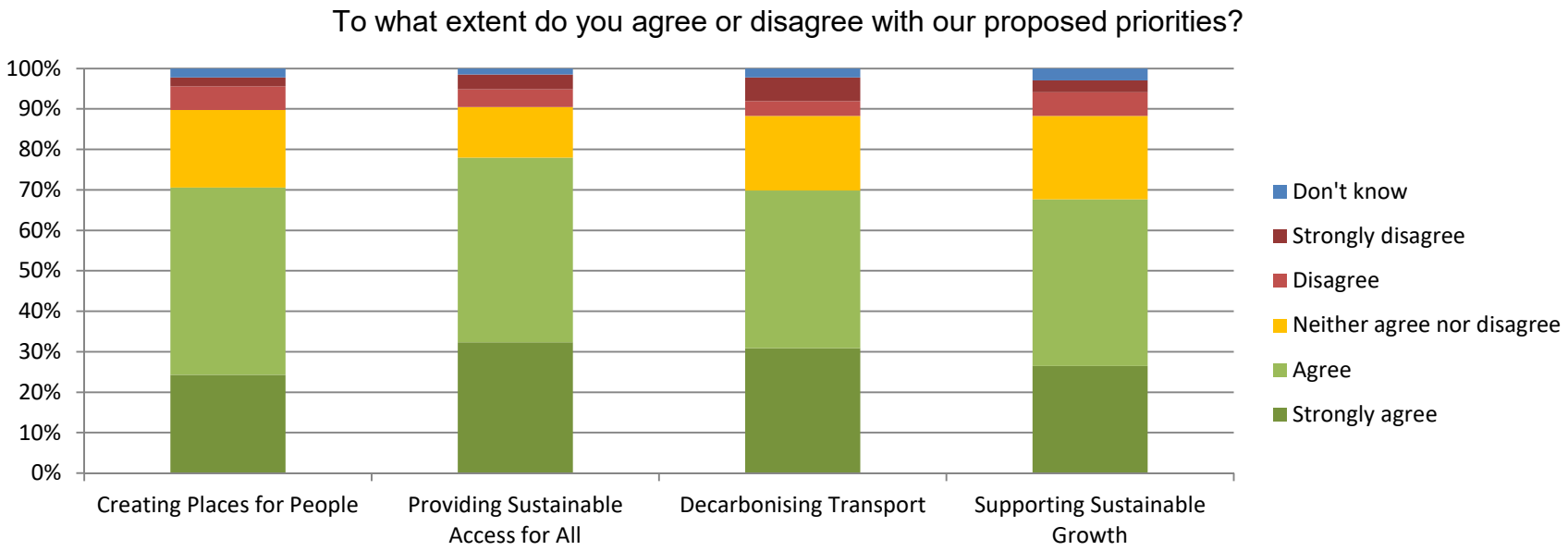
The lack of detail is such that the strategy appears to be based on vague outcomes with little evidence to support some of the assumptions on improved outcomes

Some key bullet points that everyone can easily understand

I do see many good statements but no real targets and cost benefit analysis.

Use normal everyday simple English - no complex or unexplained terminology

On Agreement with Priorities



- Widespread support for our proposed priorities
  - Creating Places for People 70%
  - Sustainable Access 77%
  - Decarbonising Transport 70%
  - Supporting Sustainable Growth 67%

West Berkshire Council

Comments – Agreement with Priorities

They're all meritorious, but why is the provision of decent public transport routes to useful destinations not regarded as a priority?

All are desirable aims

If Newbury is to survive as a town with shops restaurants, leisure facilities etc. we need to be able to have plenty of car parking and accessible roads for public and private vehicles.

Seems a good balance, although would like to see decarbonising transport as top priority.

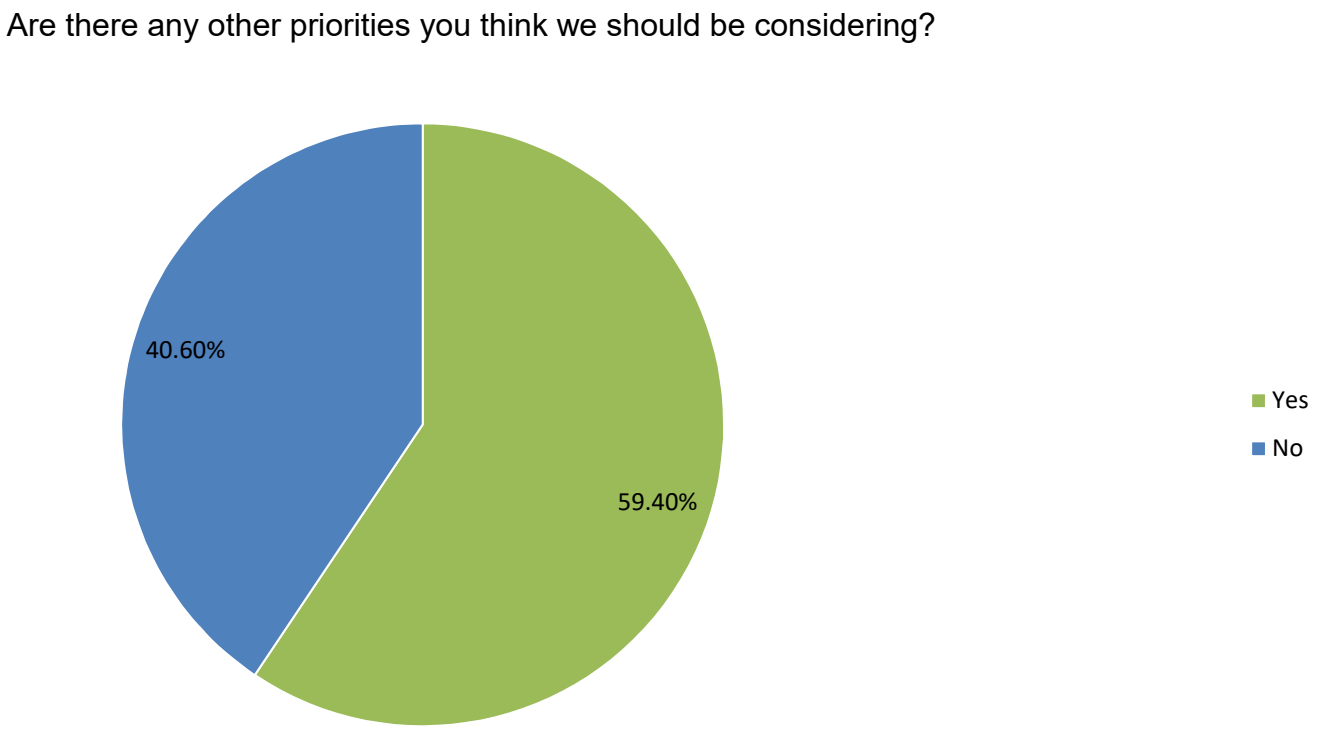
I think the plan is great, but much of it is building around existing infrastructure. Cyclists will want to go the quickest way. Ultimately, a mind-set change is needed to stop people's obsession with the car.

Maintaining existing transport infrastructure (roads, paths, cycle lanes, bus lanes) should be a priority. Adding more when we can't look after what we have is not wise.

Sustainability is crucial. Educating and involving all people is also crucial.

We all need to do something to improve the way we live but it must come from everyone.

Are there Other Priorities to Consider?



- 59% think there are other priorities to consider

Comments – Other Priorities

Using technology to encourage car sharing/pooling in rural areas, short-term/one-way EV hire for infrequent trips.

Pedestrian-ising the town centre is an absolute must!

I would like to see all cyclists and e-scooter riders banned from the pavements so pedestrians can walk safely, and no cars on pavements.

Better public transport links into neighbouring counties – Didcot, Winchester, Swindon

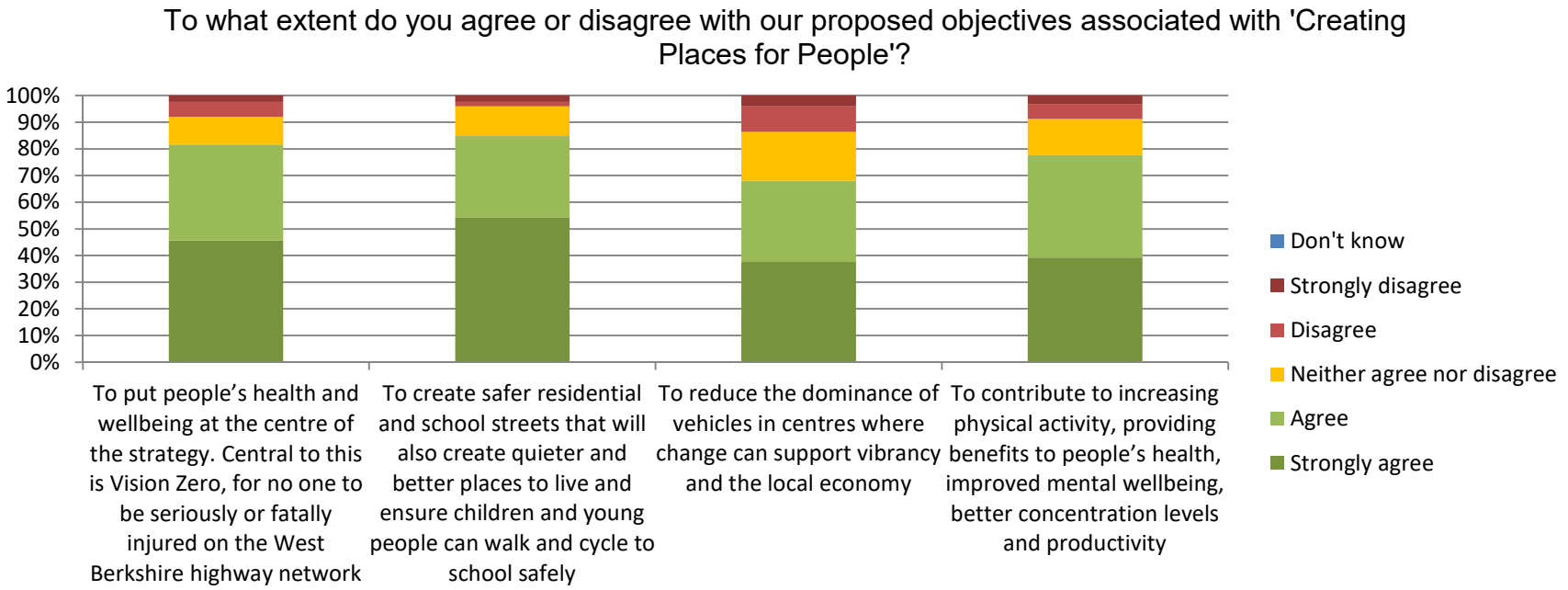
I would love to use my bike more, but where can I leave it in town safely without it being stolen.

Subsidised buses. Smaller and more frequent electric buses. They are never full.

Car use has once again been demonised, my wife is disabled, I am an OAP, how do you expect us to get around without a car. Cars promote growth, give mobility and freedom.

Traffic flow through Newbury and the amount of HGVs using the A339 as a cut through.

On ‘Creating Places for People’



- Agreement with all proposed objectives associated with ‘Creating Places for People’
  - Safer residential and school streets 85%
  - Health and Wellbeing - Vision Zero 82%
  - Active Travel 78%
  - Reduced dominance of vehicles 68%

Comments – 'Places for People'

Shops are quitting Newbury, negative attitudes towards cars and poor parking is surely a factor.

Why is the Robin Hood still a nightmare for pedestrians?

Thought needed on how objectives cater for the OLDER person. Many will be experiencing age-related problems and illnesses which mean that they cannot walk far; many will not risk cycling even if they did when younger.

If 50% of journeys are actually non-residents passing through, how can vehicle use generally be reduced?

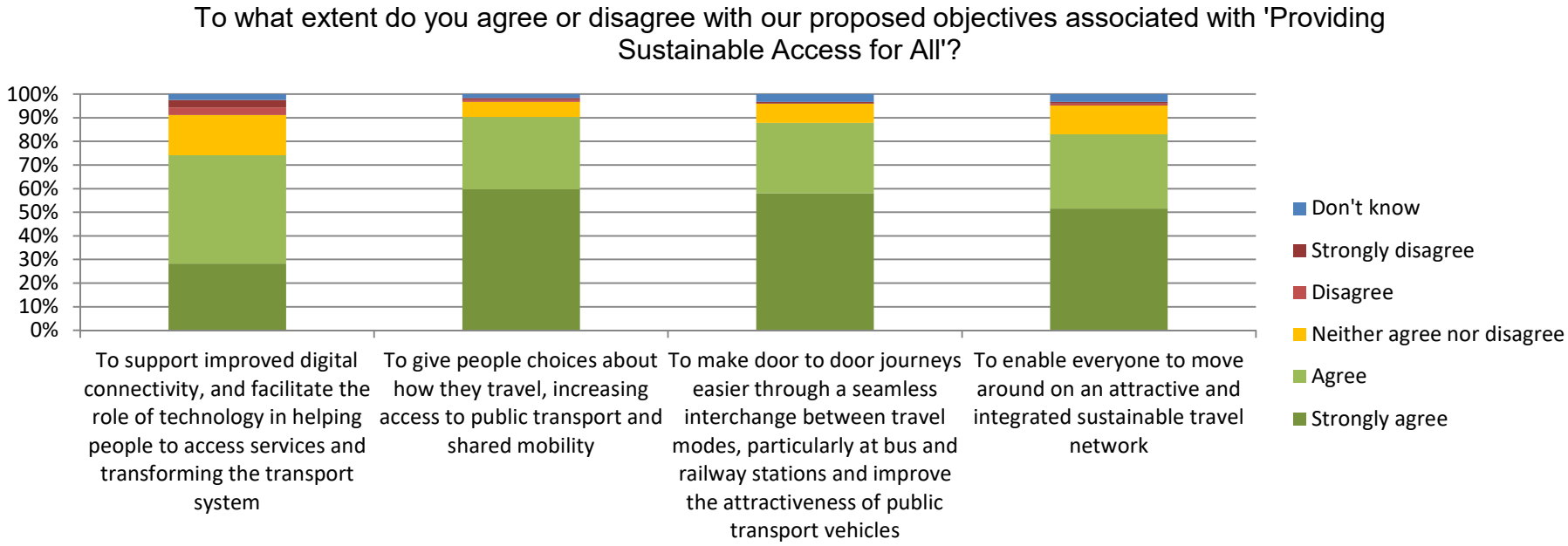
Health and wellbeing are most important. Parents shouldn't be driving their children to school and blocking pavements when they live within walking distance.

How many schools have adequate drop off / collection points?

You can't prevent injuries on our roads, accidents happen whatever you put in place.

Multiple studies show that once you move to design out people's reliance on motor vehicles the goals above follow on naturally.

On ‘Providing Sustainable Access for All’



- Agreement with all proposed objectives associated with ‘Providing Sustainable Access for All’
  - Travel choice, public transport and shared mobility 90%
  - Easier door-to-door journeys 88%
  - Attractive and integrated sustainable network 83%
  - Improved digital connectivity 74%

West Berkshire Council

Comments – 'Access for All'

An integrated network is essential; the fact it is mentioned in the LTP makes it bizarre that the bus station is nowhere near the station!

This area needs money and imagination

I cannot believe that an organisation supposedly supporting integrated, safe and sustainable transport thought it even remotely acceptable to expect cyclists to cross the A4 multiple times.

Digital connectivity is OK for most but there are still some who can't or won't use technology.

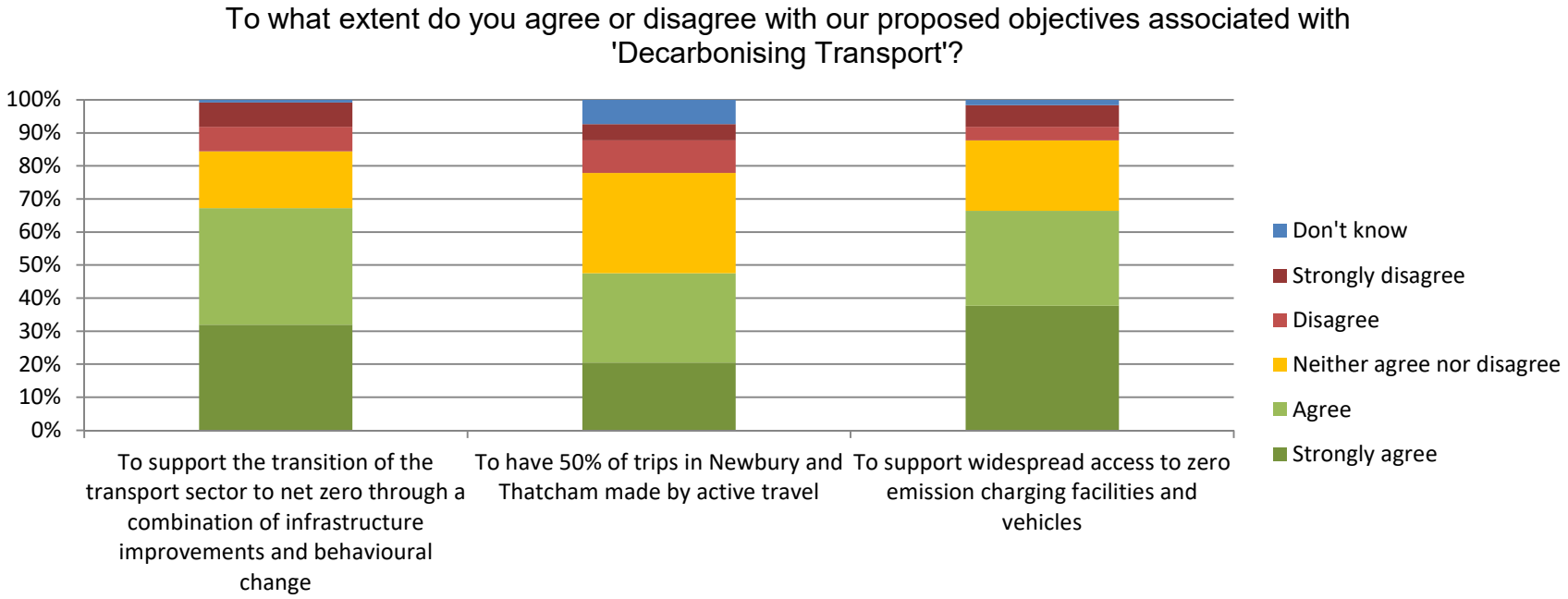
WBC chose to separate the railway and bus stations in Newbury! What confidence can be had in such an objective being fulfilled?

Would like to see increased levels of engagement and support of the private sector.

Offers desirable solutions that are more applicable in towns than the rural areas.

I have 4 young adult children. Only one has learnt to drive. They want to travel sustainably ways to travel - but the options are limited.

On ‘Decarbonising Transport’



- Agreement for two of three objectives associated with ‘Decarbonising Transport’
  - Infrastructure improvements and behavioural change 67%
  - Access to zero emission charging facilities and vehicles 67%
  - To have 50% of trips in Newbury/Thatcham by active travel 48%

West Berkshire Council

Comments – ‘Decarbonising Transport’

No question we should do this, but roads still don't feel safe enough for cyclists.

50% of journeys by active travel is under ambitious.

While recognising the need for a carbon neutral environment I fear some schemes will be implemented in haste and later scrapped or poorly used.

Improved walking routes will aid active travel and we need zero emissions.

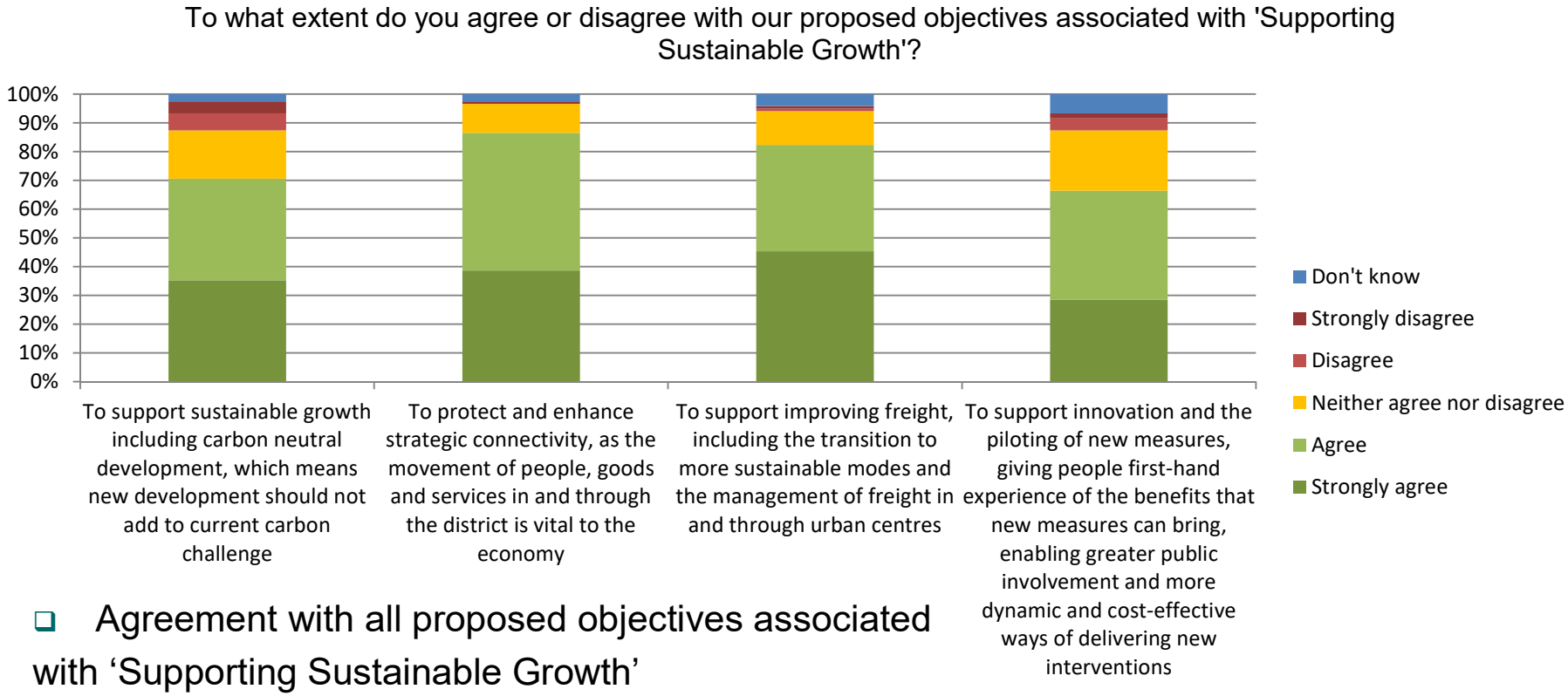
Active travel is great if you are young and don’t have shopping to carry or children or elderly people to ferry around, and live near your destination.

Limit ambition to those outcomes that can be delivered locally (EV charging points).

I don’t think that zero emissions charging has been properly thought through. Let the industry evolve before major investment.

Have you considered high emissions on the tow paths of moored barges with diesel engines running all day or wood burners going?

On ‘Supporting Sustainable Growth’



- Agreement with all proposed objectives associated with ‘Supporting Sustainable Growth’
  - Protect strategic connectivity 87%
  - Sustainable movement of freight 82%
  - Carbon neutral development 70%
  - Innovation and new measures 67%

West Berkshire Council

Comments – 'Sustainable Growth'

There is still no crossing over the railway / canal at Thatcham meaning lorries and cars have to divert via Newbury to avoid constant crossing delays.

The route to Basingstoke has no direct connect to A34, yet it is a key work / freight route.

Taking 'the people' with you is important if you want your schemes to work. Explain why you want to implement change, what the alternatives are, and how they would impact on the location.

Every opportunity should be taken to make the environment pleasant and healthy as possible.

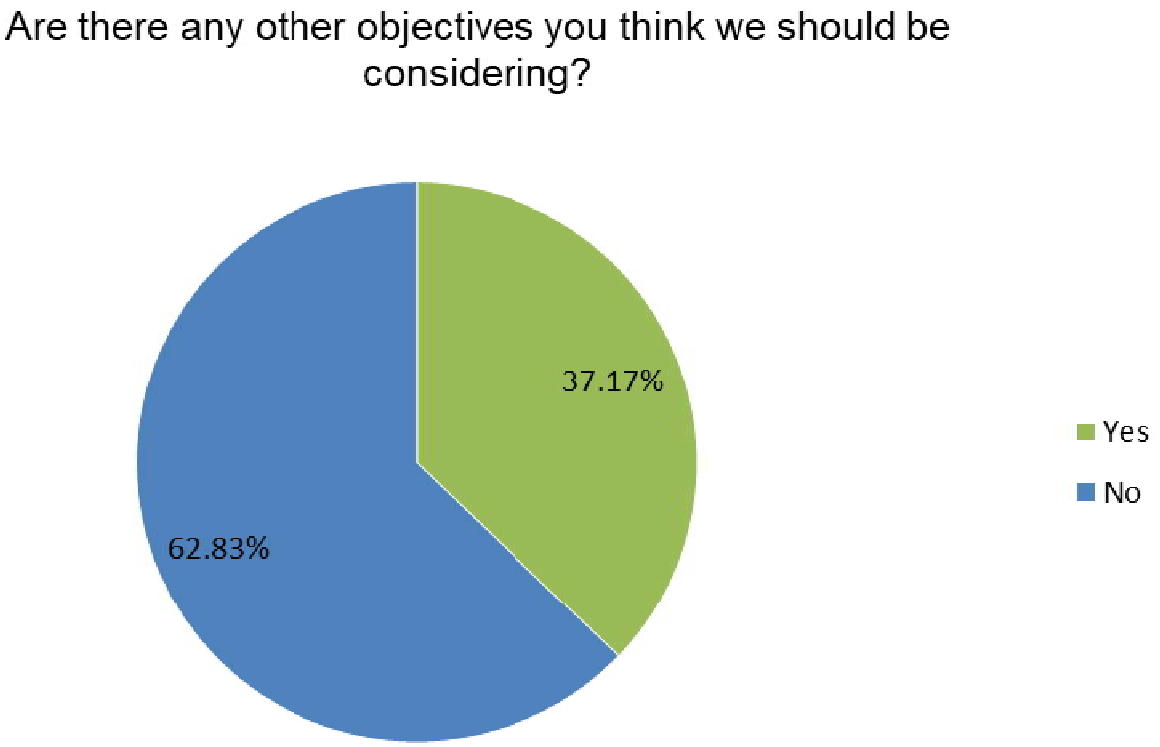
The plan appears not to reflect the need to work with other agencies who have primacy in delivery of, for example, road and rail infrastructure.

More freight and cargo should be encouraged back onto the railways.

A closer look at how freight is moved through communities should be a key element of transport planning.

West Berkshire needs to remain a vital place that attracts visitors and investment but no longer at the price of the health and wellbeing.

On Other Objectives



- 63% did not think there were any other objectives we should be considering

Comments – Other Objectives

Establish and advertise routes for active travel in order to get from a to b, not only for recreation.

Tree planting along roadside verges and in pedestrianised areas would help reduce carbon.

WBC needs to start thinking bigger and resolving the core transport issues in the area, namely the lack of north-south crossings and the fragility of the road network.

Providing footpaths in rural areas to connect villages internally and to external services.

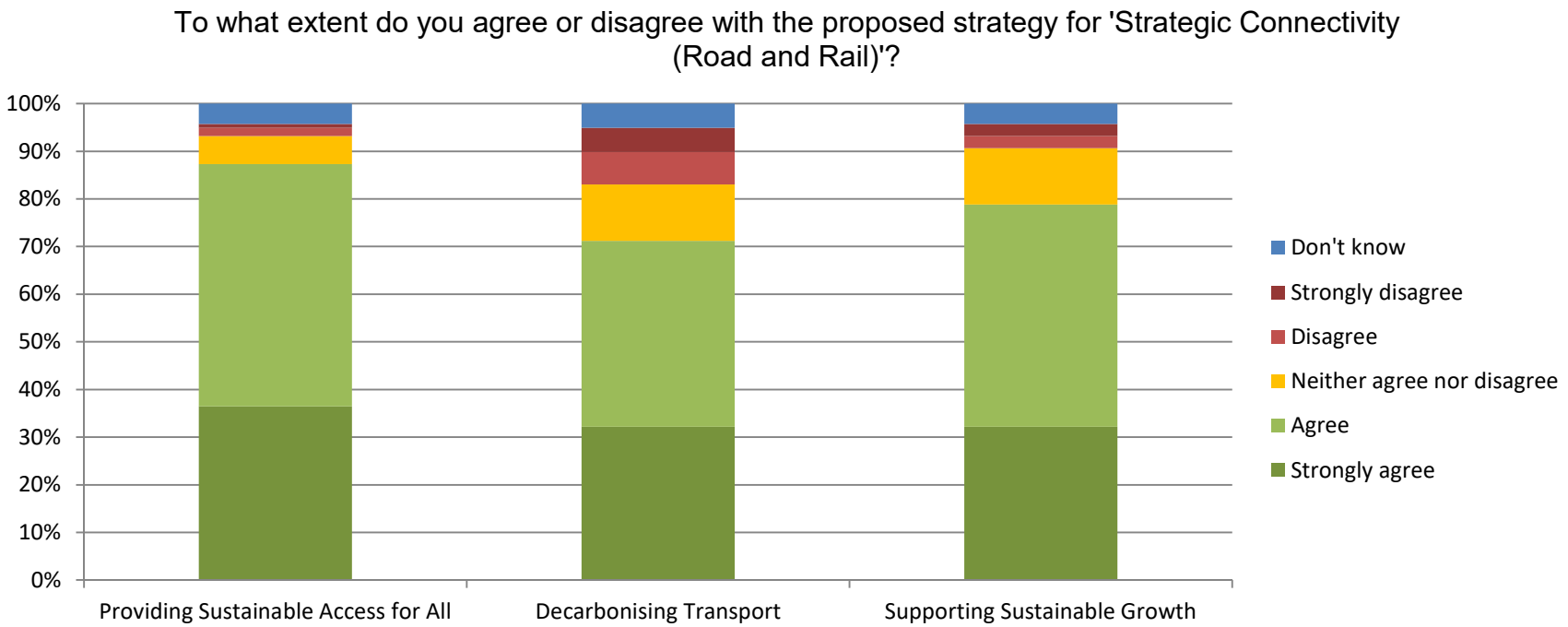
Consider what could be done to reduce through-traffic in the rural areas, i.e. commuters using lanes as "rat runs".

Promote some alternative to reduce the number of vans delivering residents' online purchases.

I think that any LTP also needs to be integrated into the wider infra-structure to embrace a 20-minute neighbourhood approach.

How might the transportation of goods through West Berkshire along the A4 and all roads off, be channelled onto trains?

Strategic Connectivity (Road and Rail)



- Agreement with the proposed strategy for Strategic Connectivity (Road and Rail)
  - Sustainable Access for All 87%
  - Supporting Sustainable Growth 79%
  - Decarbonising Transport 71%

Comments – Strategic Connectivity

I don't want to see any of this. Unless "Sustainable Access" means the ability to drive anywhere I want.

Largely driven by central government.

Rural areas without frequent bus services will require cars to take them to the nearest railway stations or bus networks - therefore car parking might be increased / provided in these key change over points.

Essential that electrification extends to Bedwyn so the service from Hungerford can return.

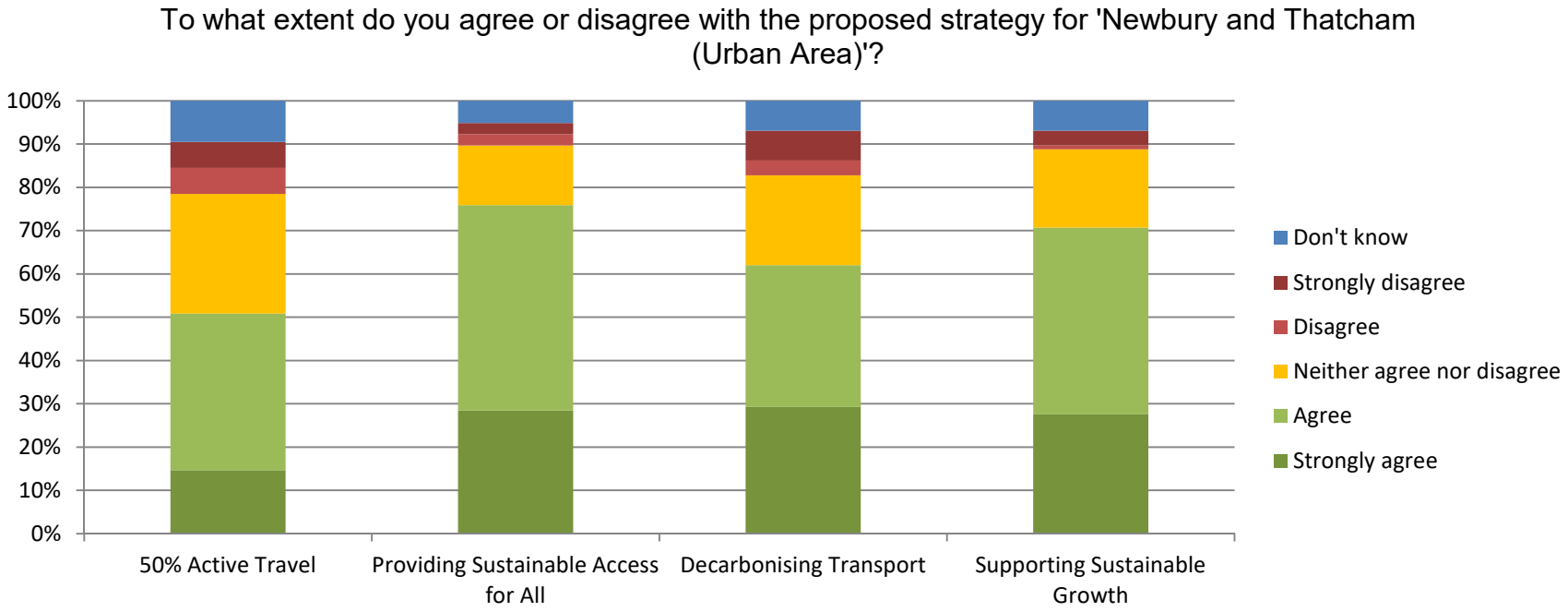
Lack of 24 hour services is a serious problem in a modern economy. The world is no longer 9-5. It is impossible to get anywhere between midnight and 5am

Disagree with more road building. More roads just generate more traffic.

Do things that make a difference, not just fall in line with current daft fashions.

These are worthy principles and will contribute to making West Berkshire a more desirable place to live and work.

Newbury and Thatcham (Urban Area)



- Agreement with strategy for Newbury and Thatcham (Urban Area)
  - Sustainable Access for All 75%
  - Sustainable Growth 71%
  - Decarbonising Transprot 63%
  - 50% Active Travel 51%

Comments – Newbury and Thatcham

I do not believe this is a matter on which local authorities should be wasting money.

Car users are penalised.

There has been an over emphasis on cycling coupled with a lack of attention to the emergence of mobility scooters and e-scooters. Not everyone can 'get on their bike'.

"50% Active Travel" - I don't see how this can be achievable.

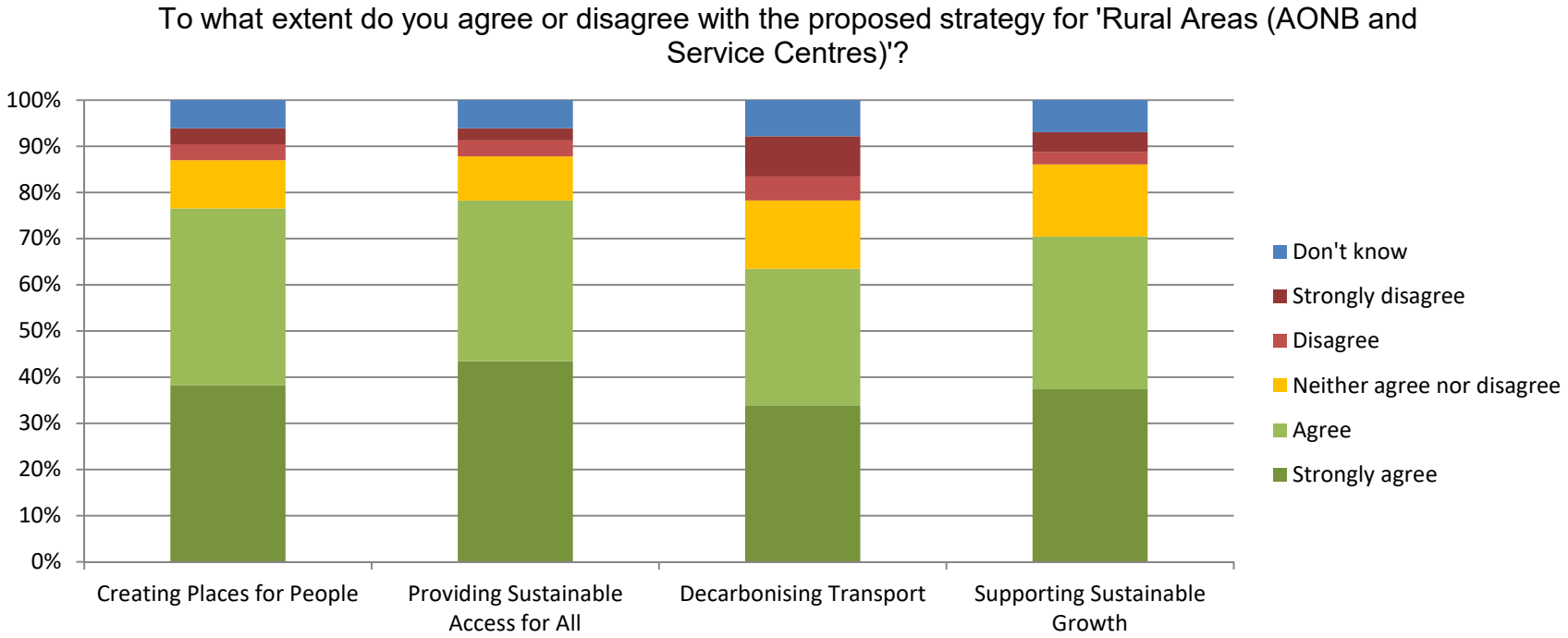
Active Travel concept needs to be expanded greatly to include active travel routes to more recreational destinations.

Any changes or developments need to be sustainable.

The way people travel round the area is up to them. Again, funding will not make it happen.

Needs to be more car parking at Thatcham Station, payable by non-technology means.

Rural Areas (AONB and Service Centres)



- Agreement with the proposed strategy for Rural Areas (AONB and Service Centres)
  - Sustainable Access for All 81%
  - Creating Places for People 76%
  - Supporting Sustainable Growth 70%
  - Decarbonising Transport 64%

West Berkshire Council

Comments – Rural Area

Support measures to improve safety of rural roads and make cycling and horse riding on them safer.

Encourage use of 20mph speed limits.

Providing a sustainable zero carbon, low cost public transport network to the rural areas. Connecting villages with urban centres is critical to support the overall strategy.

Support the use of "quiet lanes" as at Bucklebury.

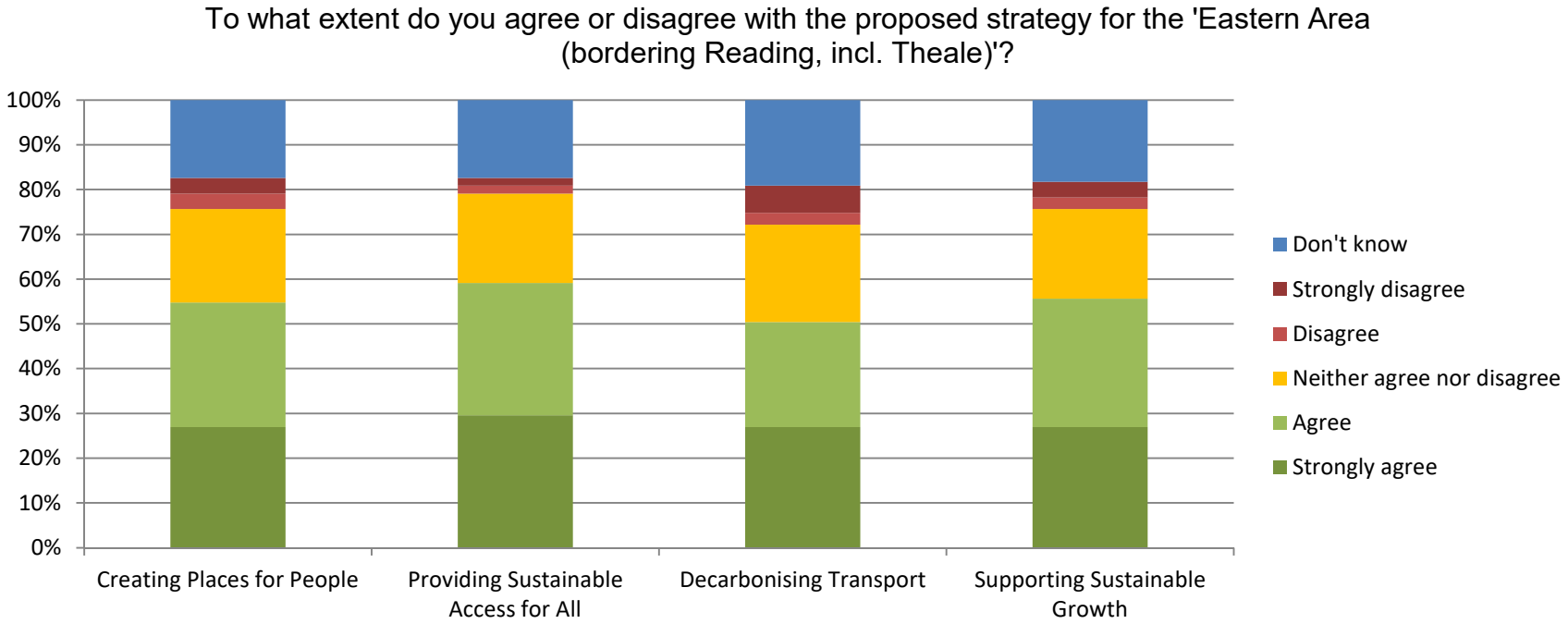
Residents have a responsibility, WBC shouldn't feel it necessary to provide everything, it should be on a priority basis.

Places for People has the potential to reduce travel by making rural centres more attractive and self-sufficient.

Rural areas are very badly served by public transport. Operators finding no demand. Unless that demand is created it's good money after bad.

Villages urgently need footpaths next to roads to enable walking plus education programme on safe passing by vehicles.

Eastern Area (bordering Reading, incl. Theale)



- Agreement with the proposed strategy for Eastern Area (bordering Reading, incl. Theale)
  - Sustainable Access for All 60%
  - Supporting Sustainable Growth 56%
  - Creating Places for People 55%
  - Decarbonising Transport 50%

Comments – Eastern Area

Keeping new developments sustainable and accessible without adding to carbon emissions will be challenging but very important.

Keep West Berkshire as a whole. Not split into several sections.

Reading residents would say most of these areas should be absorbed into Reading where it could continue to enjoy the facilities a big town provides but also help pay for them.

We all need access to enjoy the outdoors without traffic.

I like the objectives and support the actions proposed for the area, however they don't feel as ambitious or creative as the plans for urban areas.

I live in this area but don't feel neglected by West Berkshire as we are closer to Reading

Need of accessible public transport to reduce our reliance on personal cars.

I strongly want to see an increased focus on the delivery of sustainable travel and lower emissions.

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Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centre Strategies

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	13 February 2023
Report Author:	Sam Robins
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4325

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides an overview and context of the two Town Centre Strategies that have been developed for Thatcham and Hungerford by a consultant team led by Hemingway Design, commissioned by the Council in 2022. The Strategies have been developed in collaboration with residents, stakeholders and Thatcham and Hungerford Town Councils. This report also outlines the next steps for delivery of the Strategies and seeks endorsement to take them forward.

2 Recommendation

2.1 The recommendation is that (a) both Town Centre Strategies for Thatcham and Hungerford be endorsed by the Council in order to protect and enhance their economic vitality in order to meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors. Secondly it is recommended that (b) the Council seeks to take forward the delivery of the Strategies in partnership with key stakeholders.

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The Council has invested £75,000 in commissioning these Strategies. They will form part of our overall Town Centres Programme – which seeks to deliver outcomes across Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford in line with these Strategies and the Newbury Masterplan. The Council's Town Centres Programme has an annual budget across a two-year period of £134,000 in capital funding and £130,000 in revenue funding. However, this funding will need to be prioritised across the three town centres. Further funding for delivery of projects will be sought from a variety of external

	and internal funding sources, including the private sector, Community Infrastructure Levy and S106.
Human Resource:	Delivery of these Strategies will be programme managed under our Town Centres Programme, within the Economy Team. This includes two full time 2 year fixed term posts; Principle Place-Shaping Officer (Town Centres) and Project Support Officer (Town Centres). Any further project management resources required for individual projects will form part of funding applications. There will be a need to bring in expertise from disciplines and teams across the Council at all stages of delivery, from working up projects, submitting funding bids and delivering capital works. This will include at least Legal, Commissioning, Highways, Drainage, Archaeology, Planning and Property. An officer group will meet regularly to support the programme and request further support from specific teams when it is needed.
Legal:	Should they be taken forward, a number of the projects outlined in the Strategies will be subject to statutory public consultation through the appropriate legal process e.g. planning applications and traffic regulation orders. Most of the proposals in the Strategies have legal implications of some kind, and there for advice from the Council's Legal Team will be sought throughout the delivery programme. These Strategies are high-level frameworks for improvements to the Towns and they are not legally-binding commitments from the Council.
Risk Management:	The risks and their management are set out in the report.
Property:	Not all of the development projects proposed in the Strategies are on land owned or controlled by the Council and none of the projects have been considered against other regeneration priorities. Delivery will be subject to the agreement of the Council and in partnership with key stakeholders. Where proposals are situated on Council owned land there may be property implications which will be explored in more detail as part of feasibility studies and business cases for proposals.

Policy:	The Town Centre Strategies align with the emerging Local Plan policy relating to town centres; Council Strategy 2019-2023, the adopted Core Strategy 2012 (Area Delivery Plan Policy 2) and the 2020 Economic Development Strategy and 2021 Refresh.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The proposals within the Strategies aim to make both town centres more accessible and welcoming for everyone, which will have a positive impact on inequality.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The proposals within the Strategies aim to make both town centres more sociable, more accessible and more welcoming, which will have a positive impact on the lives of all residents, visitors and employees, including those with protected characteristics.
Environmental Impact:	X			The Strategies will aim to make an overall positive environmental impact on both towns through the implementation of their proposals. Specifically they promote alternative modes of transport by making the town centres more 'walkable' with improved permeability for pedestrians. The proposals for partial pedestrianisation of Thatcham Broadway could improve the localised air quality by reducing car movements in the space.

Health Impact:	X			The Town Centre Strategies could have a positive impact on community health and well-being through improvements public realm and aforementioned improvements to air quality and promotion of active travel.
ICT Impact:		X		Not applicable
Digital Services Impact:		X		Not applicable
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The regeneration of town centres is a key priority for the Council.
Core Business:		X		Not applicable
Data Impact:		X		Not applicable
Consultation and Engagement:	An online public survey was run from December 2022 to January 2023 which received 1,700 responses across both Thatcham and Hungerford. Four workshops were also held, two for each town, to get the views and input of key stakeholders (including businesses, community groups, and Hungerford and Thatcham town councils) on the issues in the towns and subsequent proposals. Within the Council, consultants engaged with the Leader, Portfolio Holder, Executive Director (Place) and officers from Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Highways.			

3 Executive Summary

3.1 This report seeks the Council's endorsement of the Town Centre Strategies for Thatcham and Hungerford as frameworks to reposition the town centres' offer to ensure they continue to meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors.

3.2 The development of these Strategies is the beginning of a much longer and more involved engagement process. Their purpose is to provide a high level framework for improvements to Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centres which the Council will seek to secure funding to deliver through various sources.

3.3 If endorsed by the Council, the Strategies will be taken forward for engagement with key stakeholders including Thatcham and Hungerford Town Councils. The proposed projects will be worked up in more detail, including business plans and funding

applications and additional funding sources for public and private sector investment will be identified. This will follow the same format as the Newbury Masterplan delivery programme.

3.4 A Programme Initiation Document will be developed for delivery of the Strategies and they will form part of our wider Town Centres Programme, including delivery of the Newbury Masterplan. The Town Centres Programme (including Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford) has a revenue and capital budget across two years in order to work-up projects in detail, support further funding bids and support their implementation. The capital budget is £134,000 per year for 2022/23 and 2024/25. The revenue budget is £130,000 per year for 2022/23 and 2024/25.

3.5 The Programme will become part of a wider Place Infrastructure Programme being developed to allow the Council to consider its priorities for infrastructure funding and delivery across the District as a whole.

4 Background

4.1 The Council commissioned Hemingway Design to lead a consultant team including New Masterplanning, following a procurement exercise, to engage with residents and stakeholders (including Thatcham and Hungerford Town Councils) and develop both Town Centre Strategies in tandem. The governance of the project was undertaken by Economic Development Board.

4.2 The engagement begin with a walk around and workshop with each Town Council and a number of invited local stakeholders and businesses, to set the context of the towns for the consultants and begin to explore key issues. This was followed by an online public consultation from December 2022 to January 2023 which received over 1,700 responses in total – testing the views of local people on the key issues in the town, and which improvements and proposals they most prioritised. This was then followed by final follow-up workshops and presentations with the Town Councils and local stakeholders to review the findings of the survey and proposals.

4.3 The consultant team then produced the final draft Strategies during and following this process. The final drafts are attached in the appendices below. It should be noted that the proposals set out in the Strategies have not been assessed against each other, nor against wider regeneration objectives for the Council. Endorsement of the Strategies by the Council does not mean that all the proposed projects will be taken forward by the Council alone. It will be for the Council and other stakeholders to agree which projects should be prioritised against the limitations of partners' funding and resources.

5 Summary of key proposals in the Town Centre Strategies

5.1 The key features of the Town Centre Strategies can be summarised as follows, which were arrived through the process of holding workshops with stakeholders and assessed through a public consultation:

5.2 **Thatcham**

- Creating a 'village centre like' quality at The Broadway
- Improving the parks and green spaces

- Creating opportunities for independent and start-up businesses
- Creating a dedicated space for markets and events
- Reducing impact, noise and pollution from traffic circulation at The Broadway
- Encouraging shoppers to visit the whole town centre on visits, not just the Kingsland Centre
- Providing better community facilities in the town centre
- Reducing the impact of the A4 and making it safer for people to cross
- Making car parking less confusing

5.3 Key proposals include full or partial pedestrianisation of The Broadway; co-locating the Library and other public facilities into a 'Community Hub'; improvements to the gateways to the town centre; and physical changes to the A4 to lower traffic speeds.

5.4 **Hungerford**

- Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre
- Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure
- Integrating community facilities within the town centre
- Reducing the impact of traffic on the high street
- Increasing opportunities for independent cafes, restaurants, retail and other start-up businesses
- Improving space for markets and events
- Improving walking routes to the high street from car parks and the train station
- Enhancing arrival into the town centre

5.5 Some of the key proposals including creating a new 'town square' outside the Town Hall by removing a section of car parking, which could be used for markets and events; creating spill out space for businesses on the High Street; and improving pedestrian connections between Bridge Street and the High Street.

5.6 The main common themes emerging through the consultation process and proposals in both strategies is the need to make more space available for pedestrians in the town centres, create intentional spaces for markets and events and improve their 'walkability' when coming from outside the centre.

6 Commentary and risks

6.1 There was a strong response from members of the public and local stakeholders during the development of the Town Centres Strategies, with over 1,700 respondents to the online survey and answers which compelled a strong need for the improvements and proposals in the Strategies. The Strategies are aligned with the Council's strategic priorities, key strategies such as Economic Development and Environmental, and with the visions of Thatcham and Hungerford Town Councils. There are however some key risks which are highlighted below along with mitigation measures.

6.2 With the exception of a small budget described in the financial section above, which is to be used on the Town Centres Programme which includes the Newbury Masterplan, there is currently no provision in the Council's budget to deliver these proposals.

Risk – lack of Council funding or staffing resource means the proposals can't be delivered.

Mitigation – prioritise against regeneration objectives and seek funding from CIL, S106 and from external funding sources such as central government funds.

6.3 The Strategies, particularly Thatcham, contain proposals which may be of concern to some members of the local community. For example the full or partial pedestrianisation of Thatcham Broadway, or measures to reduce the speed and impact of traffic on the A4 as it passes through Thatcham Town Centre. The Strategies recognise that should the Council and stakeholders decide major proposals like this are a priority, they would be subject to further feasibility work and appropriate levels of public consultation before being implemented.

Risk – the delivery of the Strategies fail to win public support and/or meet public expectations.

Mitigation – develop a communications plan to ensure that information is shared in a timely and effective way and appropriate consultation is carried out. Also work closely with a steering group of key stakeholders in both towns, including the Town Councils to support prioritisation and delivery.

7 Other options considered

7.1 The Thatcham and Hunger Town Centre Strategies could be rejected by the Council, in which case they would not be taken forward. However, this is likely to result in lost opportunities to secure external funding and public or private sector investment for the town centres, to the detriment of local residents, businesses and visitors.

8 Conclusion

8.1 The Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centre Strategies provide a strategic framework to reposition the town centres to ensure they continue to meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors. They have been developed in collaboration with residents, key stakeholders and the Town Councils.

8.2 The Strategies will form part of the Council's Town Centres Programme, including Thatcham, Hungerford and Newbury. Two FTE officers in the Economic Development Team will lead on driving forward implementation of the Strategies, and on seeking funding for those proposals which are prioritised.

8.3 It is clear that the Council cannot deliver the Strategies in isolation, so steering groups of key stakeholders including the Town Councils will be set up to help drive forward delivery of both Strategies, as for the Newbury Masterplan. The Steering Groups will provide direction on the delivery of the Strategies that will ultimately require sign-off by existing Governance structures including Economic Development Board and the Town Councils' own boards.

8.4 There is significant work to be done to work up the proposals to the level of detail required to enable the prioritisation of projects in order to seek external funding from the

public and private sectors. Therefore, it is envisaged that prioritisation of projects will be the first workstream for the Town Centres Programme.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Equalities assessment

9.2 Appendix B – Thatcham Town Centre Strategy

9.3 Appendix C – Hungerford Town Centre Strategy

Background Papers

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Officer details:

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Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:

(i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

(ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

(2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- **Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?**
- **(The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)**
- **Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?**
- **Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?**
- **Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?**
- **Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?**
- **Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?**
- **Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?**

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	That the Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centre Strategies be endorsed by the Council.
Summary of relevant legislation:	N/A
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships	**Yes ☐ No ☒** **If yes, please indicate which priority and provide an explanation**
Name of Budget Holder:	**Jehona Hansell**
Name of Service/Directorate:	**Development & Regulation**
Name of assessor:	Katharine Makant
Date of assessment:	13/02/2023
Version and release date (if applicable):	

Is this a …. ?		**Is this policy, strategy, function or service … ?**	
Policy	**Yes ☐ No ☒**	**New or proposed**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Strategy	**Yes ☒ No ☐**	**Already exists and is being reviewed**	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Function	**Yes ☐ No ☒**	**Is changing**	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Service	**Yes ☐ No ☒**		

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To endorse the Town Centre Strategies for Thatcham and Hungerford for progression towards delivery in partnership with key stakeholders.
Objectives:	To reposition both Town Centres to to ensure they continues to meet the needs of residents, businesses, workers and visitors.

Outcomes:	Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centres are perceived by residents, businesses and visitors as attractive and vibrant places to live, work and visit.
Benefits:	Thatcham and Hungerford Town Centres continue to thrive and grow to the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors.

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age		
Disability		
Gender Reassignment		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
Pregnancy and Maternity		
Race		
Religion or Belief		
Sex		
Sexual Orientation		

Further Comments:

(3) Result

Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**

There has been no evidence as part of the responses received to date to suggest that people within the Protected Characteristics groups are likely to be negatively affected. However, we will continue to monitor this aspect throughout the delivery of the Strategies and further action will be considered should this change.

Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	Yes ☐ No ☒
There has been no evidence as part of the responses received to date to suggest that people within the Protected Characteristics groups are likely to be negatively affected. However, we will continue to monitor this aspect throughout the delivery of the Strategies and further action will be considered should this change.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a EqIA 2.

If an EqIA 2 is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the EqIA guidance and template – http://intranet/index.aspx?articleid=32255.

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqIA Stage 2 required	Yes ☐ No ☒
Owner of EqIA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqIA Stage Two:	

Name: Sam Robins **Date: 13/02/2023**

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

Thatcham Town Centre Strategy

Final Draft

West Berkshire Council

NEW masterplanning

urban movement

HemingwayDesign

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3 Engagement Page 18

4 Town Centre Strategy Page 46

The Broadway

The Broadway & The Market

Parking Strategy

Kingsland Centre

Co-op Building & Car Park

Community Hub

Crown Mead

High Street & The Beach

A4 Corridor

5 Action Plan Page 78



Study Area

01

Purpose & Process

Purpose

This report was commissioned to guide and support the future of Thatcham town centre, in the context of continuing planned growth of the town's population and continuing change in what society expects and demands from our town centres.

The purpose of this study has been to develop a set of projects and actions that will enable Thatcham town centre to adapt and respond to these changes and to thrive socially and economically. Whilst this report considers Thatcham it should be noted that it has been undertaken in parallel with a similar study for Hungerford. This dual process has enabled consideration of the similar issues that they both face as market towns, to view the different ways in which they are used and perceived by their local communities, and to identify the distinctly different ways in which they need to respond.

Process

Perhaps most importantly, successful market towns are driven by their local communities, and through a 'bottom-up' approach to change that creates a distinctive local identity. This creates a loyal and committed local catchment. It is attractive to visitors seeking to discover something different from the standard High Street. It creates political consensus and helps support external funding bids. The studies for both Thatcham and Hungerford have therefore been heavily focused on local engagement, through walkabouts, workshops and on-line surveys.

The recommendations within this report are therefore directly linked to the outcomes of this engagement, and to the specific request from Thatcham's stakeholders for a bold and ambitious approach to be taken. It presents a strategy of action for Thatcham, but not a rigid blueprint for its future, enabling it to continue to evolve and adapt. There is considerable consensus on the direction of change in the town, but many projects still require further work and further engagement with the community. Whilst this report represents the outcome of this particular study, it should therefore be seen as the start of a process that continues to involve the community of Thatcham in the development and implementation of the priority projects their town needs and deserves.

02

Key Issues





This study has had regard to the following existing documents and reports:

- Thatcham an historic town in a changing world (2009)
- Design Appraisal for Thatcham Town Centre February 2009 (no copy of the subsequent update was available for review)
- Thatcham Vision Report 2015 Edition
- Western Berkshire Retail & Leisure Commercial Assessment 2016
- West Berkshire Vision Local Plan Review Baseline Report & Socio-Economic Report (2022)

This existing information has been supplemented by a walkabout with officers from West Berkshire Council and members of Thatcham Town Council, together with our own analysis and review of the town centre. We have not sought to prepare a formal 'health check' for Thatcham town centre, but to identify those areas where the position has changed since previous studies, to proceed as quickly as possible to identify the key issues facing the town centre, test these with stakeholders and local residents and propose potential solutions.

The following issues were identified through the review of existing information, walkabouts with stakeholders and the first stakeholder workshop:

- Creating a 'village centre like' quality at The Broadway
- Improving the parks and green spaces
- Creating opportunities for independent & start-up businesses
- Attracting more cafés, restaurants & independent retail
- Having more activity in the evening
- Encouraging people to stay longer in the town centre
- Creating a dedicated space for markets and events
- Reducing noise and pollution of traffic circulation at the Broadway
- Encouraging shoppers to visit Broadway and High Street – not just the Kingsland Centre
- Providing better community facilities in the town centre
- Reducing the impact of A4 and making it safer for people to cross by altering traffic flow, visible information and improved street scenes & making traffic on the A4 more aware of Thatcham town centre
- Making car parking less confusing.

Creating a 'village centre like' quality at The Broadway

The Thatcham Vision 2015 stated that:

"The residents of Thatcham have clearly said in the community survey that they like living in Thatcham and want it to be a healthy, happy place to bring up a family and live into old age. Thatcham's village style-town centre is seen by many as a very positive, desirable asset but while many may want it to look like a village, Thatcham must think and act like a modern town providing comprehensive modern services. Only then can Thatcham live up to its potential, socially and economically." Thatcham Vision 2015

The 2015 Vision notes that 90% of residents agreed (and over 60% strongly agreed) that Thatcham Town Centre should be supported and developed whilst retaining its 'village feel'. There was a clear desire expressed during the walkabout and the initial workshop that this 'village quality' be promoted through this study. Measures to promote this were therefore identified and tested through the formal on-line survey.





The Broadway is an important space at the heart of Thatcham, home to the market and events, and a social space bringing greenery to the town centre.

Improving the parks and green spaces

Our surveys across a number of market towns since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic show the increasing importance attached to green spaces. They are seen as destinations and attractions in their own right and a reason for people to visit town centres.

The green space in Broadway is the most prominent in the town centre but is dominated by the traffic that surrounds it. It means it is not always a pleasant environment, particularly when traffic queues around The Broadway looking for parking spaces. Improving this space was highlighted by local stakeholders as a priority for the town centre.

Turnfields Play Area (at the junction of the A4 and The Moors) is a larger park with play facilities but feels disconnected from the town centre, reinforced by the large fence which limits the access points. Improving this as a space, and as an arrival feature into the town centre along the A4 was highlighted on the walkabout with local stakeholders.

There are important sports and recreation facilities at Brownsfield Road. Local stakeholders, including the cricket club, expressed a strong desire to see these improved and to see better use made of the large parks and playing fields. It was considered that this could form an important extension of the town centre, and create a high quality gateway into the town centre from the west.

To the east (although technically outside the boundaries of this study) stakeholders, including students and representatives of Kennet School, highlighted the importance of the green space at Harts Hill Road on the A4. It is an important crossing point for students walking and cycling to local schools (including Kennet School and Francis Baily primary school). Again it was considered that it could help to slow traffic and create an eastern gateway into Thatcham along the A4.





Thatcham has a number of important parks and green spaces, but they can feel isolated and disconnected from the rest of the town centre.

Creating opportunities for independent & start-up businesses, attracting more cafés, restaurants & independent retail, having more activity in the evening & encouraging people to stay longer in the town centre

Independent businesses bring a stronger sense of identity to a town centre, particularly market towns. They also help make a town centre less vulnerable to decisions made at a national level.

The 2016 retail assessment highlights the level of competition which Thatcham inevitably faces from the much larger centre of Newbury, which will make it even more difficult for Thatcham to attract large numbers of national retailers and even more important that it puts in place measures to promote local independent businesses.

There is evidence from national surveys and other town centres which provides some cause for optimism that Thatcham can attract more independent businesses. Recent national surveys indicate that whilst there has been a decline in demand for retail floorspace from national retailers, those towns which have focused on independent retailers have seen growth.

Surveys also indicate that a significant number of the working population are spending at least two days a week working from home. The positive impact of hybrid working / working from home on small town centres such as Thatcham is being measured in a raft of studies. This shift in working patterns provides more opportunities for Thatcham as the spend shifts from larger towns and cities to a more local spend which in turn can support more local businesses. It can also support the provision of office space for small businesses and shared workspace.

The 2016 retail assessment also highlighted that there is expected to be significant growth in spending on leisure & cultural activities and on eating and drinking in the local area. It is considered therefore that there is scope for Thatcham to widen and improve its offer in this respect, despite the proximity to Newbury.

All these elements, together with improved green space and community facilities, will help encourage people to spend more time in Thatcham.







Thatcham has a variety of interesting independent shops across Broadway, High Street and the Kingsland Centre.

Creating a dedicated space for markets and events

Markets provide variety and diversity, history and character. They are an expression of community, and help build a strong sense of local identity. They provide affordable opportunities for new businesses to set up and grow, make it easier for young people and new traders to access trading opportunities, offer environmental and health benefits by encouraging people to shop locally, and providing affordable fresh food produce. They are an important 'tool' for driving town centre footfall, increasing dwell time, and ultimately helping to build and promote the 'brand' of a place.

Lack of space for the market was highlighted in the 2009 Design Appraisal as a key weakness of Thatcham town centre, and there was a desire expressed in the workshops for a dedicated space that would give more flexibility for markets and events throughout the week. This issue was therefore tested through the online consultation.





Desire was expressed for a dedicated space to be provided for the market. This would give more flexibility for additional markets/events on other days.

Reducing noise and pollution of traffic circulation at the Broadway

Concern was expressed during the walkabout about the physical environment at The Broadway, in particular the noise and pollution created by the traffic. This is created not just by the presence of the central parking spaces but by the ability of motorists to circulate around the Broadway waiting for a space to become available.

The 2009 Design Appraisal identified a total of 500 car parking spaces in five car parks serving the town centre. The report concluded:

"Whilst stakeholder consultation identified a lack of car parking in Thatcham as a common concern, we consider that there are plenty of car parking spaces to meet the current range of facilities in the town centre."

In 2015, the Thatcham Vision report reinforced this point, stating:

"The town centre is served by several car parks but inadequate car parking remains a common complaint. There are spaces in several locations close to (within 100-200 metres) of the centre and car parks are rarely full during the week. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the lack of parking is more than often not related to driver perception and behaviour (including unwillingness to pay to use the main car park) rather than lack of parking". Thatcham Vision 2015

No new surveys of car parking have been undertaken for this study, but our visual surveys throughout the study period reinforce the conclusion that free on-street spaces in Broadway are very popular, as is the Waitrose car park, but the Coop car park is much less busy as are the car parks at Brownsfield Road (which are a 2-minute walk from the High Street).

It is considered therefore that there is sufficient car parking capacity within Thatcham town centre to consider removing some of the parking spaces within The Broadway, and this is reinforced by the fact that this parking area is used by the market stalls on a Friday and therefore not available for parking on those days. It was agreed therefore to test support for this proposal through the on-line consultation.





Traffic circulation around the Broadway, often searching for a parking space, creates noise and fumes which undermine the quality of the space.

Encouraging shoppers to visit Broadway and High Street – not just the Kingsland Centre

Waitrose is a key 'anchor' destination for Thatcham town centre, serving an important function for the town as a foodstore. The Waitrose car park also provides around 40% of total parking spaces within the town centre and is therefore an important arrival space into Thatcham for shoppers and visitors.

This is reflected in the 2009 pedestrian flow counts which indicate:

- The biggest shopper numbers are at Waitrose and in the Kingsland Centre
- There is a significant drop (around 50%) in pedestrian numbers immediately outside the Kingsland Centre.
- There is a further fall in pedestrian numbers on the High Street.

Although these figures are relatively old, they reflect our observations during site visits. The town centre has not changed structurally in the time since those surveys were undertaken. Waitrose remains the dominant store in Thatcham and there is no reason to believe that the barrier effect of leaving the Kingsland Centre will have changed significantly.

The Design Appraisal identified the 'pinch points' at the entrance into the Kingsland Centre by Waitrose which still exist and will discourage pedestrian flow through to the town centre. It also identified low levels of footfall as a threat to the High Street.

The connection from Waitrose (and its car park) to The Broadway is suffering from a number of vacant units and is in need of environmental improvement. The cluster of vacancies on the northern side of the arcade, and the fact that the two large units marking the entrances at either end (former Lloyds Bank and former Lloyds pharmacy) are vacant also discourages visitors into the centre.

The 'public realm' in the arcade is cluttered and of varying quality. It creates a substantial visual and physical barrier which will deter some Waitrose shoppers from visiting The Broadway. The strategy has therefore considered measures to encourage more shoppers visiting Waitrose to visit the Kingsland Centre Arcade and continue to explore the rest of the town centre. It has also considered potential ways to increase footfall into the High Street and make it feel less peripheral.





The physical and visual clutter within the Kingsland Centre undermines pedestrian connections to The Broadway. This is not helped by the vacant units at key entrance points.

Providing better community facilities in the town centre

Delivering an improved community hub has been a priority for Thatcham for over a decade. The West Berkshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2010) stated that a 'major centrally located community facility' was a priority for Thatcham, stating that:

Although this is a major and costly project for the town the benefits are vast. The building could include the council offices, the local library, a local museum and heritage centre, an information point for citizen's advice bureau, the police, etc., a lifelong learning classroom, offices for local volunteer groups, an internet café, meeting rooms for use by local groups and start-up businesses. Using such a centre as a base for senior citizens support and a place for teenagers to meet safely are other ideas.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan also highlighted that the library needed significant expansion:

A new library is considered vital to Thatcham, as the current library provision is grossly inadequate for a town of 25,000+ people. The library is too small, in the wrong place and with limited scope to expand its activities. It needs to be accessible and larger (at least 700 square metres) and to have an enlarged mandate. It needs to retain present activities but also to expand them in a number of ways, such as becoming an information centre, the centre of a learning town provision and the heart of the networking of the town.

Although this study did not include a detailed review of community requirements, the demand for community services will have increased with the planned population growth for Thatcham and this is confirmed by informal discussions with stakeholders and service providers. Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore provision of a new community facility for Thatcham was identified as a priority issue in the walkabout and the initial stakeholder workshop. The study has therefore considered ways in which this need can be addressed.

The 2009 Design Appraisal also highlighted as a weakness the fact that existing community facilities (such as the library and Town Council) were outside the town centre. These facilities are however only a 2-3 minute walk from the edge of the High Street and the study has therefore considered ways in which this area can be viewed as the town centre location it potentially is.









The cluster of important community facilities at Brownsfield Road, including health, library, sport and Town Council offices, can feel isolated from the rest of the town centre, despite being 2 minutes walk from the High Street.

Reducing the impact of A4 and making it safer for people to cross by altering traffic flow, visible information and improved street scenes & making traffic on the A4 more aware of Thatcham town centre

Market towns of a similar size to Thatcham generally serve a compact local catchment, with residents having relatively easy walking and cycle routes into the town centre, but also a wider rural population which is increasingly reliant on access by car.

Thatcham is a relatively compact town with almost all residents living within a 1-mile radius (20-minute walk) of the town centre. Although it has been outside the scope of this report to consider the quality of walking and cycling routes to the town centre, the 2009 Design Appraisal highlighted barriers to walking and cycling into the town centre. The largest barrier is clearly the A4/Bath Road, which separates the northern half of the population from the core town centre shops and services and the southern half from the health centre, library and sports provision.

The Design Appraisal, and update, also noted that "the appearance of the town also affects how visitors, and those who pass through it, perceive Thatcham". The SWOT analysis identified the lack of key landmarks and arrival points into Thatcham, the fact that the A4 diverts traffic away from the town centre and the poor quality environment including backs of buildings along this route as key weaknesses and these problems still exist.

Improving the 'walkability' of a town brings social, economic and environmental benefits. It improves physical and mental health, it improves air quality and helps address climate change and our surveys also show that those people who walk into town centres visit more often, spend more (particularly in local and independent shops) and are more likely to visit in the evening and support the evening economy.

Reducing the barrier effect of the A4 and improving its appearance to passing motorists were therefore considered key issues for Thatcham at the walkabout and at the initial workshop and were tested with the wider public via the on-line survey.







The A4 could present a much more positive image of Thatcham town centre to passing motorists. It also acts as a barrier for people walking to the town centre, to school or other facilities.

Making car parking less confusing

A key concern highlighted during the walkabout and initial workshop was the variety of different parking controls and pricings that existed across the town centre car parks. It was considered that this discouraged parking in a number of car parks, particularly Coop and Brownsfield Road car parks, putting additional pressure on the Waitrose car park and on The Broadway.

Studies elsewhere have shown the benefits of introducing coordinated parking strategies across car parks, and it was considered that such a strategy could help divert parking to those areas which were currently less well used. It was acknowledged that different landownership's and operators meant it was not in West Berkshire Council's direct control to change this, but the issue was tested through the wider consultation.







There are a variety of different operators of the town centre car parks, with varying approaches to pricing, payment and enforcement. The feedback from stakeholders was that this was confusing and deters visitors to certain car parks.

03

Engagement

The strategy responds to priorities highlighted through public and stakeholder consultation. The survey questions were agreed with stakeholders via workshops and subsequent correspondence. This section of the report documents the responses from the public survey, which was open from the 5th of December 2022 to the 9th January 2023, receiving 1060 detailed completions.

Thatcham Town Centre Strategy

HemingwayDesign, NEW Masterplanning & Urban Movement are working with West Berkshire District Council, as well as Thatcham Town Council, and other stakeholders on how to improve Thatcham town centre.

We have held meetings and workshops with local stakeholders, and are now seeking the views of residents, workers, business owners, and visitors on what should happen.

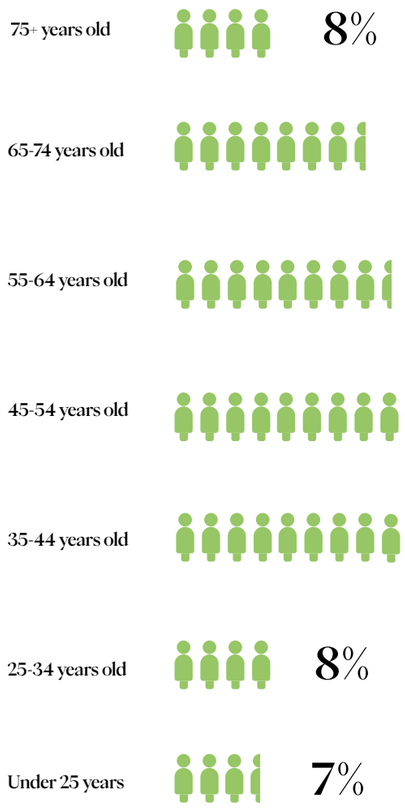
Please scan the QR code below to take the survey or visit https://www.westberks.gov.uk/thatcham-hungerford-strategies to find out more.

On the behalf of West Berkshire District Council, your enquiries and comments will be analysed by HemingwayDesign. Copies will be made available to the relevant planning authority so it can note your comments. Your personal details will not be placed on the public record. Your personal details will be held securely by HemingwayDesign in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, will be used solely in connection with the Thatcham Town Centre Strategy and, except as noted above, will not be passed to any third parties. HemingwayDesign will only keep your personal details until the studies have been completed

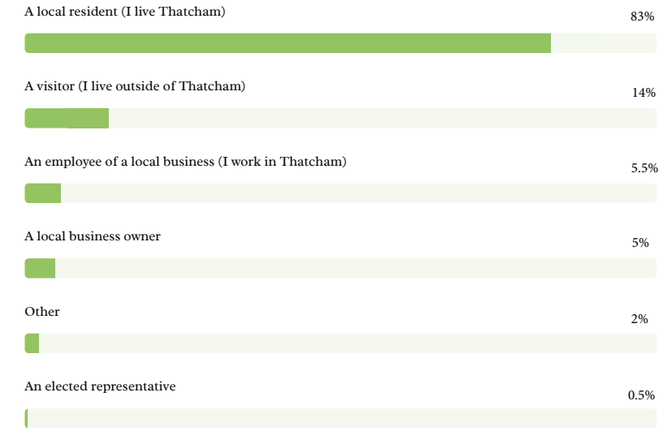
West Berkshire Council · NEW masterplanning · urban movement · HemingwayDesign

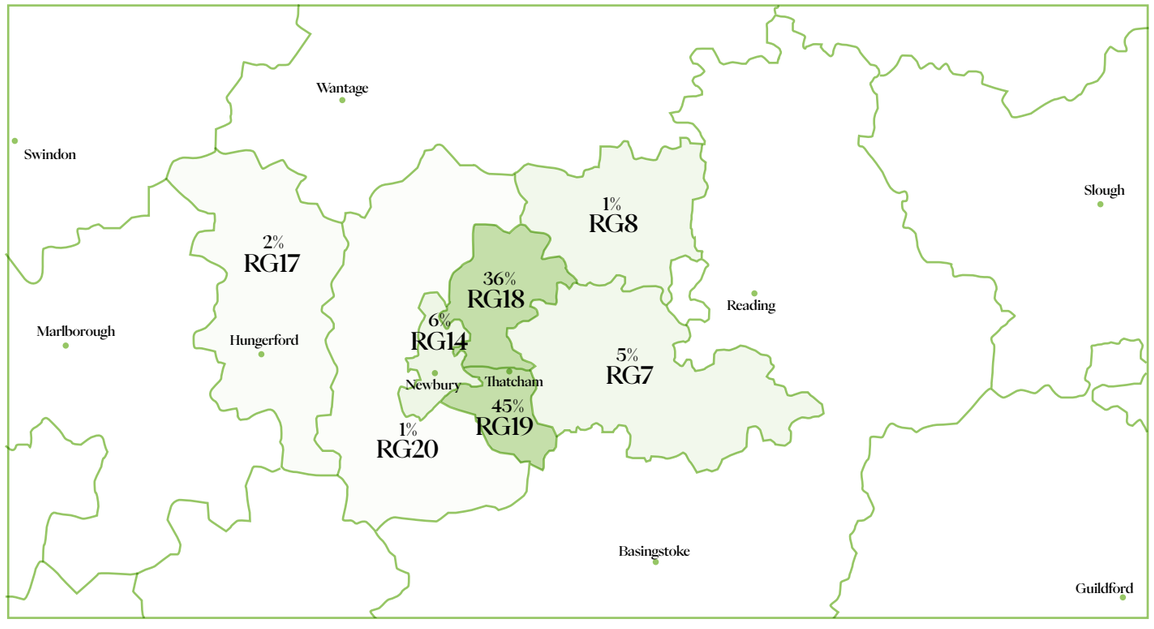
Demographics

As expected, the greatest response was in the 35-54 age ranges, as this is the largest demographic in West Berkshire. 43% of respondents were within this range. There was however a good response rate across all age ranges. Around 10% of West Berkshire residents are aged 15-24, and the survey response rate was 7%. Further engagement was held with students of Kennet School to allow for more specific feedback on issues of importance to young people.



The vast majority of survey respondents identify as local residents of Thatcham, living in postcodes RG18 and RG19. This is not surprising, and reflects the findings of the previous retail studies that Thatcham serves a local catchment and the larger centre of Newbury will attract visitors from further afield.



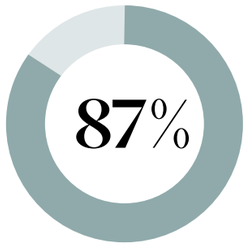


Visiting the town centre

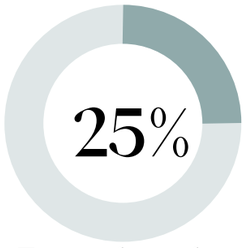
Reason for visit

87% of respondents say they usually visit the town centre to shop. 25% are most likely to visit to attend a market, event or to eat, drink, socialise in the daytime. Only 5% of respondents say they are likely to visit the town for a sport or leisure activity.

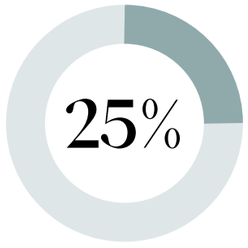
Other common reasons for visiting include visiting family, attending church, passing through when walking or driving elsewhere, and to visit the GP, dentist, post office or library.



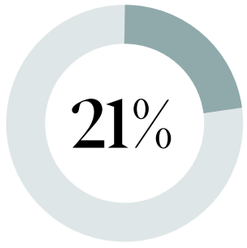
To shop



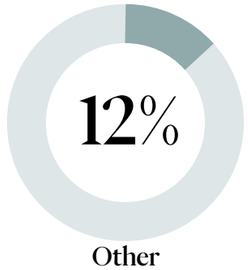
To attend a market or event



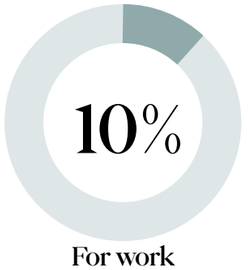
During the day to eat/ drink/socialise



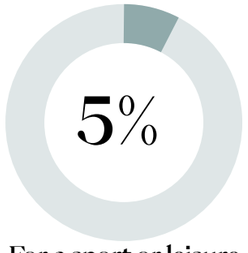
In the evening to eat/ drink/socialise



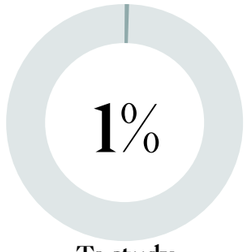
Other



For work



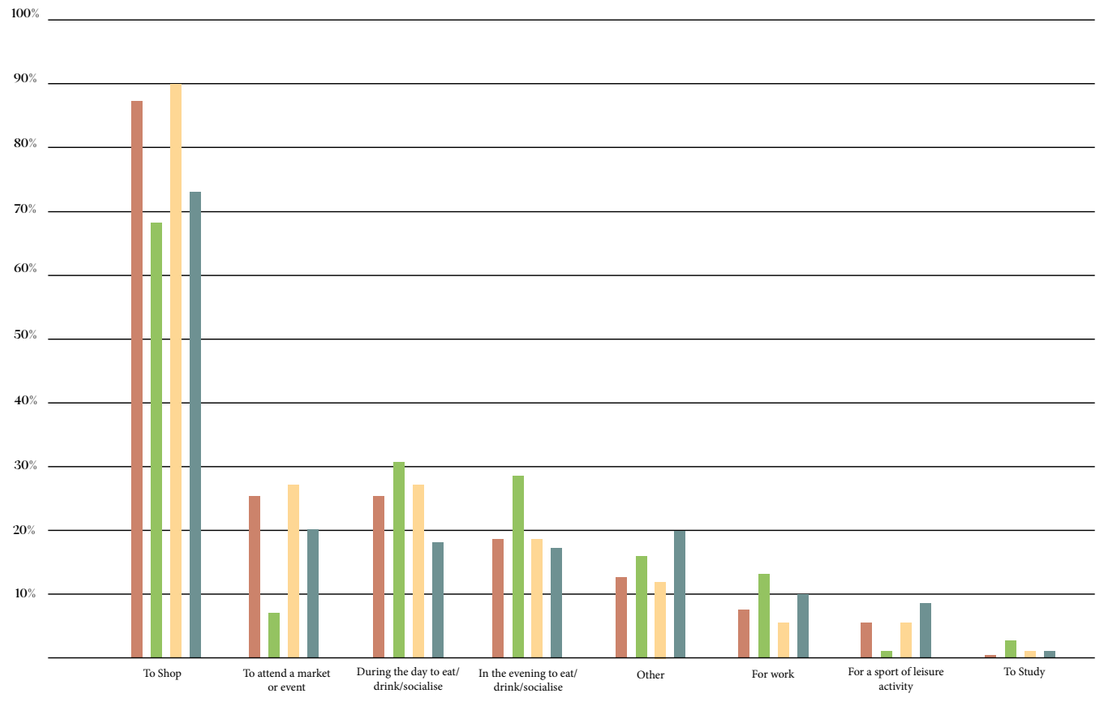
For a sport or leisure activity



To study

U25s visit the town centre less frequently than other age groups, but are significantly more likely to visit on a Friday or Saturday evening.

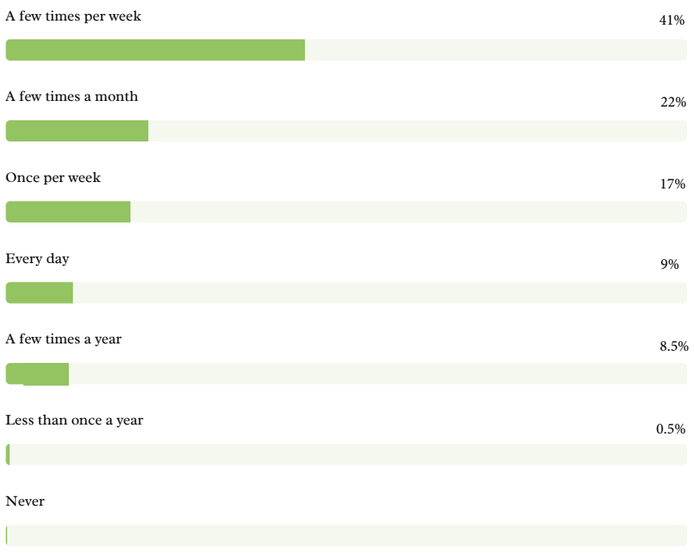
U25s are less likely to attend a market or event in the town centre, or visit for a sport or leisure activity than other demographics.

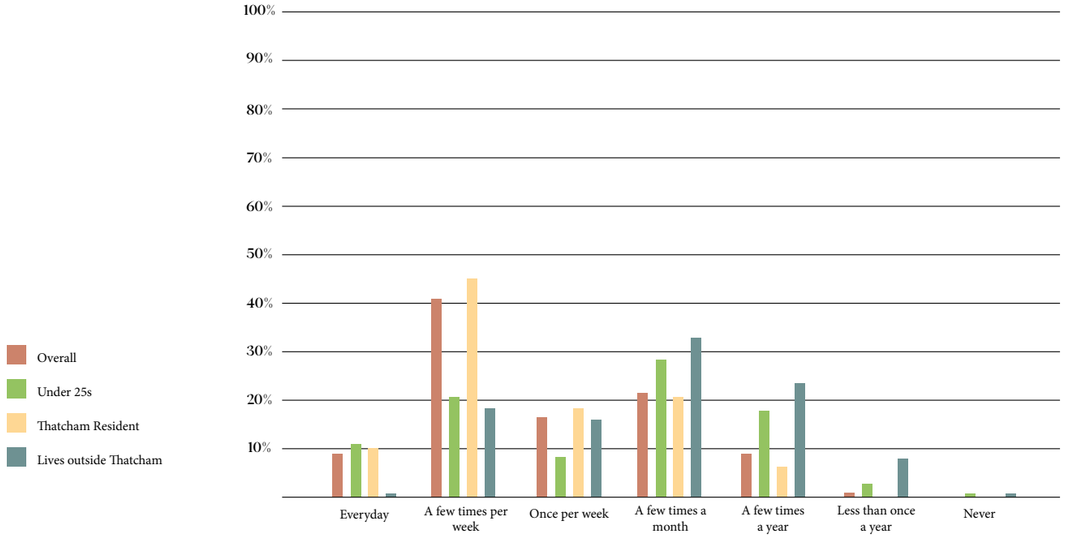


Visit Frequency

50% of respondents, and 55% of local respondents, state they visit Thatcham town centre a few times a week or more.

65% of visiting respondents visit the town centre a few times a month or less. 32% will visit the town centre a few times a year or less.

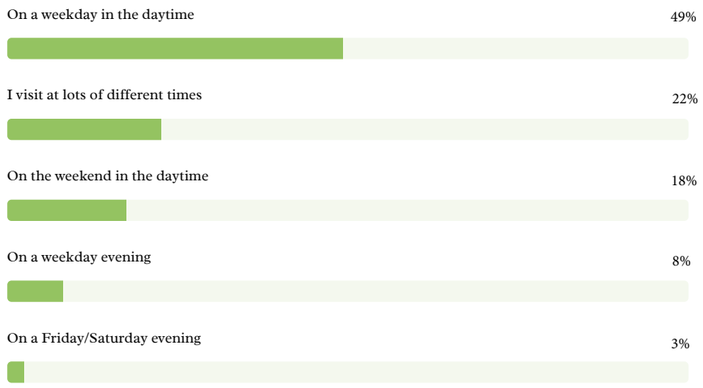


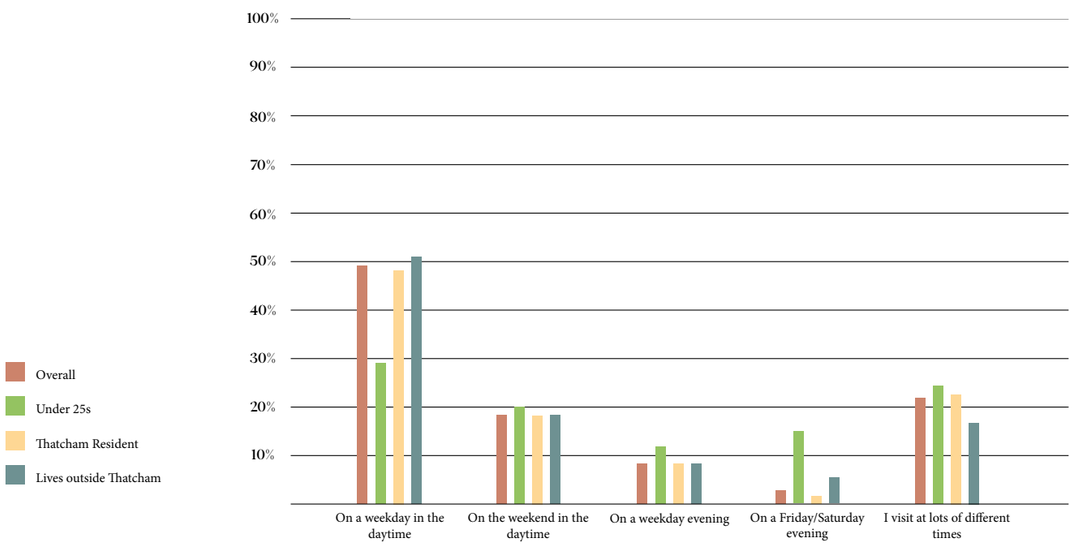


Time of Visit

22% of respondents say they visit at lots of different times. 49% are most likely to visit on weekday in the daytime, and 18% most likely to visit on the weekend in the daytime.

U25s are more likely to visit the town centre on a weekday or weekend evening than other demographics.

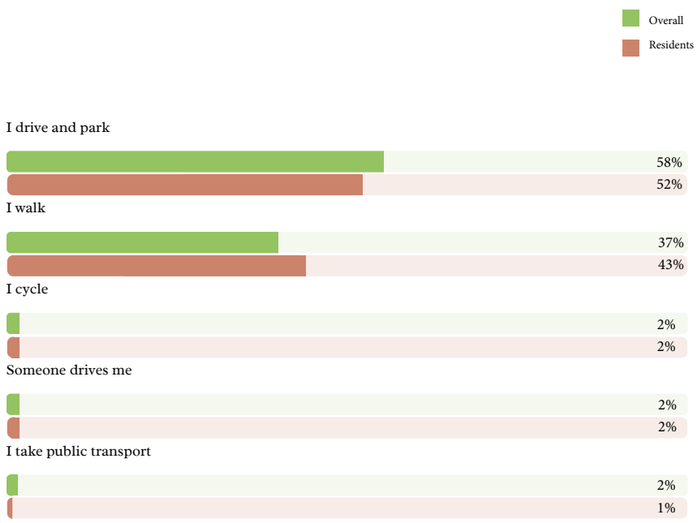


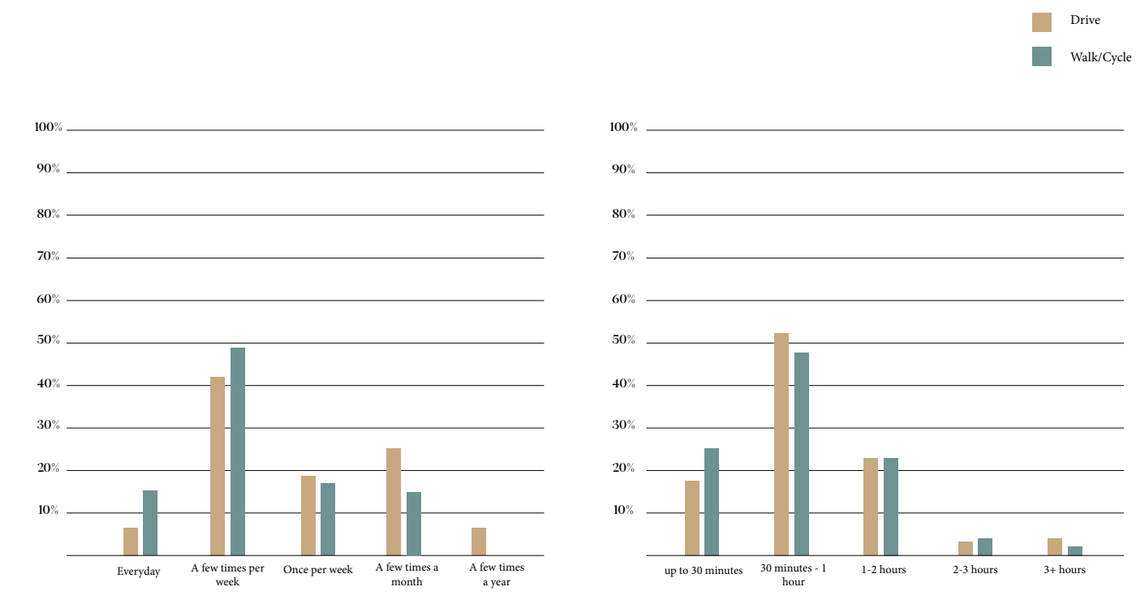


Travel

52% of local respondents usually drive and park when visiting the town centre, 43% usually walk.

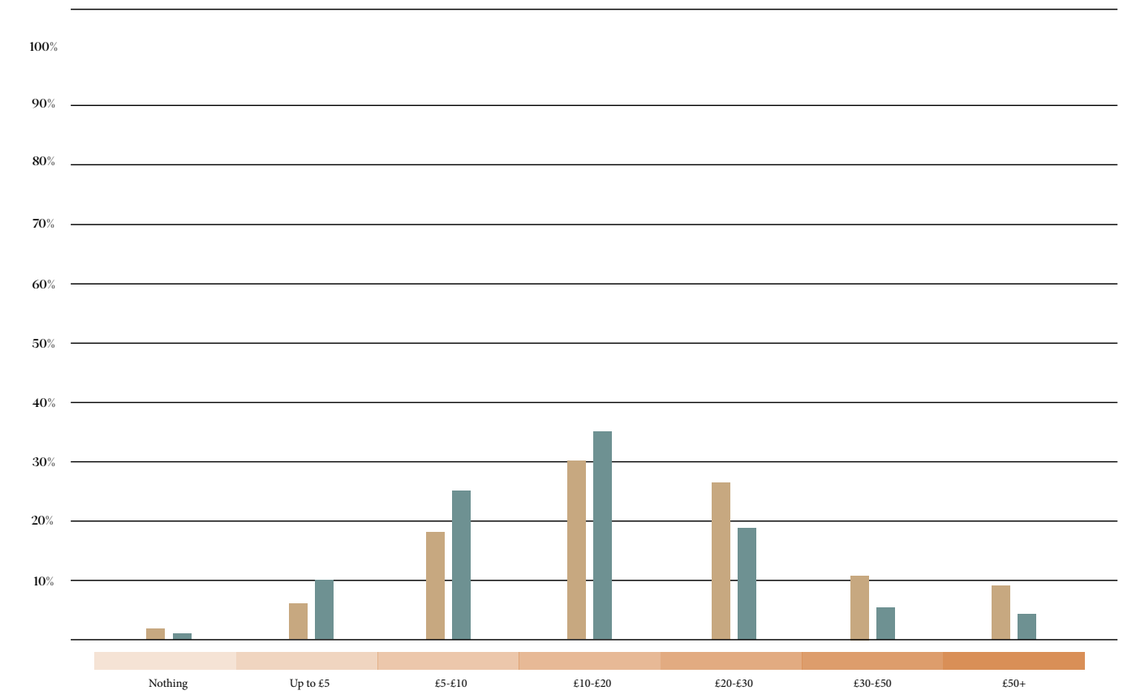
Local respondents that walk or cycle to the town centre visit the town centre more frequently than those that drive and park (approximately 35% more per month).





Visit frequency / Mode of transport

Length of visit / Mode of transport



Spend / Mode of transport

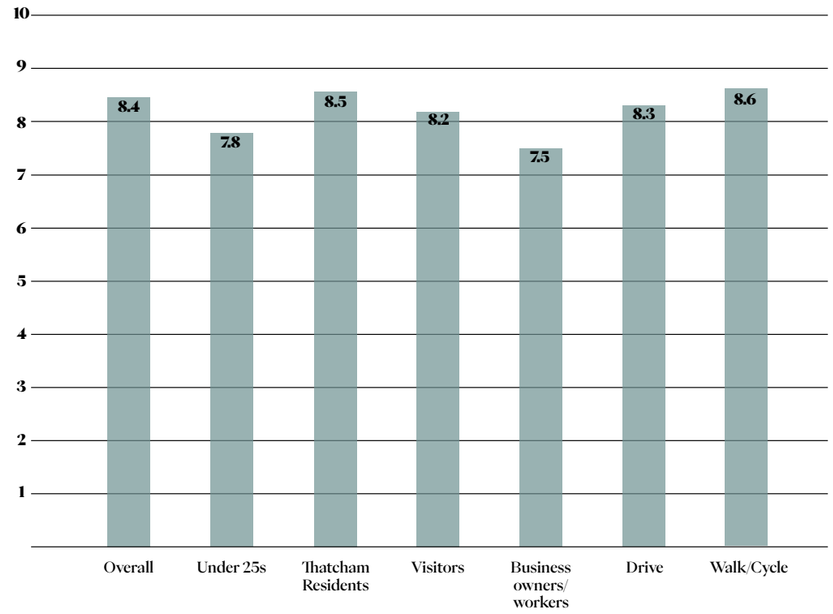
Issues & Opportunities

A number of issues and opportunities were highlighted through stakeholder engagement and initial site appraisals. These issues were then agreed with stakeholders for testing with the wider community via the on-line survey.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these issues and opportunities, from 1 (unimportant) to 10 (vital). The responses are shown here, with the highest scoring issues listed first.

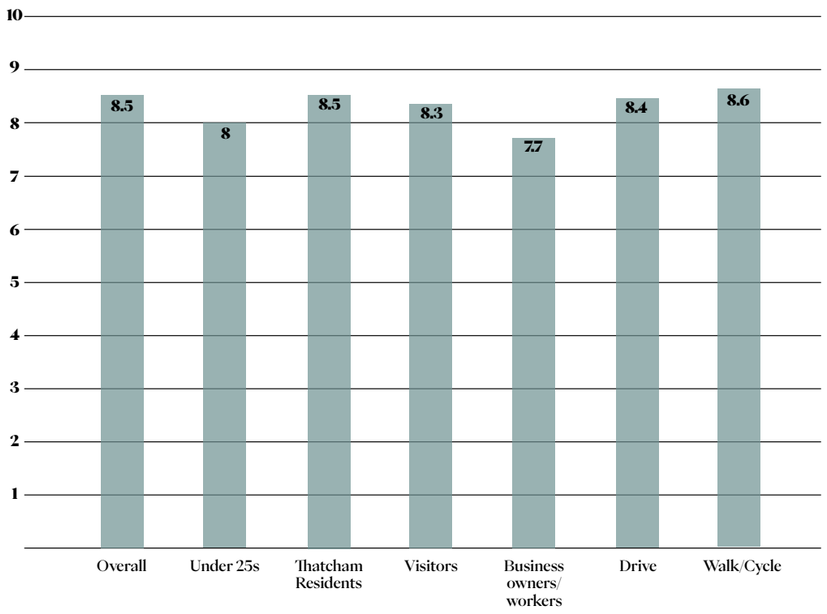
Encouraging shoppers to visit Broadway and High Street – not just the Kingsland Centre

8.4
Average rating



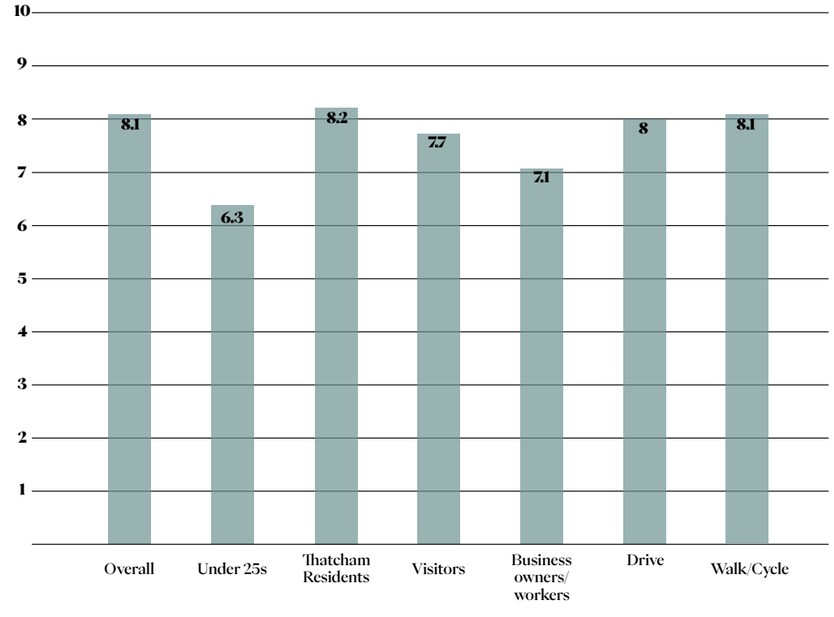
Creating opportunities for independent & start-up businesses

8.5
Average rating



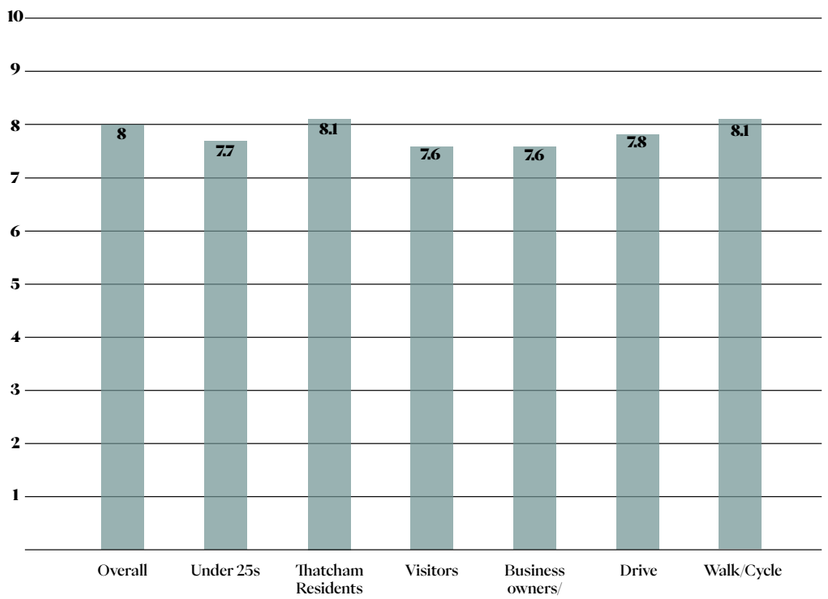
Creating a 'village centre like' quality at The Broadway

8.1
Average rating



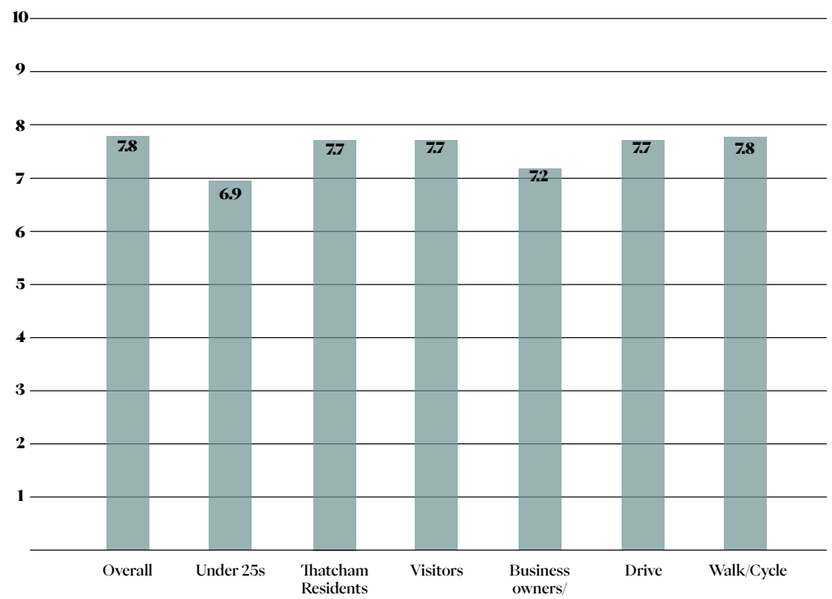
Providing better community facilities in the town centre

8.0
Average rating



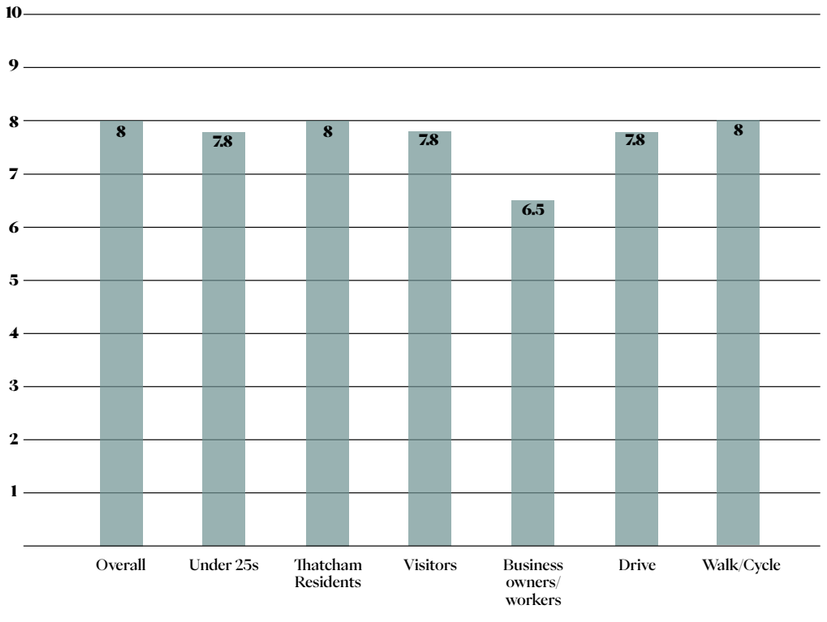
Encouraging people to stay longer in the town centre

7.8
Average rating



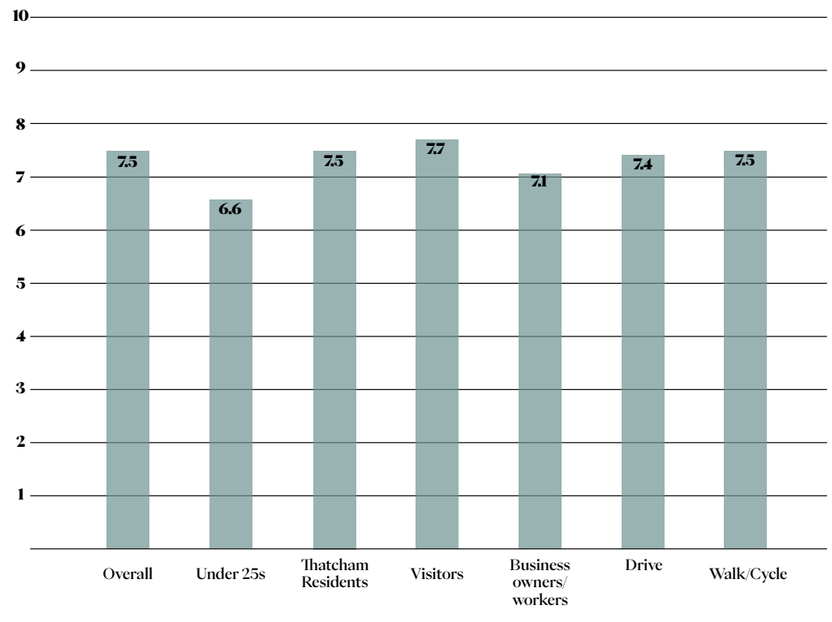
Improving the parks and green spaces

8.0
Average rating



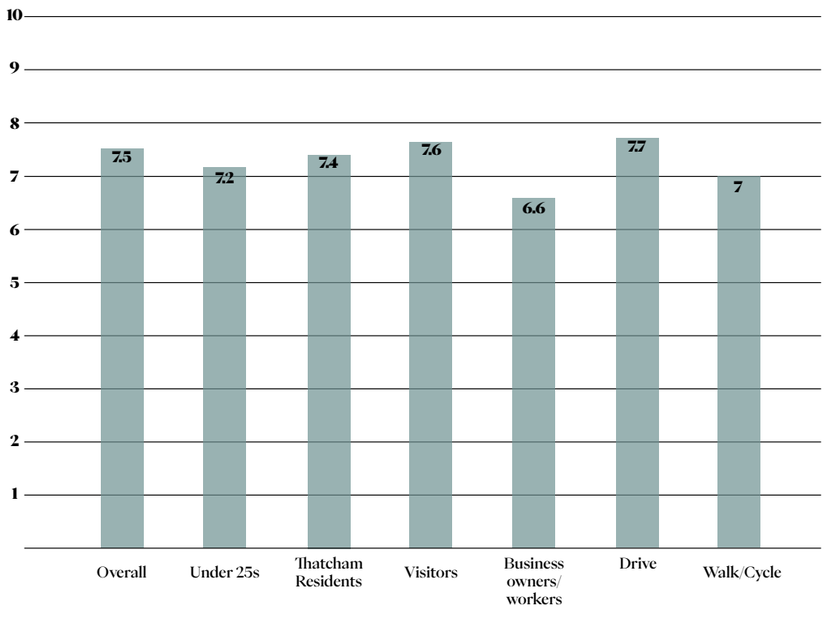
Creating a dedicated space for markets and events

7.5
Average rating



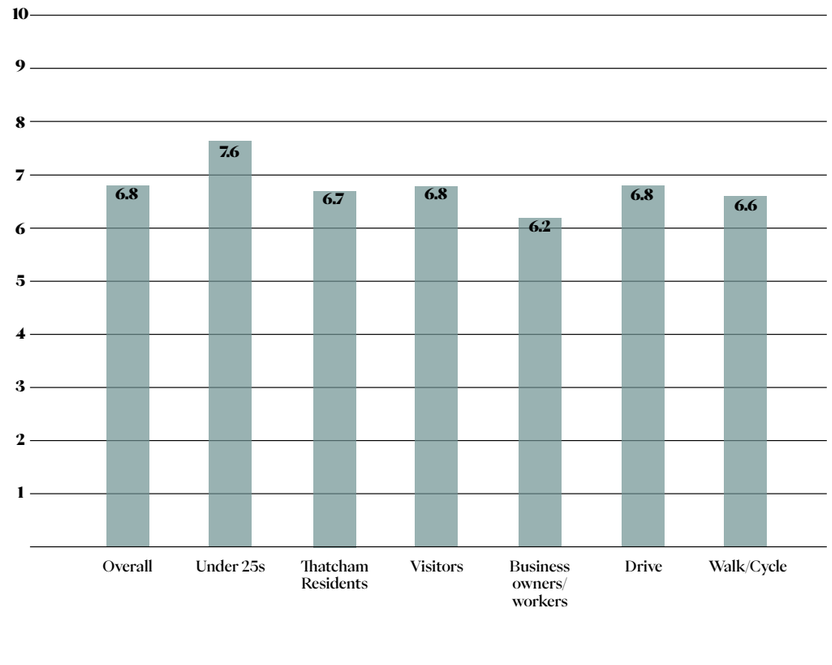
Making car parking less confusing

7.5
Average rating



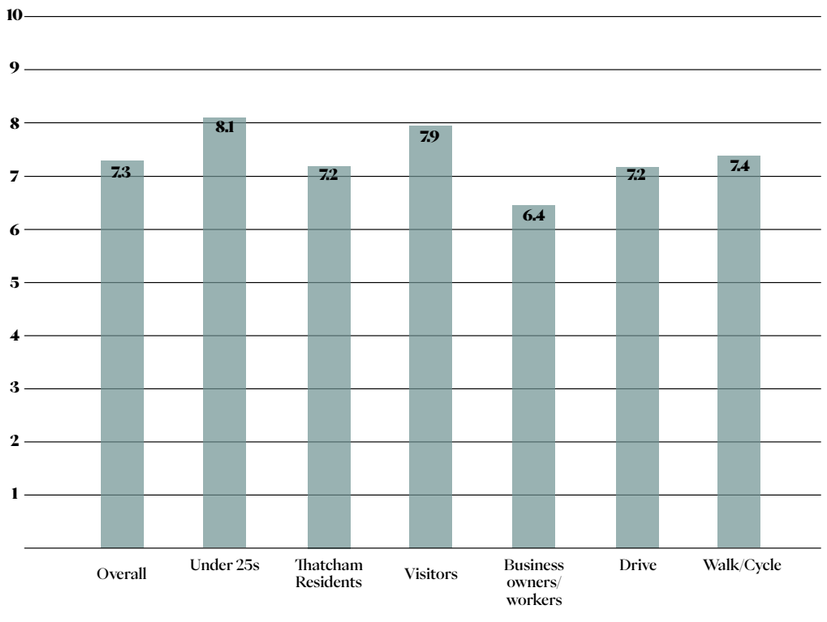
Having more activity in the evening

6.8
Average rating



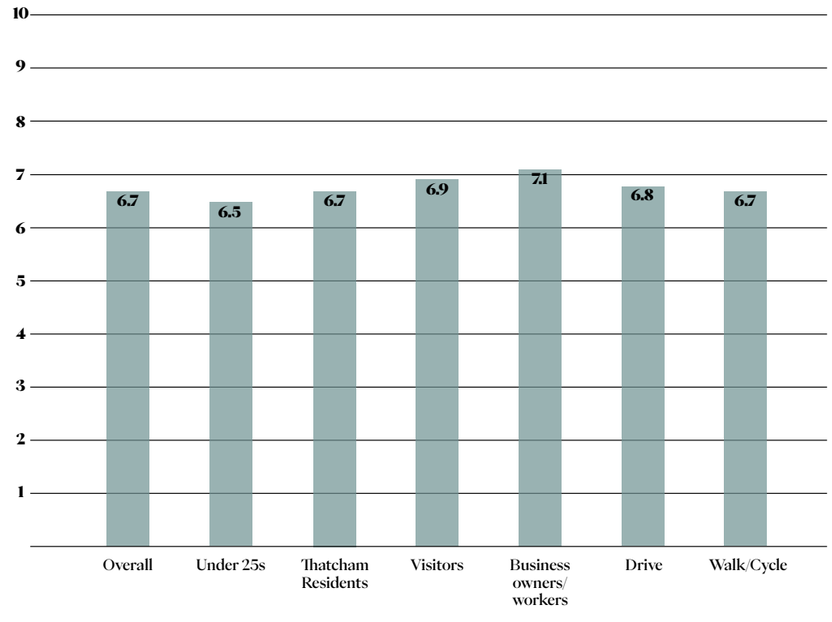
Attracting more cafés, restaurants & independent retail

7.3
Average rating



Making traffic on the A4 more aware of Thatcham town centre

6.8
Average rating

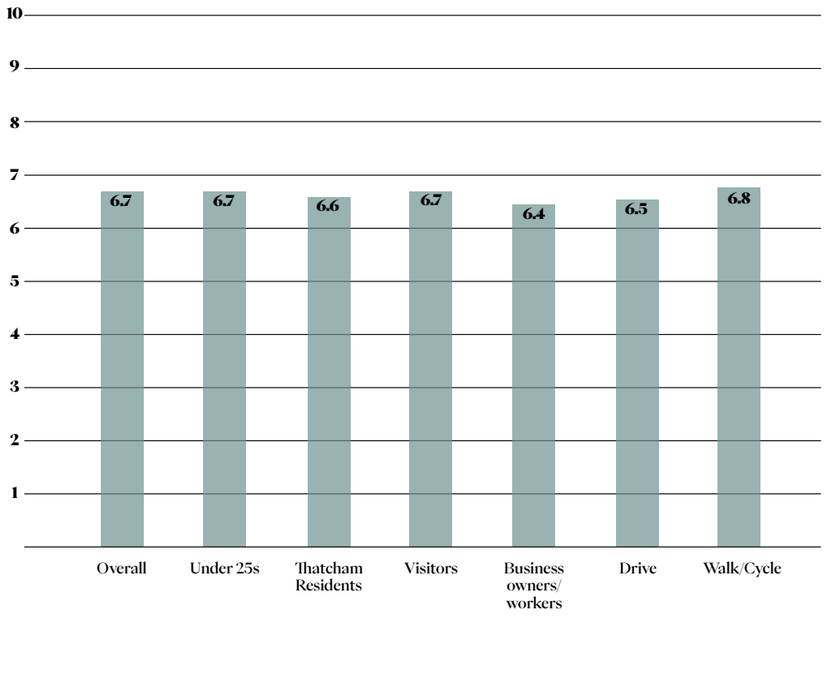


Improvements

At the first stakeholder workshop, attendees were asked to consider ways in which the town centre could be improved. A series of potential improvements were agreed for testing with the wider community via the on-line survey.

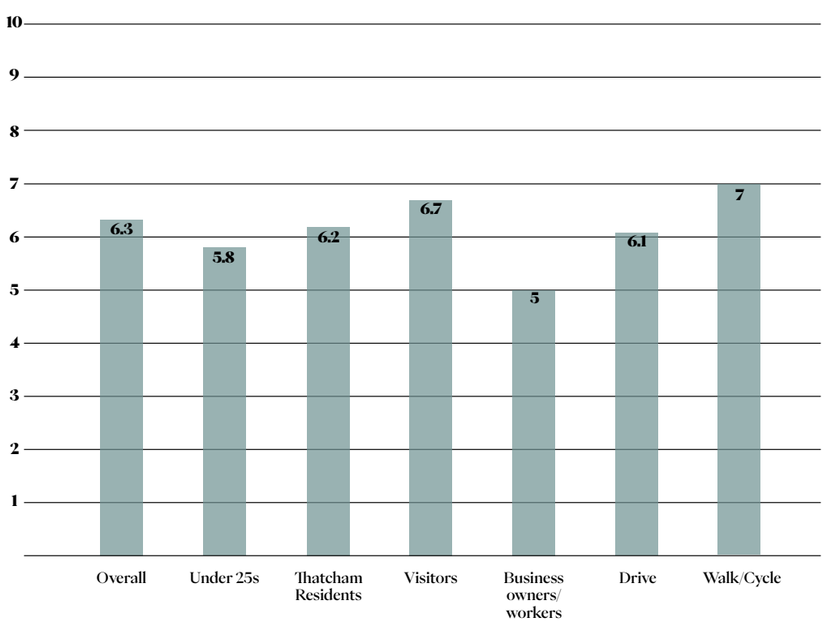
Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of these improvements, from 1 (unimportant) to 10 (vital). The responses are shown here, with the highest scoring issues listed first.

Reducing the impact of A4 and making it safer for people to cross by altering traffic flow, and improving the street scene



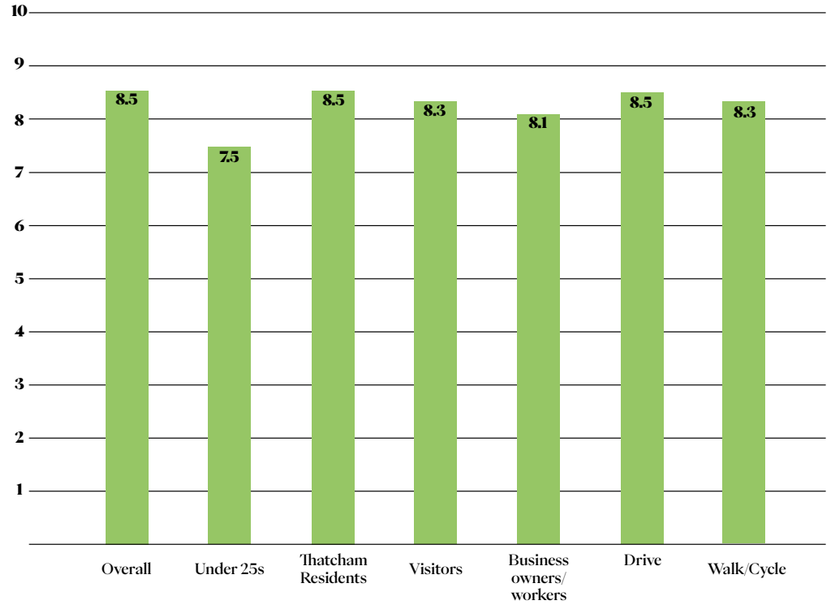
6.7
Average rating

Reducing noise and pollution of traffic circulation at the Broadway



6.3
Average rating

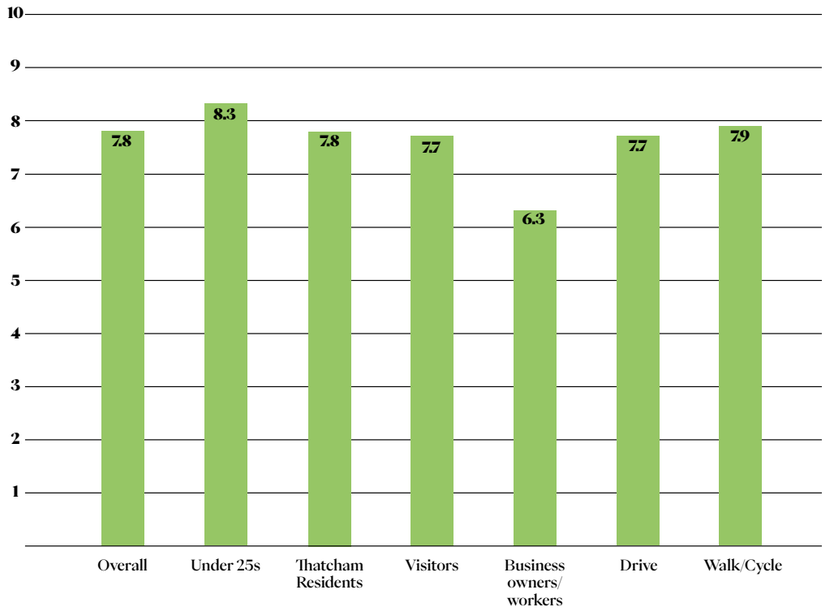
Consider a single tier parking policy across all car parks to reduce pressure to park in The Broadway e.g. could include 1 hour free parking period in every car park



8.5
Average rating

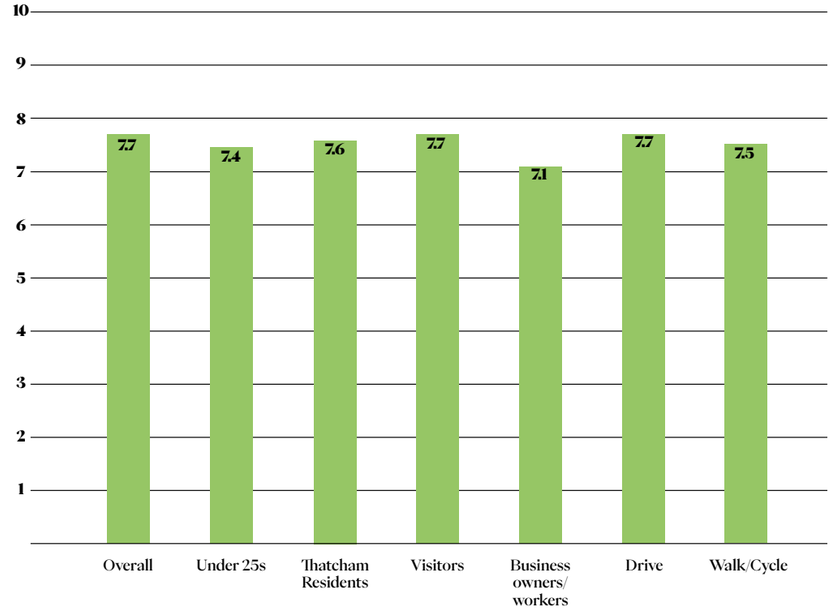
Improve the appearance of Crown Mead shopping area

7.8
Average rating



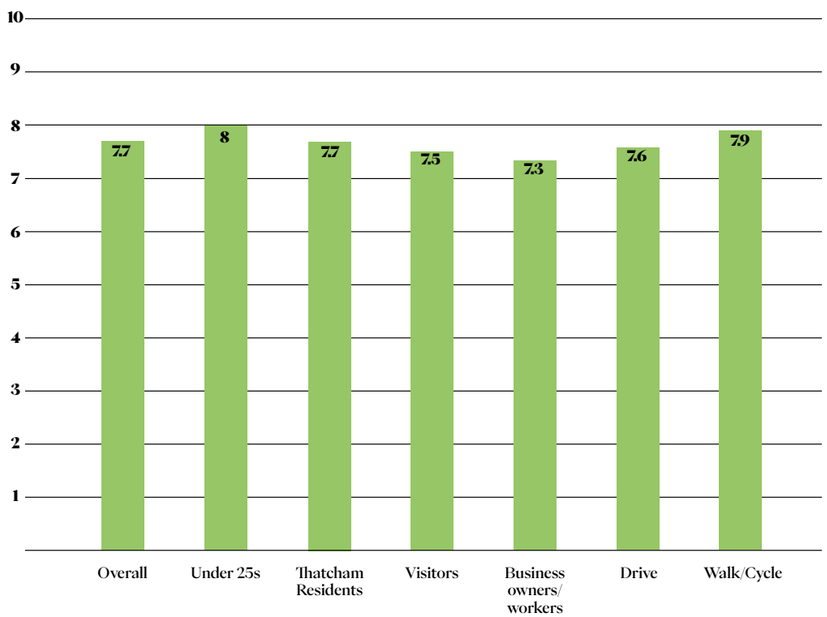
Encourage greater use of Co-op car park with better signage and pedestrian connections to High Street and Broadway

7.7
Average rating



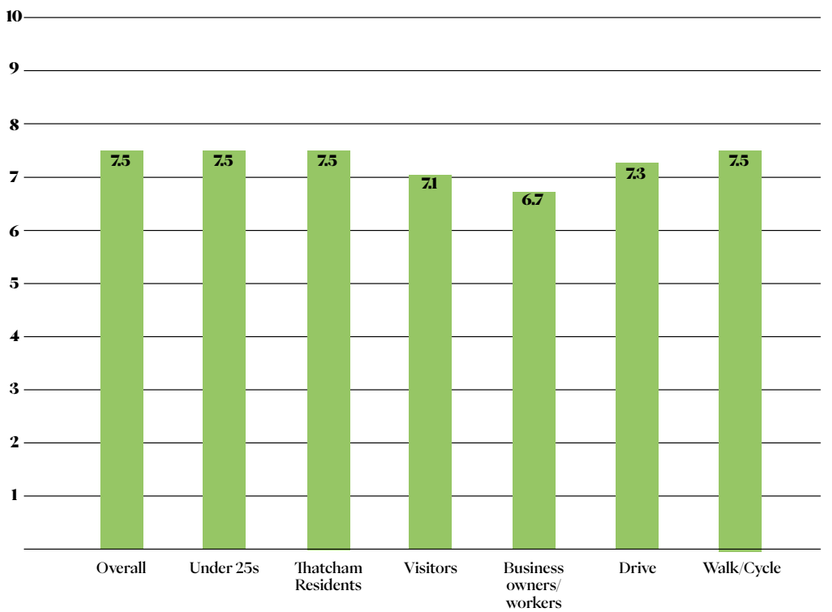
Provide a new community facility with new library, health facilities, arts space, meeting space and café

7.7
Average rating



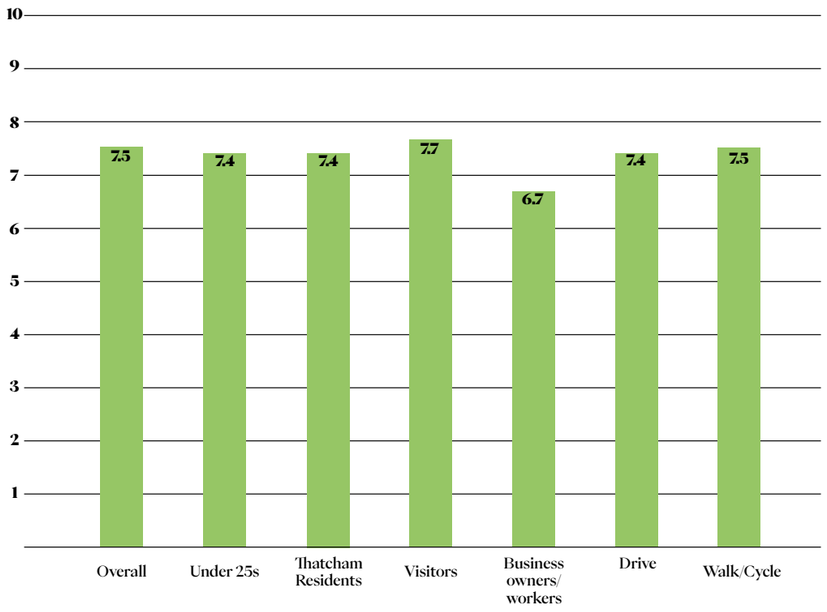
Improve sports, recreation, and community facilities around Memorial Field and Brownsfield Cricket Ground

7.5
Average rating



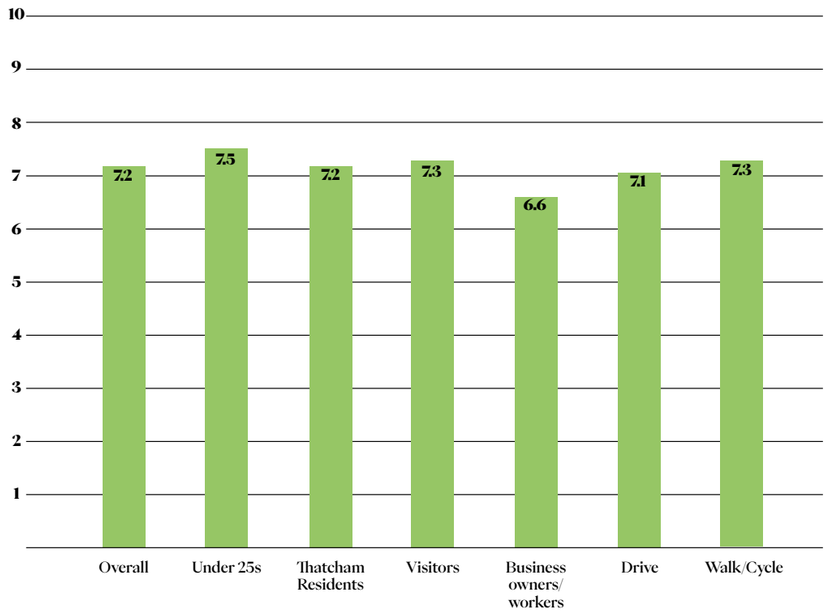
Improve the areas alongside the A4 (increasing planting/ greenery, surfacing enhancements, new wayfinding& lighting) to provide a more appropriate setting for Thatcham's historic buildings and highlight town centre facilities

7.5
Average rating



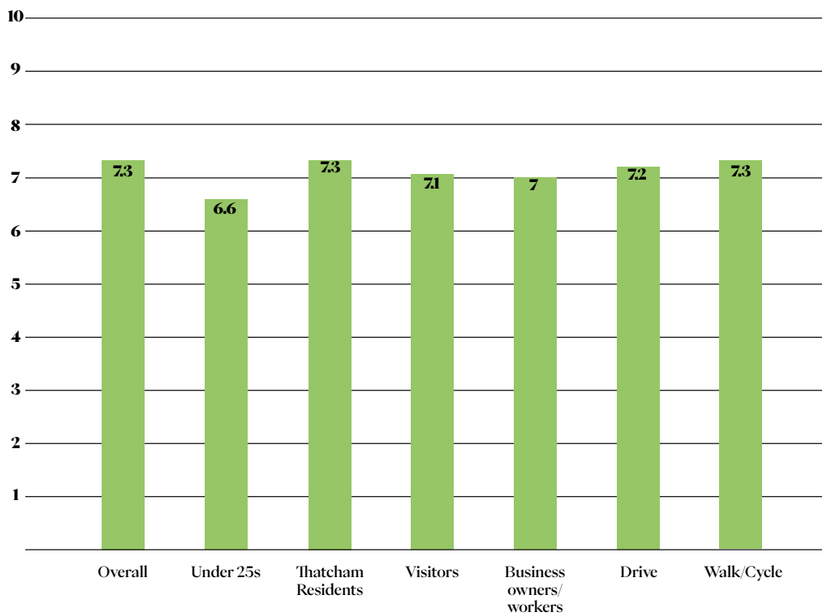
Create a meeting place in the town centre specifically for young people

7.2
Average rating



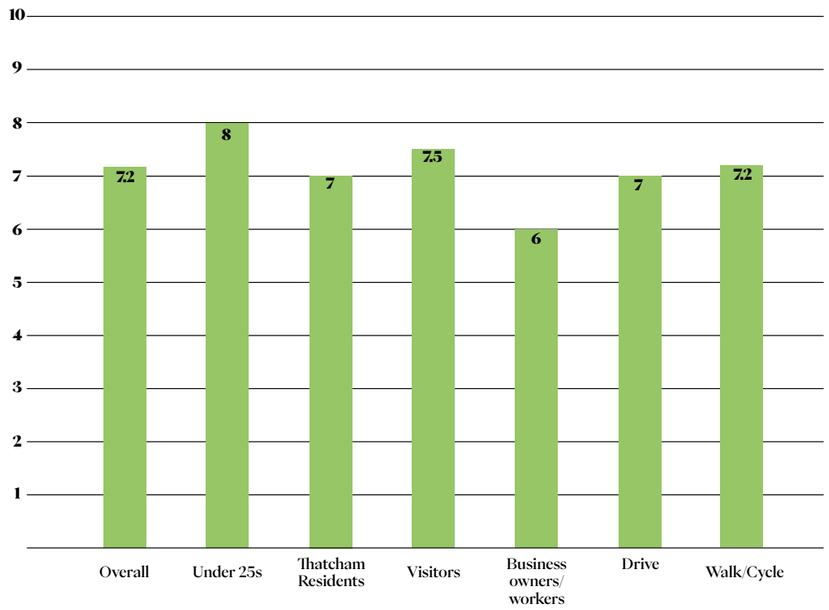
Encourage use of Brownsfield Road and Memorial Hall car parks with improved signage and better walking links to High Street

7.3
Average rating



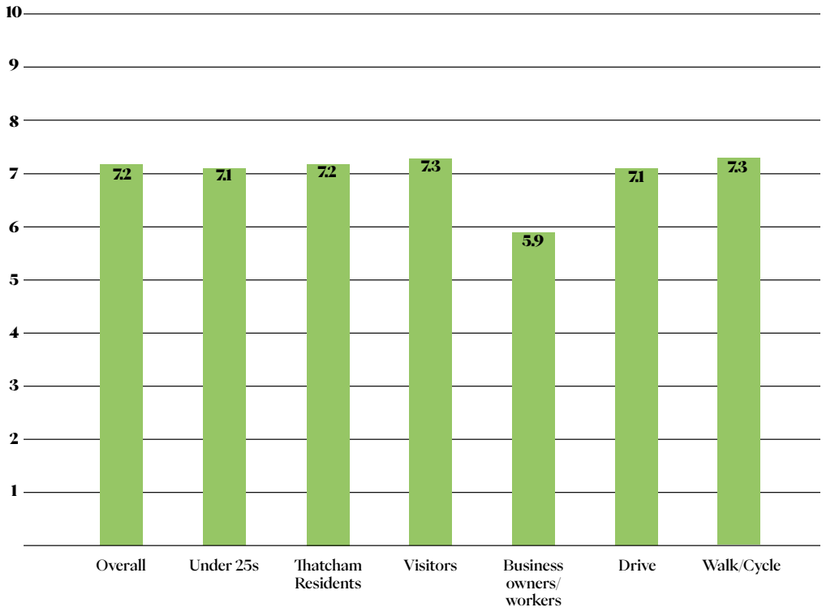
Create more space in Broadway for cafés, markets, seating, and events

7.2
Average rating



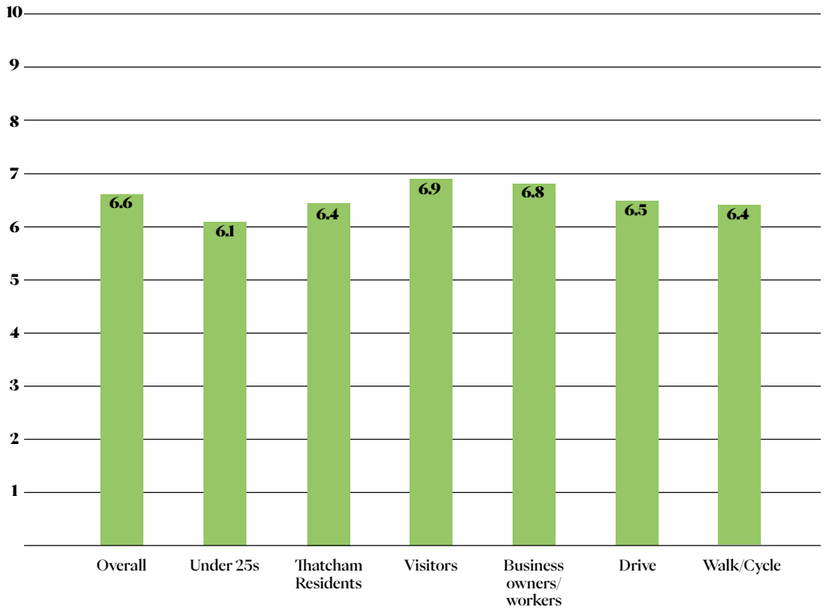
Create a 'village green like' quality in The Broadway with more planting and green space

7.2
Average rating



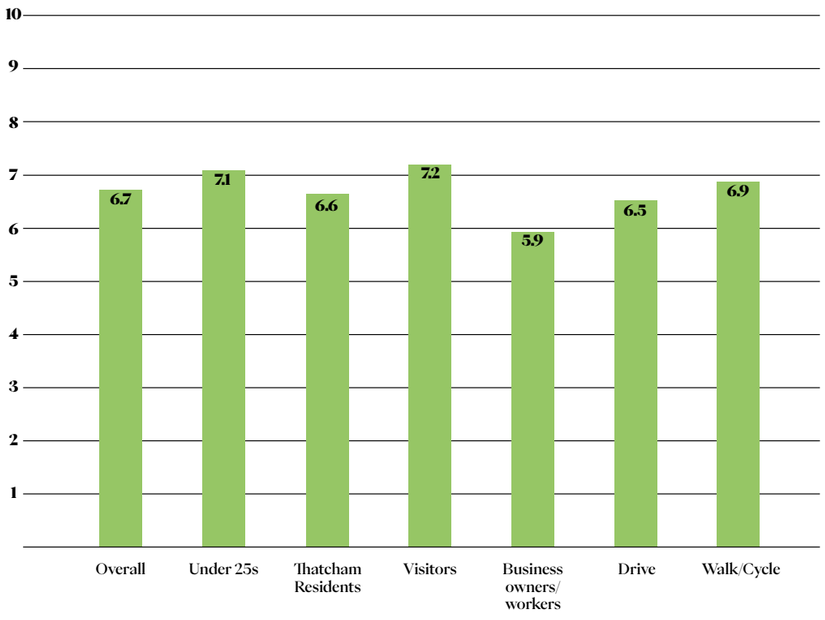
Improve the junction of the A4/High Street ('The Beach')

6.6
Average rating



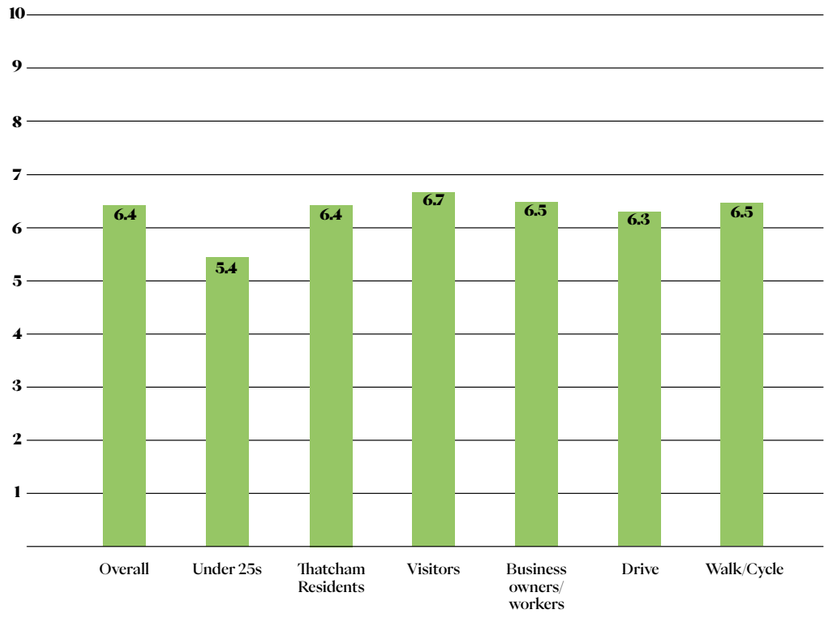
Widen pavements for shoppers and to create more outdoor space for cafés and businesses

6.7
Average rating

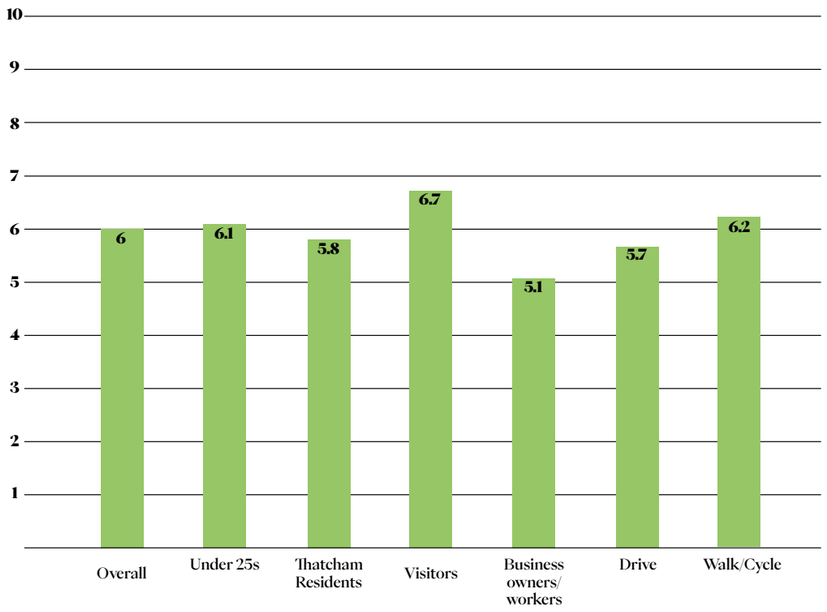


Introduce 20mph zones to create safer crossing of A4 for shoppers and schoolchildren

6.4
Average rating

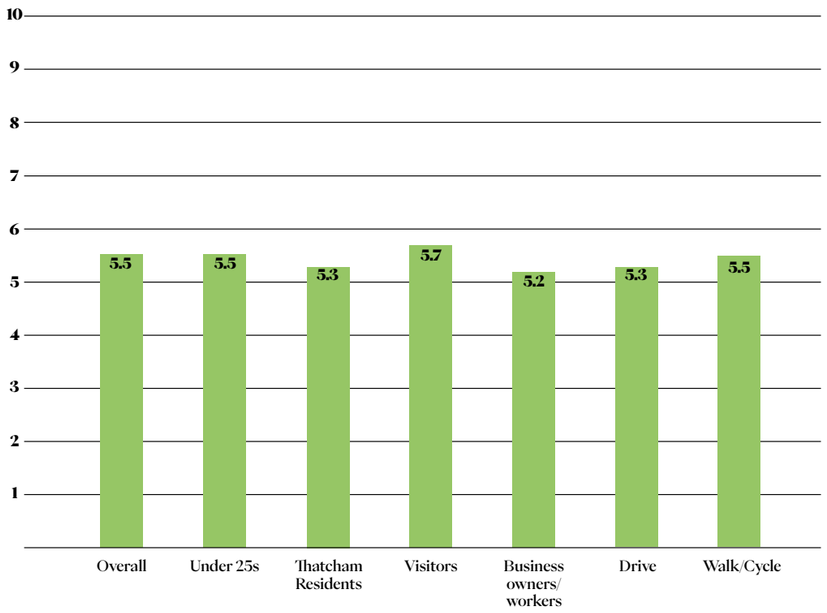


Reduce traffic circulation at the Broadway to reduce noise and pollution



6.0
Average rating

Improve connections into Turnfields Park



5.5
Average rating

When asked if there are any other issues respondents think should be addressed or improvements required common themes include:

- *More, and better quality events*
- *Free Parking*
- *Fewer empty shop units*
- *Wider variety of shops, particularly independent businesses*
- *Bank/banking hub & pharmacy*
- *Activities / facilities for young families*
- *Facilities for teenagers and young adults*
- *More greenery and planting for biodiversity and to address the climate crisis*
- *Safety / Antisocial behaviour*
- *More independent retail including pop-ups*
- *Location of Library - relocate to centre of the town*
- *Improved access by public transport*
- *Shopfront improvements*
- *Improved cycle infrastructure*
- *More green public space*
- *Areas of pedestrianisation*
- *More/ better EV infrastructure*

Stakeholder Workshop





Following the initial Stakeholder workshop held in November 2022 and completion of the public survey a follow-up workshop was organised with the help of Thatcham Town Council. This was held on the evening of January 24th, 2023 at the Town Council offices.

The purpose was to present the findings from the recent survey and to have the invited guests discuss in a workshop session how the priorities for Thatcham could be developed as projects and ideas.

At the end of the workshop each group feedback to the larger audience to share their discussion points. Overall feedback from the group discussion was that the proposals should be 'ambitious'. It should recognise the level of population growth planned for Thatcham and the demand for services and potential CIL funding) that comes with it.

There was a desire to be ambitious in the plans for traffic in The Broadway and along the A4. To examine opportunities to remove as much traffic and car parking as possible from the Broadway, and to slow traffic down on the A4 with a 20mph zone to make life better for pedestrians (especially young people and students).

And there was a clearly stated desire that young people should be leading the discussion on the future of the town, and the need to find ways to ensure that they are more closely involved.

This level of 'ambition' is therefore reflected in the town centre strategy and the scale of projects presented for Thatcham in the Action Plan.

Student Workshop



On February 21st, an online workshop was held with Kennet School Sixth Form students.

The purpose of the workshop was to explore the students thoughts on, and ideas for their town centre. To discuss the findings from the survey, and how young people might like to be involved in shaping projects going forward.

Discussions centred around improving the markets and event offer, leisure and recreational facilities, and the physical environment/appearance of the town centre.

Markets & Events

Participants expressed desire for the markets to include high quality street food, product by local designer-makers, pre-loved clothing including clothes exchanges, and entertainment such as live music and performance. It was discussed that young people could play a part in seeking out local traders. Participants also expressed desire for markets to take place on a weekend rather than weekday when young people are likely to be studying or working.

Participants expressed desire for more events such cinema screenings and live music, and suggested that these could 'pop-up' within vacant town centre retail units. Participants also stated desire for Memorial Fields to be utilised for a wider range of music and arts events.

Leisure & Recreational Facilities

Participants expressed desire for additional sports and leisure uses at Memorial Fields including, walking, running, cycling & BMX routes, multi-use games areas, as well as more seating, tables, and socialising opportunities.

Ideas for utilising vacant town centre unites for pop-up activity such as table tennis clubs were also discussed

Participants stated desire for more independent retail, cafés and restaurants in the town centre and stated that an independent café with work, study and social space, that remained open in to the evening, would be popular amongst young residents.

Physical Environment

Participants expressed desire for less car parking and traffic circulation in the town centre, more greenery, seating and tables to create a more inviting environment to get together with friends and hang out.

Improving pedestrian routes/connections to and through the town centre, and addressing the impact of the A4 were also stated as key priorities.

Participants suggested that students at the Kennet School may like to be involved in producing artwork such as graphic wall murals and wayfinding signage to promote the town centre.

04

Strategy

Projects:

1. The Broadway
2. The Broadway & The Market
3. Parking Strategy
4. Kingsland Centre
5. Co-op Building & Car Park
6. Community Hub
7. Crown Mead
8. High Street & The Beach
9. A4 Corridor

To reflect the clear views from the stakeholders present at the workshops, and the support for projects shown in the survey responses, and the level of population growth anticipated in the Local Plan, this study sets an ambitious strategy for Thatcham town centre.

The strategy seeks to achieve this ambition whilst reinforcing the 'village' qualities of Thatcham town centre, creating a more sociable, walkable and 'people-focused' place. This reflects our own engagement findings and the conclusion of Thatcham Vision 2015.

It recognises the need to promote local and independent retailers, as well as health, community, leisure, business, residential and recreation uses to create a vibrant town centre. It understands that some people will need to travel by car and looks to make car parking arrangements as straightforward as possible whilst minimising the visual and environmental impact of traffic and parking.

The Broadway

Starting at the centre, there is a clear desire to reduce the impact of traffic and car parking at The Broadway. Options are therefore outlined for removing parking and reducing through traffic, creating more space and a healthier environment for eating, drinking, markets, events and socialising in the heart of the town centre.

The free, on-street parking in the centre of The Broadway, and around its edge, has been identified by local residents as creating a number of problems. Visitors by car are encouraged to look for the free spaces at The Broadway, rather than pay to use the car parks on the edge of the town centre. The street layout means the car parking is highly accessible to motorists, but when the car park is full it also encourages circulation around the Broadway as visitors wait for a space to become available.

The amount of on-street parking limits the space available for businesses and people, whilst the vehicle circulation means that the space that does exist can be dominated by vehicle noise and fumes. The proposals consider a series of options for removing traffic from The Broadway, gradually increasing in scope and ambition.

Reducing the amount of on-street parking at The Broadway is considered possible because the parking data which exists for the town centre suggests that there is always capacity at other town centre car parks, even on market days when the Broadway central parking is not available.

The 2009 Design Appraisal identified a total of 500 car parking spaces in five car parks serving the town. Almost half of these spaces were in The Moors and Kingsland Centre (Waitrose) car park, highlighting the importance of this popular car park to the town centre. The 2009 report concluded:

"Whilst stakeholder consultation identified a lack of car parking in Thatcham as a common concern, we consider that there are plenty of car parking spaces to meet the current range of facilities in the town centre."

Thatcham Vision report reinforced this point, stating:

"The town centre is served by several car parks but inadequate car parking remains a common complaint. There are spaces in several locations close to (within 100-200 metres) of the centre and car parks are rarely full during the week. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the lack of parking is more than often not related to driver perception and behaviour (including unwillingness to pay to use the main car park) rather than lack of parking". Thatcham Vision 2015

No formal surveys of car parking have been undertaken for this study, but our visits and visual surveys reinforce the conclusion that free on-street spaces in Broadway are very popular, as is the Waitrose/Moors car park, but other car parks, including the Coop car park are much less busy.

Any removal of parking from The Broadway should however be coordinated with improvements to the other car parks in terms of signage and pedestrian connections (see page 58).







Precedent / Romsey Market Place

As part of an overall enhancement project for Romsey town centre, improvements have been made to Market Place. The scheme has been designed to create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, provide a new space for public events and markets.



Precedent / The Square, Wimborne

Enhancements to The Square in Wimborne Minster have seen alterations to the traffic flow to create more pedestrian areas and an attractive 'centrepiece' for the town to host markets, events and cafe spill-out.

Option 1: Widening Pavements

This option is very limited in its scope. It seeks solely to remove the parking on the eastern edge of The Broadway, along the edge of The Kingsland Centre. This would allow pavements to be widened outside the Kingsland Centre, creating space for cafés and other businesses to spill out onto this side of the street that is more likely to get afternoon and evening sun due to its southern and westerly aspect. It would reduce the barrier between the Kingsland Centre and The Broadway, encouraging visitors to Waitrose to visit the rest of the town centre.

This option could also remove parking on the western edge, which would require relocation of the taxi rank. It provides more potential for the businesses on this edge of the Broadway (including restaurants, and the butchers/bakers) to provide seating on the pavement and to promote their businesses, particularly given that the footways on this side of The Broadway are narrower than on the eastern side.

This option brings some benefits to The Broadway as outlined above but does not remove the vast majority of the free parking available in the Broadway, and does not therefore address the environmental impact of the traffic circulation. It is not considered to be an 'ambitious' option.

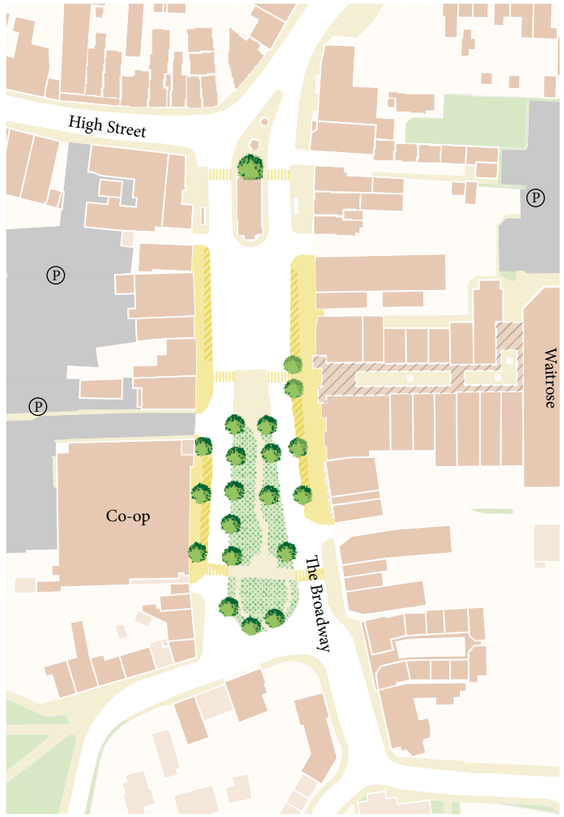
Option 2: Permanent space for market and events

This option is more ambitious as it removes the 16 spaces in the central area of The Broadway. These are the spaces that are used for the Friday market, and which are therefore already unavailable on one of the busier shopping days of the week for Thatcham.

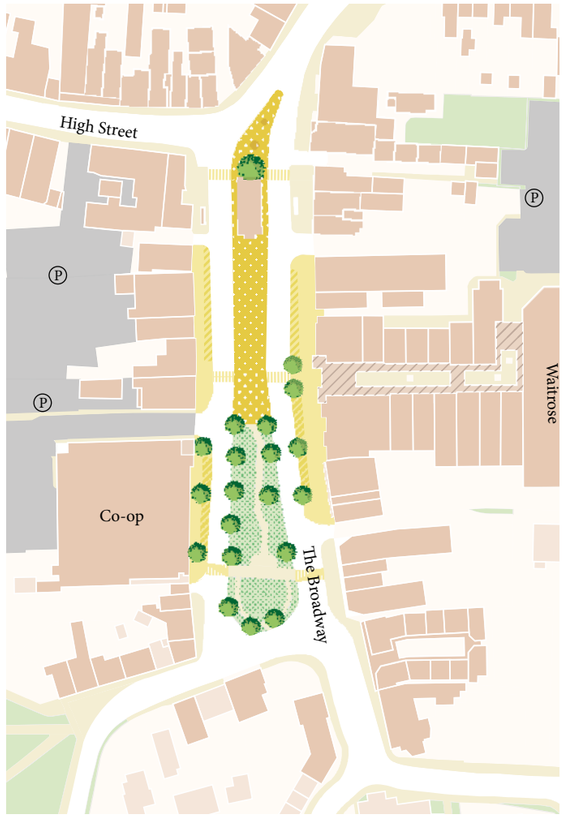
To make the most of the benefits it should be combined with removing the on-street parking on the eastern side of The Broadway. This allows for a permanent social/event/market space to be created in the centre of the town, with a high quality 'village square' complementing an upgraded green space.

Reducing the number of available spaces in The Broadway will encourage use of other car parks and reduce traffic circulation in the heart of the town centre, creating a healthier, and more attractive, space for people to spend time.

Under the current pricing strategy, free parking for 30 minutes or 1 hour would still be available at the Coop Car Park or The High Street (as it is on market days when the central parking area is occupied by market stalls). Any strategy to reduce spaces in The Broadway should be combined with measures to improve signage and directions to other car parks and to improve the pedestrian links from those car parks to The Broadway and High Street (see below).



Option 1 /Widening Pavements



Option 2 / Permanent space for market and events

Potential areas to widen pavements by reducing on-street parking

Permanent space for market and events by removing central parking area

Option 3: 'Partial Pedestrianisation'

This option is much more ambitious. As well as removing on-street parking it also restricts through traffic on the eastern edge between the access points to the two private car parks and service areas.

Restricting through traffic allows for a much stronger connection to be made between the Kingsland Centre and The Broadway, allowing for more green space, more planting. It would allow the market and other events to be better integrated with the Kingsland Centre and encourage pedestrian flow from the Arcade to the rest of the town centre.

Reducing traffic movements around the Broadway also opens up the opportunity to rethink the Broadway/ A4 junction, potentially reducing the amount of carriageway, creating more space for people and improving the sense of arrival along the A4.

By breaking the vehicular connection on the eastern edge of Broadway it will remove the opportunity to circulate around The Broadway seeking a parking space. As under option 2, free parking for 30 minutes or 1 hour would still be available at the Coop Car Park or The High Street.

Retaining traffic on the western edge gives access to the Coop car park and allows on-street parking to be retained on the western edge (if considered preferable). It also brings an increased level of activity to The Broadway in the evening. The partial pedestrianisation could be considered for the western edge rather than the eastern edge but would need to address access to the Coop car park and servicing area (see under Option 4).

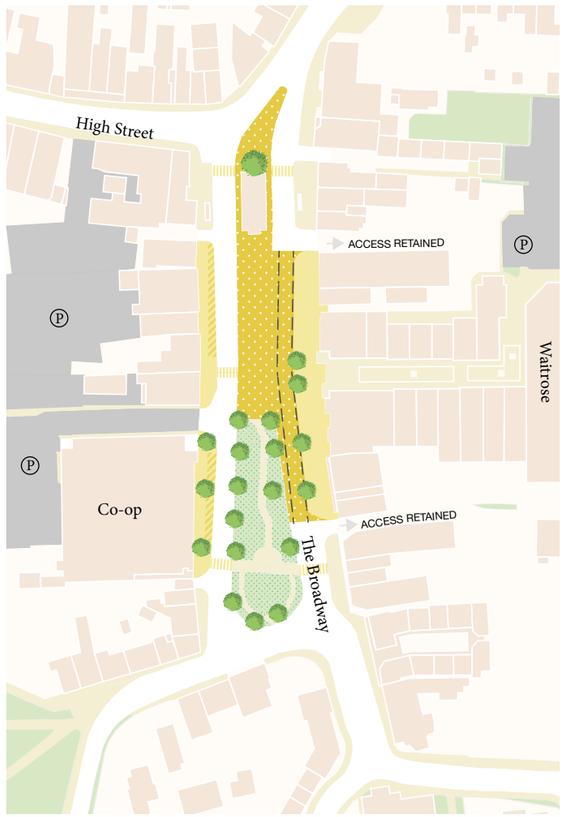
There are clearly implications for bus services which would need to be discussed with the operators. The option could allow for occasional bus movements to continue along the eastern edge, although this would limit the scale of planting and pedestrian space that could be provided. Alternatively, consideration could be given to moving the bus stop closer to the A4.

Option 4: 'Full Pedestrianisation'

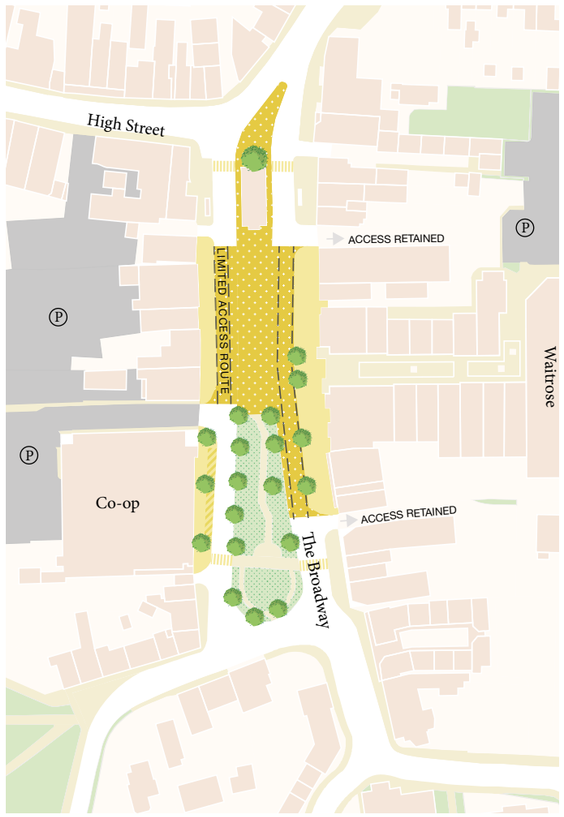
This option is the most ambitious, restricting through traffic on both sides of the Broadway and was proposed by a number of stakeholders at the January workshop. This allows a much stronger pedestrian connection to be made between the Kingsland Centre, The Broadway and the High Street, allowing for more green space, more event space and more spill-out space for businesses. Removing all through traffic will also have a more significant impact in reducing noise and fumes in the area.

This option raises complex access and servicing issues which this study has not had time to consider and resolve. The most obvious issues are the need to reroute bus services and the need to retain access to the Coop car park (for public parking, private parking and servicing to the Coop and other businesses).

Closure of the western edge (north of the Coop car park entrance) would require an alternative exit from the car park. This could potentially be created adjacent to the public house but would require reconfiguration of the car park and agreement of third-party landowners. Closure of the whole western edge would require a new access and exit from the car park and no obvious solution has been put forward to address this issue.



Option 3 / Partial Pedestrianisation



Option 4/ Full pedestrianisation

Potential areas to widen pavements by reducing on-street parking

Permanent space for market and events by removing central parking area

Optional carriageway retained to allow for buses or emergency vehicles

The Broadway & The Market

The central parking area on The Broadway is used for the Friday market, and other events. Removing the central parking area creates a space where complementary markets and events can be held at other times. Full or partial pedestrianisation of Broadway creates a larger space for expansion of the market and for larger events. It also allows for these to be extended into adjacent areas, such as the Kingsland Centre Arcade.

Extending the market offer into adjacent areas can help encourage pedestrian flow around the town and is closely linked to other potential projects below. Reducing clutter in the Kingsland Centre Arcade could allow market stalls to be extended into the shopping centre, or to be connected with pop up activities in the vacant units. Improving the physical environment in the Coop car park could create opportunities for street vendors, markets or music events to complement the Broadway market, encourage use of that car park and draw visitors towards the High Street.

The survey highlights that creating more space in The Broadway for markets and events, is a priority for young people. Whilst the market runs successfully on a Friday, Thatcham Town Council may wish to consider the timings of the markets so that more of the local (and visiting) community, including young people, who are likely to be attending school, college or at work at this time, are able to participate.

In order to have the best possible impact, the markets must be carefully curated and rooted in the character and identity of Thatcham. There's no one size fits all template for a successful market – the very fact that no two markets are exactly the same is one of the reasons why they're so popular. But there are some key elements that come together to form the foundations of a successful, thriving market event that appeals to all ages:

- Retail: Showcasing local independent designer-makers, artists, and craftspeople,
- Food & Drink: Fresh, local, and sustainable produce and an evolving street food offer,
- Entertainment: Live music & street performance,
- Workshops and/or interactive elements: E.g. hands-on, creative, and participatory workshops that engage the local community, and add an element of surprise that keeps visitors coming back.

The branding and promotion of a market is as important as the curation and it is important that all these areas are consistent in developing a strong visual identity and in their promotion on social media with high quality photography.



Precedent / Second Sundays Andover

Second Sundays is a new curated street market showcasing Andover's best local talent. Second Sundays brings together some of the best local producers, designer-makers, and artists in the region, alongside street food, live DJs, and free creative workshops, on the second Sunday of every month in Andover town centre.



Precedent / Holt Sunday Market

Holt Sunday Market is a curated monthly market, whereby on the first Sunday of each month April-Dec (every Sunday during July & August) the town centre is closed to vehicles for a day of Norfolk's best independent, makers and street food traders, alongside communal dining & performances.



Precedent / First Friday Margate

First Friday is a free, monthly celebration of creativity and community in Margate. The market partners with local independent shops, pubs, galleries and cafés, with many extending their opening hours to put on other events for the community and benefit from increased footfall. The markets' Instagram page doubles up as a useful community resource, listing creative events happening in and around the town.

Parking Strategy

The priority from an 'active travel' and sustainability perspective is to increase the number of people walking and cycling into Thatcham town centre. Reducing on-street parking in The Broadway is one important element in this strategy.

A key part of relocating on-street parking from The Broadway will be to ensure parking in other car parks is as attractive as possible to those needing to travel to Thatcham town centre by car. There are a number of aspects to this which need to be addressed:

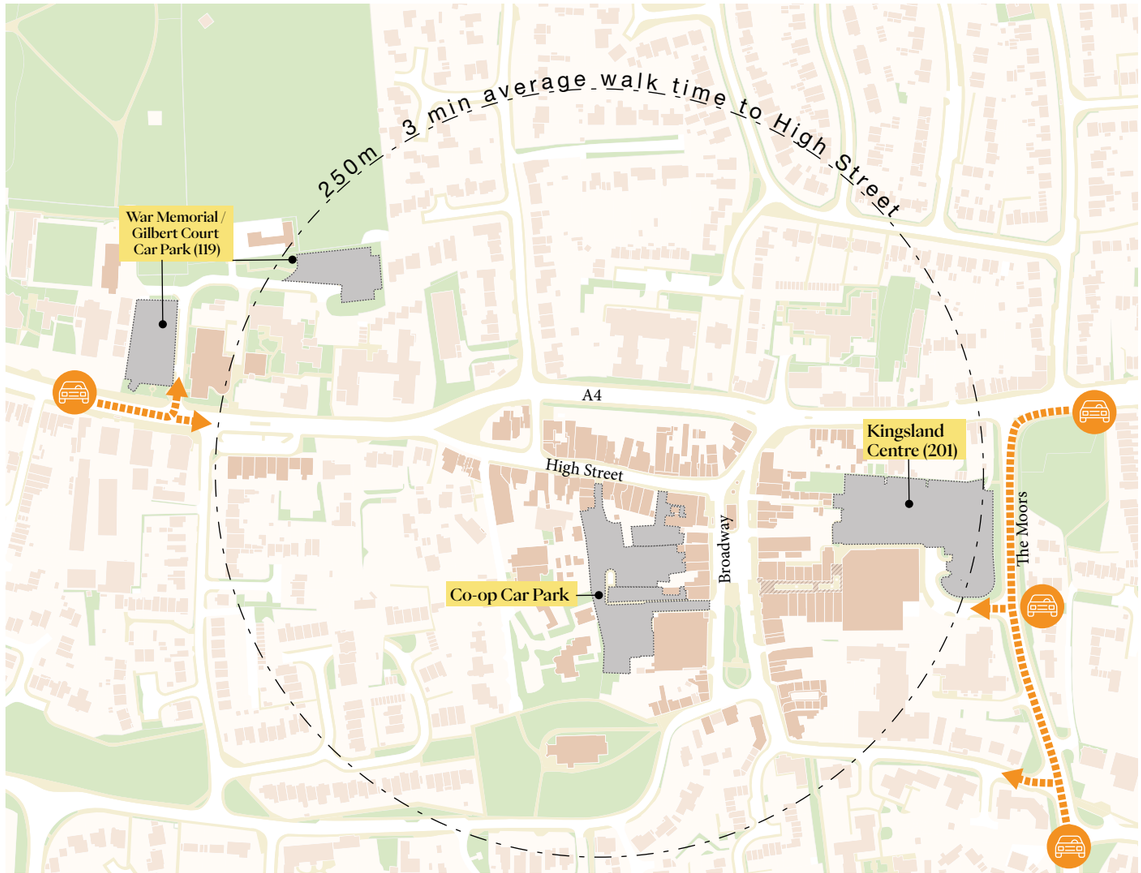
1. Car parks need to be clearly signed as town centre parking, particularly from the A4, but also from the south,
2. Signage needs to promote a consistent town centre 'brand' for all car parks,
3. Pricing needs to be consistent,
4. Payment methods need to be as consistent as possible across all the car parks, and
5. Pedestrian routes to The Broadway and High Street need to be attractive, safe and clearly signed.

Delivering a coordinated pricing strategy and payment strategy within the car parks was the highest priority for local residents, but cannot be delivered by West Berkshire Council on its own and would require coordination across a number of different landowners/ operators.

It is recommended that a preferred pricing approach be developed by West Berkshire Council for discussion with other landowners. This strategy should seek to agree consistent approaches to parking and pricing in the town centre which would include agreement on any free parking provision and be considered in the context of the desire to reduce car journeys and promote active travel. It is not recommended that any changes be made to the parking and pricing strategy for Thatcham High Street as the coordinated strategy would only apply to off-street car parking.

Improved signage, and coordinated signage can potentially be delivered by West Berkshire Council. Waitrose car park and Memorial Fields car park should be clearly identified as town centre car parks (e.g. rather than supermarket car park). Improving arrival to the Waitrose car park, and creating a sense of 'town centre arrival' needs to be coordinated with improvements to the A4 and to Turnfields Play Area (see separate project). Improving arrival to the Memorial Fields car park, and creating a 'town centre gateway' needs to be coordinated with improvements to the A4 and to Crown Meads shopping area (see separate project).

The final ingredient in encouraging use of these car parks is to make the pedestrian routes to The Broadway and High Street as obvious and attractive as possible. The key routes are indicated on the diagram below. Improvements to the Memorial Fields car park are considered under the Community Hub project. Improvements to the Waitrose car park route are considered under Kingsland Centre improvements. Improvements to the Coop car park route are considered as part of a separate project to improve the wider environment of that area of town.



Improved signage directing visitors to town centre car parks

Kingsland Centre

As noted in the Key Issues, Waitrose is a key anchor destination but the connection from Waitrose (and its car park) to The Broadway is suffering from a number of vacant units and is in need of environmental improvement. The 'public realm' in the arcade is cluttered and of varying quality. It creates a substantial visual and physical barrier which will deter some Waitrose shoppers from visiting The Broadway.

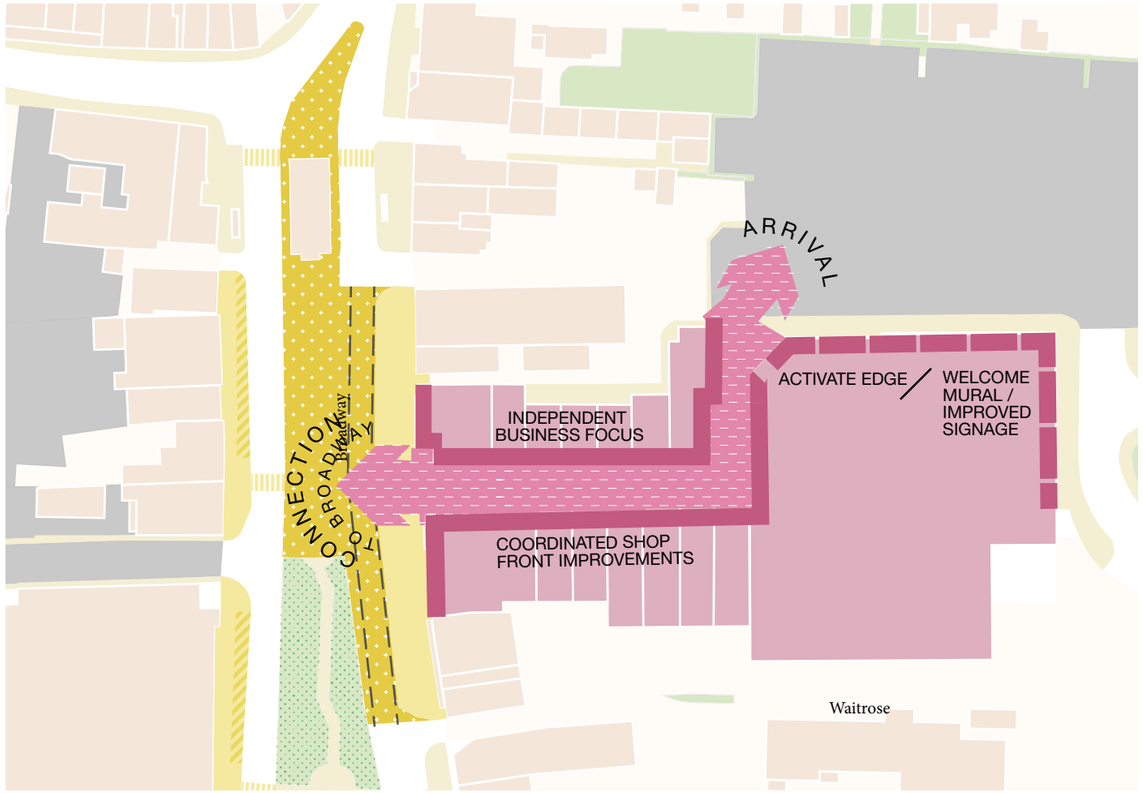
A key objective therefore is to improve the physical environment of the Kingsland Centre, to encourage stronger pedestrian flow into Broadway from the Kingsland Centre and Waitrose car park, and along High Street from The Broadway (and from the Coop car park).

The opportunity could be taken to improve the blank edges of the Waitrose store. The rear (eastern) elevation dominates the arrival from The Moors, and improved signage/mural welcoming visitors to the Kingsland Centre and to Thatcham would help address this. The side elevation fronting the car park could also be improved. Many stores provide windows and stool seating for shoppers to eat their lunch, creating a more active presence and introduction to the town centre. Improving the physical environment outside Waitrose, where pallets and other elements discourage flow towards The Broadway, should be a priority, as should removing the outdated and unattractive roof structure. Reducing the bollards and bins at the entrance to the Kingsland Centre from the car park, and redesigning the planters can reduce physical barriers and clutter. All these measures would improve visual links between Waitrose and The Broadway and create stronger pedestrian connections.

Within the Kingsland Centre, creating a stronger flow together with other improvements should help to improve demand for the vacant retail units. There are four vacant units in the Kingsland Centre at the time of our study, and these are in prominent locations impacting on the eastern and western entrances into the Arcade area. Occupying these units, even with temporary or pop up uses should be a priority.

Discussions have been held with the library about potentially occupying a unit but there are physical constraints and the cost of the lease is likely to be prohibitive. Alternative funding approaches would therefore have to be found, but the principle of the library with a cafe and other complementary uses (such as indoor markets for local businesses, or the Maker Space currently west of the town centre) taking a significant amount of space on this northern side of the arcade would help create a new 'brand' for the centre.

Coordinating outdoor seating provision for the businesses, together with coordinated shop front designs and possibly canopies to provide some shelter, will help with a rebranding of the Kingsland Centre to create a more coherent identity.





Precedent / Coordinated shopfront improvements



Precedent / Coordinated approach to outdoor seating and street planters



Precedent / Kingland Crescent, Poole

In 2020 centre owners Legal & General committed to provide 10 retail units to start-up and independent businesses with no rent or business rates to be paid for two years.

The initiative responds to the recent changes in consumer trends and the affect these changes have had on shopping centres across the UK. Tenants now include, a coffee shop and roasters, Fishmoger, surfboard café, house-plants and homewares store, zero waste shop, and art gallery.



Precedent / The Community Works, Oxford

The Community Works is vibrant hub right in the heart of Oxford. It combines a restaurant and cafe with a number of smaller creative community spaces, within a building left empty for almost 8 years.

Today, The Community Works is a place where the community can come together to eat and drink, but to connect, collaborate and create. It has also served to drive interest and footfall in the area, diversifying the offer and giving people more reasons to visit.



Precedent / Culture Palace, Enfield

Culture Palace is a temporary creative hub, housing a performance space, museum, bookshop, café and screening room in Enfield Palace Gardens shopping centre.

The pop-up space is hosting performances, films, workshops, live music and an array of arts activities.



Precedent / The Sovereign, Weston-super-Mare

In Weston-super-Mare, The Sovereign shopping centre, have transformed two vacant retail units into 30 mixed size studio spaces, meeting rooms and coworking workspace for local entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses.

Co-op Building & Car Park

The Co-op is a prominent building on The Broadway and an important use for the town centre. Unfortunately, the building's long frontage to The Broadway does little to animate the street, and the blank side elevation creates an unattractive route to the car park to the rear. This is reinforced by the very narrow pavement for pedestrians and the tendency for the route to flood.

The potential should be investigated for the Co-op building to be more intensively used, possibly consolidating the foodstore element into a smaller, more efficient footprint and enabling other uses to create more life on to The Broadway. A smaller foodstore, and use of upper floors, may allow opportunities for an indoor 'market' for small traders, for the library or other community uses to relocate into the town centre or for the creation of a new community venue, ideally located for events on The Broadway or in the car park to the rear. Ideally a new use for this building would be combined with opening up stronger pedestrian connections between The Broadway and Church Lane via The Old Priory, an attractive listed building.

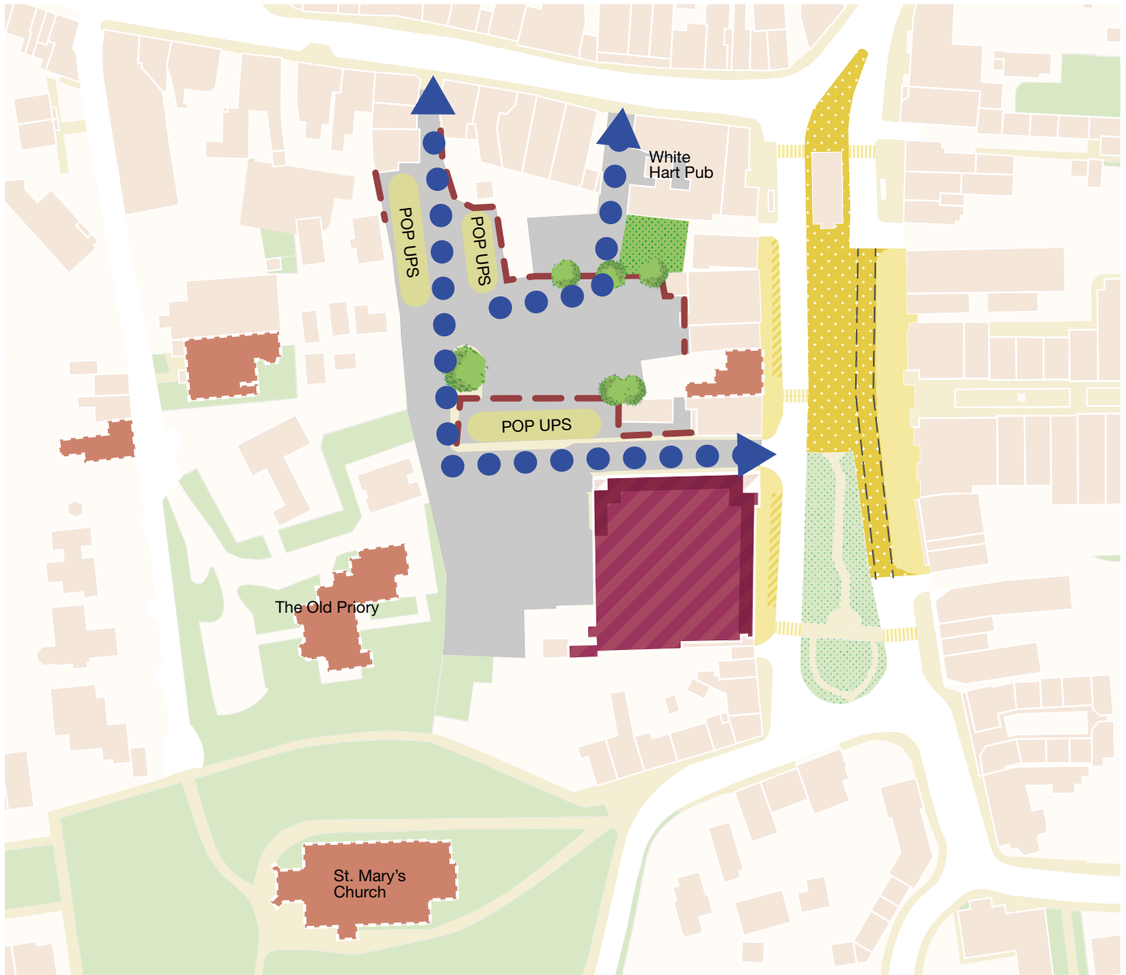
The car park to the rear is strategically well located for serving The Broadway and High Street. It has mature trees, brick walls, views to the Church and planting, and potential connections to the churchyard via The Old Priory. It is however undermined by the poorly maintained parking areas and fencing, untidy rear elevations, locations of trolley bays and the service yard of the Co-op foodstore. The layout, fencing and barriers and mix of public and private car parking can make it complicated to navigate as a visitor.

The range of private ownerships makes this a complex area to improve but if the above issues can be addressed this strategic area to the rear of The Broadway and High Street is potentially an attractive space for Thatcham. Priority should be given to simplifying the parking layout and payment arrangements. Ideally there should also be a clear demarcation between public and private car parking areas and the private parking should not create a barrier for those visiting High Street or The Broadway.

Suggestions were made that the pedestrian alleyway between the car park and High Street (adjacent to Thatcham kebabs) could potentially be converted into a vehicle exit from the car park. Creating an alternative exit could allow the route from Broadway to become a one-way entrance only into the car park which would allow for a wider footway to create a safer and more attractive route for shoppers. This alleyway would however be quite a narrow route, would create a difficult exit onto High Street and would undermine its role as a potentially attractive pedestrian connection to the shops and facilities on High Street.

This pedestrian route to the High Street should however be improved, currently it is not well signposted and is dominated by commercial waste bins, bollards, poorly maintained blank walls and private car parking areas. It could form an attractive alley, potentially enhanced with planters/seating and occasional pop up shops or food trucks. This would require the relocation of 5-6 private car parking spaces but would create an interesting and positive gateway to the High Street.

Consideration could be given to creating a new exit from the car park, for vehicles and pedestrians, adjacent to the White Hart public house. There is already a vehicular entrance to the small private car park, and this could potentially be extended and reconfigured to create a direct route (exit only) from the car park. An additional pedestrian connection to High Street could also boost footfall for those businesses, and could enable an attractive pub garden/ café garden area to be created to the rear of the White Hart and other businesses in what would be a sunny corner of the car park with views to the Church and beyond. Creating an alternative exit from the car park would also allow the western side of The Broadway (north of the car park entrance) to be pedestrianised for market day or other events without closing the car park. It is most likely that this alternative exit could be created if the size of the Co-op store was reduced, with a corresponding reduction in the size of the service vehicles needing to access the store and exit onto High Street.



Frontages improved to animate routes

Potential for Co-op building to be more intensively used

Improved pedestrian routes

Areas with improved boundary treatment

Opportunity for pub garden

POP UPs Opportunity to introduce pop up uses

Listed buildings



Precedent / The Branch Community Centre, Chipping Norton

A former NatWest in Chipping Norton is being transformed in to a versatile multi-purpose community space incorporating community hall & kitchen, public cafe, meeting and function rooms, rentable office space, and community garden. The project is led by The Branch Trust charity established by the local St Mary's Church.



Precedent / Frome

The monthly Frome Independent market activates the entire town centre, including town centre surface car parks, with live music, DJs, performance, creative workshops, activities, and market stalls.

Community Hub

The need for a new community facility was identified in the key issues section, and has been considered necessary for a number of years. There needs to be a comprehensive brief prepared, assessing all the potential facilities which need to be provided to cater for the increasing population of Thatcham. There are then two potential approaches for delivering such facilities:

1. to locate them in separate buildings and locations within the town centre to encourage circulation around the town, or
2. to co-locate as many services as possible within a central hub.

There are different benefits from each approach, and options for relocating the library are considered below for both the Coop building and the vacant units in the Kingsland Centre. The preference expressed through the workshops however was clearly to develop a large hub for community, arts, health, sport and recreation focused around the existing cluster of facilities and playing fields at Brownsfield Lane/Memorial Fields. This approach appears currently more deliverable, given the extent of land in public ownership, the availability of the vacant care home and the need to improve the existing library, health facilities and sports pavilion. Residential use may be necessary to provide funding for the scheme but should not dominate and the priority for this key site is to meet the community and leisure needs of the growing population.

For a new hub in this location to maximise the benefit to the town as a whole, it must be seen as being part of Thatcham town centre. The car parking must be clearly signed and visitors to the hub must be willing to walk to the town centre, and vice versa. If this happens it has the potential to significantly expand the perceived extent of Thatcham town centre, integrating the shopping area with the existing sports, community and health facilities and making the High Street a more central, and less isolated, feature of the town centre.

The project details will need to be developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders, but our strategy approach is based on the following principles:

- **A mixed-use community hub.** This is likely to comprise more than one building but there should be a coherence to the delivery of community, health, leisure, sports, youth, civic and cultural uses across the site.

- **Creating a new arts/community/sports facility.** This must be able to serve all the recreation areas and sports grounds, and create a new destination for Thatcham. This building needs to be located where it can replace the existing cricket pavilion which is a priority for the cricket club. Any uses should also reflect the existence of the Family Hub on Park Lane.

- **Creating an improved health & well-being facility.** This should improve the medical facilities at the site, and consider how these can be integrated with complementary health activities and treatments associated with the sports and leisure facilities.

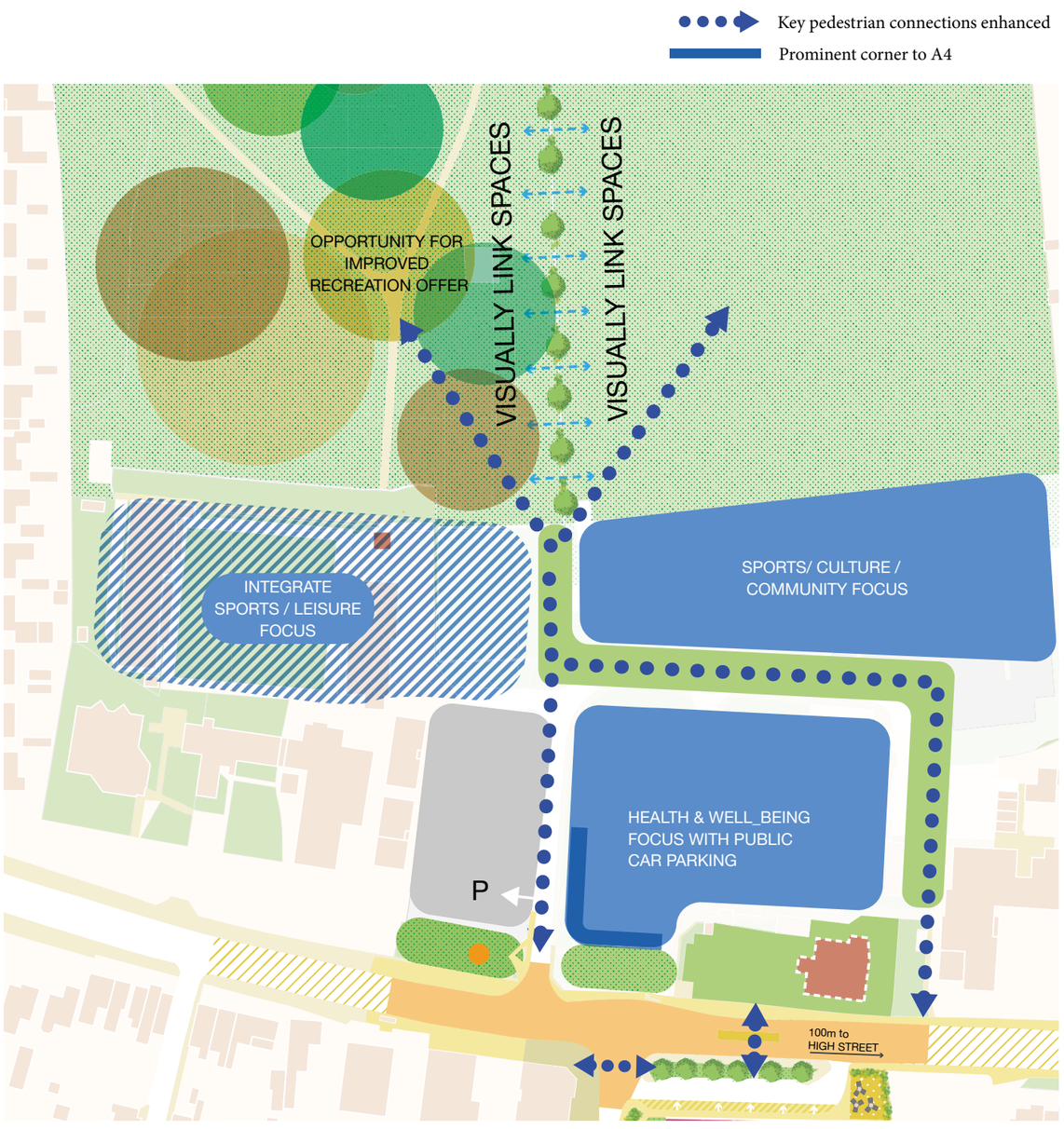
- **Creating a stronger street frontage and arrival in Thatcham**. A 'statement' building should be visible to passing motorists, and a 'town centre' use, such as a pharmacy, the library or other 'active' use, should have its frontage visible from the street. This should be coordinated with improvements to Crown Mead and the wider improvements to the A4.

- **Enhancing the existing gardens and green setting along the A4.** The strategy therefore considers the potential for a new green space connecting the Memorial Gardens with the dental surgery walled garden as a strong arrival feature into the town. Alternatively the 'statement building' could be located on the A4 frontage.

- **Improving the town centre car parking offer**. Looking to consolidate the car park spaces, to provide parking for the new hub and for visitors to the town centre, and improve pedestrian connections between the car parks and the High Street.

- **Improving walking and cycling links through the park.** Creating better connections to the town centre from residential areas to the north and west. Encouraging residents to leave their cars at home whenever possible and improving accessibility for those without access to a car.

- **Improving the leisure and recreation facilities within the park.** Promoting the use of Memorial Fields for a more diverse range of leisure & well-being uses. This could include introducing a running/cycle/BMX track around, the periphery, natural play and exercise features, more seating and picnic areas, as well as improving biodiversity and ecological habitats by introducing wilder areas of planting.

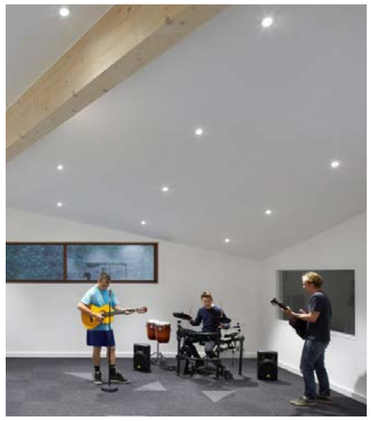


The precise scale and nature of the facilities to be provided as part of any proposed Community Centre are still to be determined. The example projects below illustrate a few of the approaches that have been delivered elsewhere.



Precedent / Sowerby Park, North Yorkshire

Sowerby Park is a 7.5 hectare green space at the centre of a growing community in North Yorkshire. The project, includes a 1km fitness trail, a sustainable drainage system, space for three high quality sports pitches, bike trails, and allotments. The emphasis was on creating a park that became a common place for the community, supported health and well-being whilst establishing a matrix of new and improved ecological habitats. The process involved significant consultation with local clubs, to ensure the facility met their needs.



Precedent / The Point Youth Centre, Tadley

The Point was opened in 2016. The project was instigated by TDCA to meet the needs of the youth of the Tadley area and was supported with substantial funding from Tadley Town Council and the Turbary Allotment Charity with additional support from Local Infrastructure Fund and the Greenham Common Trust.

The facility provides a safe environment for young people, with a cafe area, and a fully equipped music studio.



Precedent / The Larick Centre, Tayport

The Larick Centre has been quoted as 'a building by the community, for the community. The centre houses a large sports hall, a number of smaller halls, meeting spaces, and a café.

The spaces have been designed with flexibility in mind to cater for a multitude of community uses. The main hall's scale makes it suitable for sport, community and social events.

Crown Mead

Improving Crown Mead was identified as one of the key priorities in the survey results. This area should be seen as the western arrival into Thatcham town centre, it being less than 100m from the edge of the shops to the start of the High Street. The parade of shops serves an important local facility and is a potentially attractive terrace of properties, let down by a poor quality public realm dominated by parking, the signage and the treatment of individual shopfronts. Improving this could be a significant benefit to the town.

Any improvements to Crown Mead would of course need to be agreed with, and implemented by, the owners of the development. They would also need to be coordinated with the proposed A4 highway improvements in this area, which would potentially create better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Key measures for Crown Mead could include:

- A coordinated treatment of the shopfronts to create a distinctive local identity for Crown Mead and a sense of arrival into the town centre,
- Improved planting along the boundary wall to the A4,
- Improved treatment of the public space at the eastern end with planting and seating,
- Consideration to 'chevron' style parking to create more space for pedestrians along the shops and make the shopfronts more visible,
- Coordinate improvements at the Green Lane junction, to include physical improvements to the parking and external appearance of Wiltshire Tyres premises and improved pedestrian crossings between Green Lane, Crown Mead and the Memorial Field facilities.

This town centre gateway should be marked not just by the Crown Mead shops but by the civic, sports and community facilities opposite (including the medical centre and library) and the public car parking. It should announce the quality of the community and recreation facilities available, as well as the start of the retail and leisure offer, encouraging visitors to use this car park and walk to the town centre.

To maximise the benefits of improving Crown Mead, the gateway improvements should therefore be coordinated with improvements to 'The Beach', the space at the western end of the High Street which is prominently visible to pedestrians and motorists along the A4 at this point. Unfortunately the view does not currently 'sell' Thatcham town centre, with no activity or 'life' visible to draw visitors towards the High Street. Addressing this should be a priority and is identified under a separate project.



Precedent / Shopfront Improvements

Shopfront improvements have been made to 33 businesses across the 7 market towns of Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill, Shefford, Biggleswade, Potton and Sandy, as part of Central Bedfordshire's Market Towns Regeneration Fund.

High Street & The Beach

The public space at the western end of High Street is known as The Beach. Although it is not an entry point for vehicles it acts as an important gateway to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists, and will have a significant impact on the perceptions of the town centre for motorists passing through Thatcham. Improving its appearance has been identified as a priority in studies going back to 2009.

The public realm here is poor. It is an unattractive triangle in which to sit given its proximity to the A4, the fact that it has traffic on two sides and no activity on the third side of the triangle. The planting which is provided to shield people from the traffic creates a space which is not overlooked and feels potentially unsafe. There is therefore very little to encourage people to spend time in this area.

Environmental improvements are essential for this space, including a more structured and coordinated approach to signage and planting. It is considered however that more fundamental change is needed to address the structural problems of this public space.

The priority should be to ensure this space announces the High Street and encourages people to visit the town centre. Opening up the space to the restaurant behind could help achieve this. It would need to be combined with improvements to the external appearance of the restaurant building, removing some of the poor-quality single-story extensions, and considering a new glazed extension which would front the Beach and the A4. Other measures to announce the High Street would be coordinated with improvements to the A4, and new crossings as well as a mural/painted sign promoting the High Street along the blank building wall which is currently prominent on this approach.





Precedent / Settle Mural

During a series of co-design sessions young people in Settle voiced their desire for a mural in the town that respected heritage of Settle whilst also referencing a more contemporary vibe as a nod to the young people there. Created in contrasting pastel colours, the mural features four giant words 'soar', 'wandering', 'rise' and 'rolling', chosen by the young people as a reflection on their connection to their hometown.

A4 corridor

The 2009 Design Appraisal highlighted barriers to walking and cycling into the town centre, but the largest is clearly the A4/Bath Road, which separates around half the population from the core town centre shops and services. Our engagement workshops have also highlighted the importance of creating safer crossings to schools south of the A4, and improving routes for students walking or cycling to and from school along the A4.

The Design Appraisal, and update, also noted that "the appearance of the town also affects how visitors, and those who pass through it, perceive Thatcham", and again a priority identified through the engagement has been the need to improve perceptions along the A4. Reducing the barrier effect of the A4 must therefore be a key objective for Thatcham.

The overall aim of the A4 corridor strategy is to create the sense that motorists are passing through a town centre, and to adapt their driving behaviour accordingly. Local stakeholders, including representatives of Kennet School, would like to see motorists travelling at 20mph from Francis Baily school in the east to the Memorial Fields sports and community facilities in the west. This would assist in creating safer crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.

The details of the strategy clearly need to be developed with the West Berkshire Highways Team and with the wider community. This includes coordination with parallel initiatives to enhance the A4 for active travel users to the west of Crown Mead. A number of principles are set out below in order to guide this work:

- Physical and environmental changes to encourage lower traffic speeds
- Creating more space for pedestrians and cyclists along the A4
- Improving north-south crossings of the A4
- Creating strong gateways at the eastern and western arrival points
- Creating a series of town centre 'spaces' along the A4
- Improving the physical appearance of the town centre edge

At the eastern arrival a stronger 'village green' character can be created between Stoney Lane and Harts Hill Road, with landscape improvements and enhanced play facilities at the green, and a better setting for the historic Bluecoat School building. Slowing traffic and improving crossings here would help create safer routes to the Francis Baily school, Kennet School and leisure centre.

At the western arrival, a stronger gateway can be created around the Memorial Gardens and Crown Mead, coordinated with improvements to both these areas under separate projects.

In addition to these major gateways, three other key spaces/junctions have been identified where crossings can be improved and a stronger sense of 'place' created to promote the town centre:

- **Park Lane**

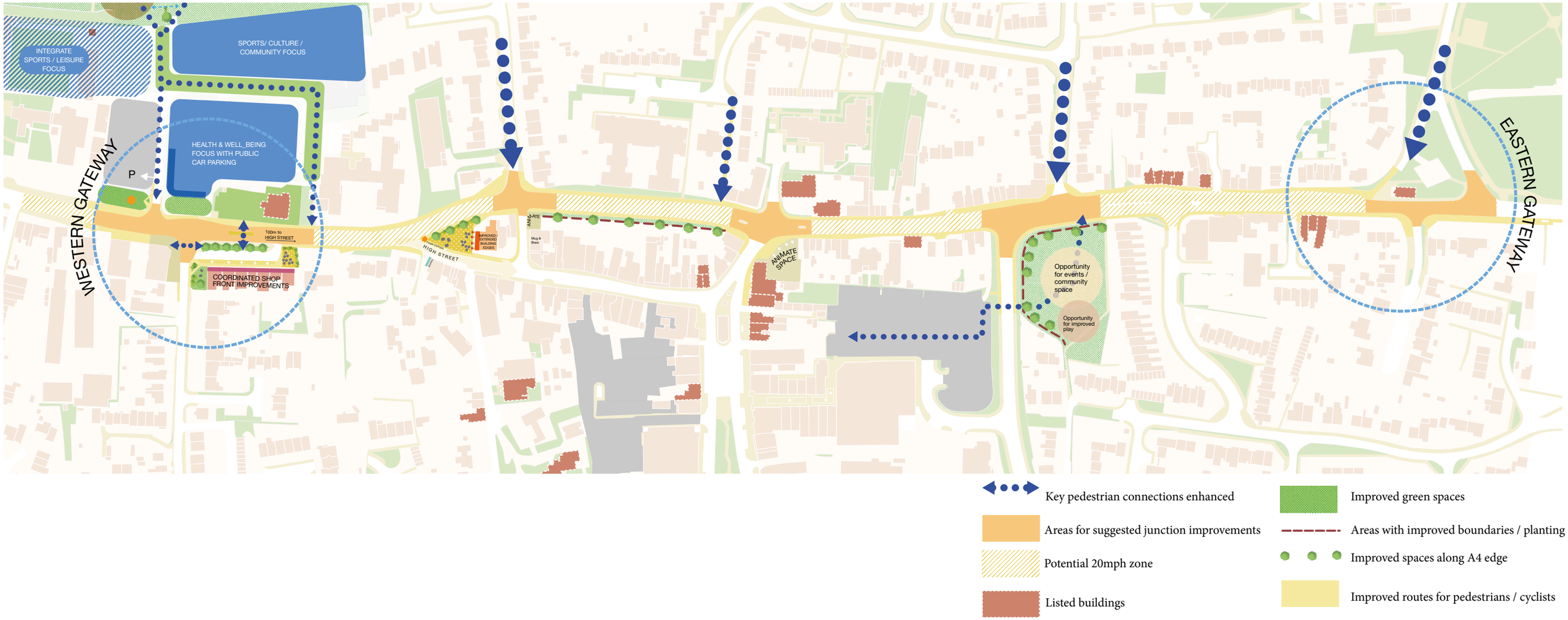
This is a pedestrian and vehicular route from the north, crossing into High Street, and with the Mug & Brew café fronting on to the A4/Chapel Street at this point. Consideration should be given to relocating the private parking which occurs in front of the Mug & Brew café, to create a better space for eating and drinking outside the café and a stronger sense of arrival from Park Lane. Other environmental improvements could include replacing the poor quality fencing, either by continuing the attractive brick wall or by introducing more planting to screen the parking and rear of the properties facing High Street. Removing some of the signage would reduce clutter along the A4/Chapel Street, and improving the side elevation and entrance into the hairdresser's unit opposite the café would help announce High Street to motorists.

- **The Broadway junction**

Reducing traffic circulation around the Broadway could also make it easier to introduce complementary improvements at the A4 junction. Limiting traffic movements would enable some turning movements to potentially be removed, and the width of the carriageway to be reduced. This in turn allows more space for pedestrians, for cyclists, and for planting and environmental improvements, a better setting for historic buildings and a stronger town centre sense of place.

- **Park Avenue/Turnfield Play Area**

Creating a town centre sense of arrival, with improved signage to the Kingsland Centre, will encourage motorists to use the Waitrose car park when visiting the town centre from the east. Improving pedestrian crossing at the junction, and creating routes through the Play Area into the Kingsland Centre will encourage residents to walk into town from the north and east of Thatcham.





Precedent / Croydon South Public Realm

The South End High Street Public Realm project re-establishes the high street as a place of enterprise and community. Improving movement and transport networks along the street to prioritise people over cars and rebuild a sense of civic pride in the heritage and character of the Borough.

Newly planted trees helped soften gathering areas and a variety of public art and graphics along the street brought a splash of colour and life to walls and windows.



Precedent / Clapham Old Town

Clapham Old Town in Lambeth saw the creation of a number of new, small public spaces and improved pedestrian crossings, aimed at reconnecting the Old Town with the adjacent neighbourhoods, improving access to public transport and making walking and cycling more appealing. Traffic speeds were reduced by narrowing carriageways and introducing twenty mph zones making it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross.

05

Action Plan

This section outlines delivery mechanisms for the projects described in Section 4. It considers the process for working up the projects in more detail, the stakeholders that should be involved in that process, the potential timescale for design, engagement and delivery together with possible funding options that could be explored.

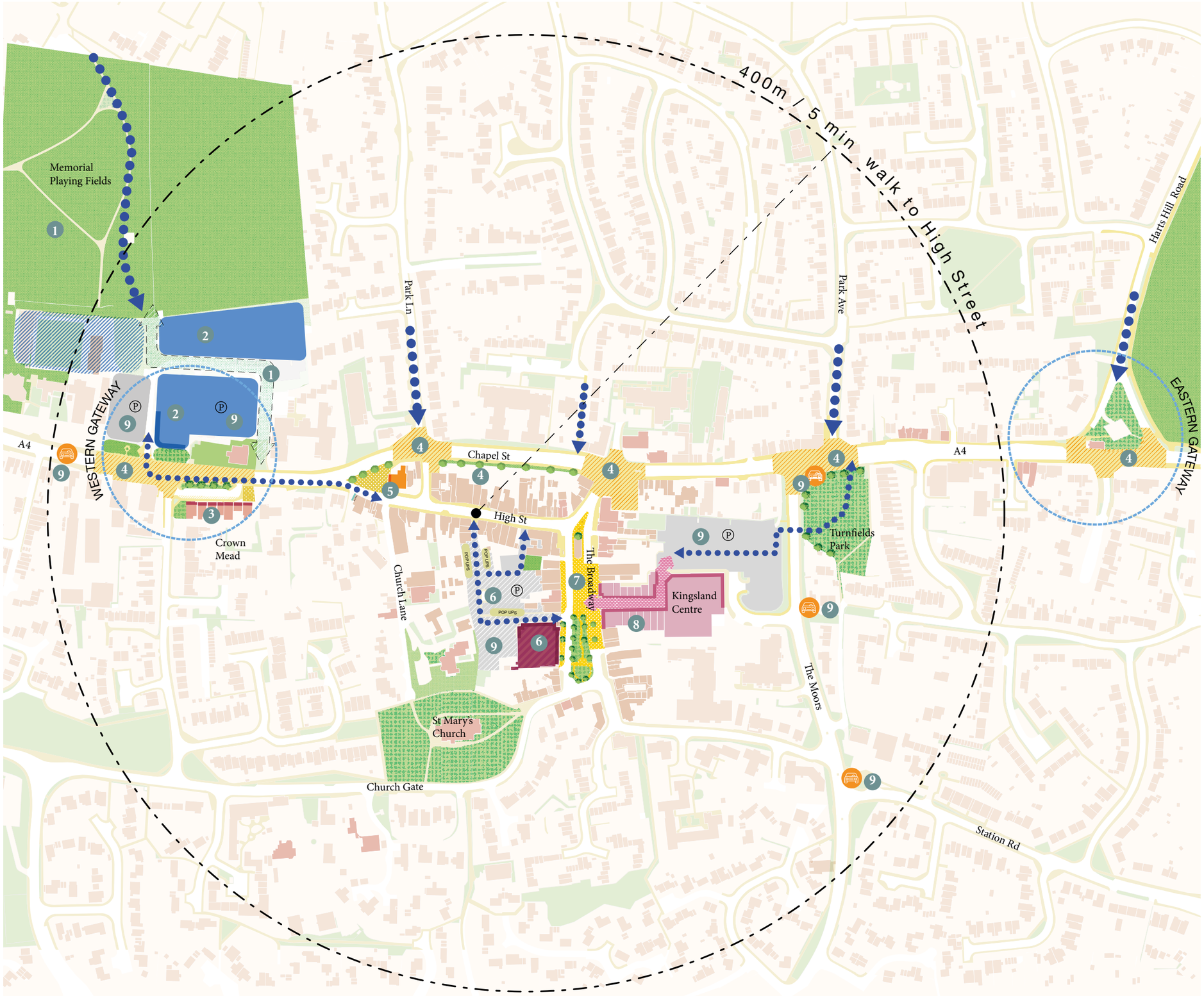
The Action Plan is designed to help West Berkshire prioritise its future capital funding programmes, to help identify priorities for allocation of CIL funds, and to support bids to external funding bodies. It is also designed to help coordinate activities within Thatcham so as to maximise value for money from the funding allocated.

A variety of projects are outlined which are considered to reflect the views expressed through the on-line consultation and stakeholder workshops, and which address the priority issues identified. Together they present a coherent strategy to improve Thatcham over the course of the West Berkshire Local Plan period to 2036.

It should be emphasised that this is not put forward as a 'blueprint' for Thatcham. This is an ambitious Strategy for the future of Thatcham. The Action Plan present different options as to how the projects can be taken forward, and the preferred course of action should be determined by the town itself.

The Action Plan identifies how the projects proposed meet the priorities identified by local stakeholders through the engagement process but more detailed design work is needed before these can be delivered. It is essential that this engagement continues as the projects are worked up and allows local stakeholders to shape the more detailed proposals.

The focus of the Action Plan is on short-term and medium-term proposals that can be implemented over the next 3-5 years but there are some projects that may not come forward until later in the plan period. For many projects, particularly the A4 improvements, a phased approach is likely to be necessary to reflect the availability of funding. For other projects, such as Broadway improvements, a trial approach is recommended to test the benefits of the proposals without incurring significant expenditure and allowing the detailed designs to be refined. They are therefore projects that will be delivered over both the short-term and medium-term, but which elements of the projects come forward in the short term will be determined by the local community and by the availability of funding.



Priority Areas for Change

1. **Memorial Field & Brownsfield Cricket Ground** - Improved sports, recreation, and community facilities as well as pedestrian connections between adjacent residential areas and town centre
2. **New Community Hub** incorporating facilities for community, arts, health, sports & recreation
3. **Crown Mead** - Public realm and shop-front improvements
4. **A4 corridor improvements** - environmental changes to encourage lower speeds, improved crossings and space for pedestrians and cyclists, improved gateways, arrival points and public realm enhancements
5. **High Street & 'The Beach'** - Improved public realm & wayfinding to announce the High St and arrival to Thatcham Town Centre from the A4
6. **Coop building & Car Park** Improvements to animate space and routes including improved building use and public realm enhancements to connect to Broadway and High St as well as exploring opportunity for new uses.
7. **Creating a 'village green like' quality at the Broadway** through traffic management, improved spaces for pedestrians and enhancing the space for events and community use.
8. **Kingsland Centre Improvements** - Shop-front, wayfinding & public realm improvements
9. **Parking Strategy** - improved arrival signage and consistent approaches to branding, pricing and connections to town centre.

Short Term Priority Projects

Improving existing car parks

Making car parking less confusing is a major issue for Thatcham stakeholders (scoring 7.5). Addressing this issue would have the benefit of encouraging visitors by car to use the less busy car parks and to reduce the pressure on The Broadway in particular, contributing to a reduction in the amount of circulating traffic searching for a space in the heart of the town.

Proposed measures included:

- Consistent approach to pricing, length of stay and payment across four main car parks
- Coordinated branding and signage to create clear town centre identity
- Stronger signage to Waitrose 'town centre' car park via The Moors
- Consideration of single consolidated car park at Brownsfield Road/Gilbert Court as part of redevelopment
- Improvements to quality of Coop car park and pedestrian connections to Broadway and High Street

Improvements to the car parking at Brownsfield Road/Gilbert Court would be complemented by enhancements to the A4, particularly in terms of better pedestrian crossing.

Stakeholder Priorities

Stakeholders identified the following as priority projects, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

- Creating a single-tier parking policy across all car parks (8.5)
- Encouraging greater use of the Coop car park (7.7)
- Encouraging greater use of the Brownsfield Road car parks (7.3)

Indirectly this project also supports a number of wider stakeholder objectives by reducing the amount of traffic in the Broadway.

Delivery costs and funding

Adopting a coordinated pricing strategy is not strictly a capital project and no budget is identified for this. It should however be accompanied by coordinated signage and 'branding' of the Thatcham town centre car parks, as part of the marketing of the town and welcoming visitors.

Assume 6 directional 'wayfinding' signs and a further 6 welcome/information boards at a cost of £5,000 per sign indicates a budget of around £50-60,000. Allowing a figure representing around 20% of that for design (approx. £10,000) plus a further £30-40,000 for installation gives an overall budget estimate of the order of £100,000 for signage.

Further improvements, including consolidation of the car parking and additional signage would need to be made to the Brownsfield Road car park as part of the wider Community Hub redevelopment.

Improvements to the Coop car park would also include planters/parklets and pop up shops located to enhance the pedestrian connections to High Street and The Broadway. Pop up shops are assumed to be provided by the operators and no cost has been allowed for these. Allowing for 3-4 planters (estimated at £6,000 each) or parklets (estimated at £10,000 each) to be provided by the Council, suggests a potential budget of up to £50,000. This would require negotiation with private landowners on the potential relocation within the car park of individual parking spaces and bin stores for commercial or residential uses. These should all be capable of being relocated in the future to allow for a more comprehensive remodelling of the car park, and the possibility of a new pedestrian or vehicular access adjacent to the White Hart public house.

Consideration could be given to using CIL contributions or West Berkshire Highways Funding to fund the signage and wayfinding project as part of the wider package of improvements proposed along the A4.

Action and timescale

The objective should be to coordinate implementation of the new parking strategy with the trial of the new Broadway public realm improvements (identified for Summer 2024). Consultation on the proposed parking strategy and pricing mechanism (including the extent of any free parking periods) should also be coordinated with consultation on the options for improving The Broadway.

This project cannot be delivered by West Berkshire Council alone. A coordinated approach to pricing requires the agreement and support of a number of private landowners and car park operators. It should be a priority in the next 3-6 months to identify and contact the relevant operators and discuss the strategic benefits of a single, coherent pricing strategy as part of a wider strategy to promote the underused car parking areas. Preparation of a business plan could be beneficial, indicating how a coordinated approach could benefit these operators and bring more income in the longer term for these underused car parks.

Short Term Priority Projects

The Broadway

A series of options were presented in the Strategy section which could meet the desire of the community to redesign and improve The Broadway. The most ambitious but potentially deliverable option was considered to be Option 3, which includes:

- Removing central parking to create more social and event space
- Creating a permanent space for more frequent markets
- Restricting through traffic on eastern edge to reduce traffic circulation and fumes (potentially retaining bus access)
- Removing barriers between green space and Kingsland Centre
- Widening pavements to allow cafés to spill out into Broadway
- Improved green space, additional seating and tree planting

Stakeholder Priorities

Improving the Broadway addresses a large variety of stakeholder objectives, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

- Creating opportunities for independent and start-up businesses (8.5)
- Encouraging shoppers to visit Broadway and High Street (8.4)
- Creating a village centre like quality at The Broadway (8.1)
- Improving parks and green spaces (8.0)
- Encouraging people to spend longer in the town centre (7.8)
- Creating a dedicated space for markets and events (7.5)
- Attracting more cafés, restaurants & independent retail (7.3)
- Create more space in Broadway for cafés, markets, seating and events (7.2)
- Widen pavements for shoppers and create more outdoor space for cafés and businesses (6.7)
- Reducing noise and pollution of traffic (6.3)

Delivery costs and funding

The scale of a permanent scheme in the Broadway, with a dedicated market space, is comparable to the improvements delivered in Romsey town centre, Market Place, at a cost of £3m. Consideration should therefore be given to the need for a budget of at least this order of magnitude to deliver the level of improvements sought by stakeholders. If the scheme was delivered with improvements to the A4 Broadway junction then costs would be increased further.

Consideration should be given to the use of CIL funding to deliver improvements at Broadway, address the social and community needs of the growing population, the need for additional public space and the need to address the potential impact of additional traffic. Improvements at The Broadway could be coordinated with improvements to the A4 Broadway/ Chapel Lane junction, potentially opening up other West Berkshire Council funding sources as well as LEP funding. The social, community, economic and cultural benefits of the project could potentially open up opportunities for funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund or from Greenham Trust.

Action and timescale

It should be a priority in the next 12 months to maintain the momentum and continue to engage with stakeholders to agree and trial a preferred option. Implementing a trial approach will enable the preferred option to be tested and refined before design costs and significant capital expenditure is incurred. A priority issue should be to consider with bus operators the implications of any redesign of the eastern side of The Broadway on bus services and to engage in discussions about any implications for taxi drivers.

The trial should last at least 8 weeks to allow time for the traffic and business impacts to be assessed. Ideally, it is recommended that the trials take place in July and August to maximise opportunities for events and activities to be held during the trial period and to maximise use of the space in the evening.

Given that local elections are being held this May, it is probably more realistic to target Summer 2024 for this trial period. This allows a period of 3-6 months to engage with the stakeholders and agree the preferred option (end of 2023), plus a further 6 months to plan and publicise a series of events.

Following the trial a period of 12 months for design refinement, tendering and construction would allow for the improvements to be completed by the end of 2025. Ideally, this timescale would also allow for completion of the Broadway improvements to be coordinated with refurbishment of the Kingsland Centre (see below). It should be noted however that delivery of additional major schemes within this timescale could also put pressure on the delivery capacity of the West Berkshire Highways teams.

Short Term Priority Projects

Kingsland Centre

A series of potential improvements were presented for the Kingsland Centre, including:

- Removing arcade roof and declutter the internal arcade to improve integration with The Broadway
- Coordinated shop fronts and street furniture design to create stronger local identity
- Promoting small and independent businesses within the arcade to reduce vacant premises
- Small business or community uses to reduce impact of vacant former Lloyds building.

Improvements were also suggested to the Waitrose store including signage/murals to enhance arrival from The Moors and glazing along the car park elevation to bring activity to this edge.

Stakeholder Priorities

Improving the Kingsland Centre potentially addresses a number of stakeholder objectives, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

- Creating opportunities for independent and start-up businesses (8.5)
- Encouraging shoppers to visit Broadway and High Street (8.4)
- Providing better community facilities in the town centre (8.0)
- Encouraging people to spend longer in the town centre (7.8)
- Attracting more cafés, restaurants & independent retail (7.3)
- Having more activity in the evening (7.3)

It also has the potential to create a meeting place in the town centre for young people (a proposal which scored 7.2 in the survey findings).

Delivery costs and funding

The cost, and funding, of improvements to the Kingsland Centre can vary according to the level of ambition. At its most ambitious, with improvements to the public realm, shopfronts and remodelling of units to make provision for community uses, workspace, pop-ups and independent businesses, the scale of project is comparable to improvements delivered in Kingsland Crescent, Poole. The physical improvement of around 10 small units, together with rent free periods, was estimated in Property Week to cost around £600,000 with additional funding for events and activities. Additional costs may also be incurred to remove the canopy at the Kingsland Centre and consideration could also be given to refurbishment of a vacant unit for a new use, such as community café/workspace/youth venue.

The Kingsland Centre is of course in private ownership so the cost of any improvements should in the first instance be borne by the owners. However there may be beneficial conversations to be had around funding where physical improvements and new occupiers bring wider social, economic and community benefits to Thatcham. Alongside private funding from the Kingsland Centre owners, delivery of small business space, community or arts uses could open up funding opportunities from central government grant schemes or other local sources, for example Greenham Trust.

Works undertaken by the owners, and any events and activities, should ideally be complemented by WBC investment in the surrounding public realm, particularly The Broadway.

Action and timescale

It should be a priority in the next 6 months to continue the discussions with owners and managers of the Kingsland Centre to identify a strategy for occupying the vacant units, either permanently or temporarily. Clearly the prime responsibility for this, and the associated costs, lies with the owners. West Berkshire Council could however also give consideration to what uses it could potentially relocate to help fill these vacancies.

The objective should be for at least a temporary solution for occupying vacant units to be in place for Summer 2024 whilst the trial scheme is operating for The Broadway. The priority should be to ensure the vacant Lloyds bank unit is occupied with a temporary café, pop up retail or events venue which can make use of the extra space on Broadway. Discussions have been held with the Library but we understand that there are financial and logistical difficulties with taking a single unit such as the former Lloyds bank unit. A more comprehensive approach could however bring strategic benefits from a town centre location.

It should be a priority to engage with younger people in Thatcham to help determine the best temporary or longer term use of these units, building on the involvement of Kennet School.

Occupying these units should be combined with removal of the canopy and other clutter which would allow the 'Arcade' to open up onto the new space at The Broadway with more external seating for Costa Coffee. Again, ideally this should be in place for the operation of the trial scheme for the Broadway in Summer 2024.

A more comprehensive scheme should be designed in parallel with the improvements to the Broadway, and put in place before the new space opens in Summer 2025.

Short Term Priority Projects

Crown Mead and A4 gateway

Improving the appearance of Crown Mead shopping parade was seen as a priority in the survey responses, scoring 7.8. Potential measures identified in the strategy section included:

• A coordinated treatment of the shopfronts to create a distinctive local identity for Crown Mead and a sense of arrival into the town centre,
• Improved planting along the boundary wall to the A4,
• Improved treatment of the public space at the eastern end with planting and seating

Stakeholder Priorities

Improving the appearance of Crown Mead shopping parade was seen as a priority in the survey responses, scoring 7.8 overall and 8.3 with U25s. It would also help deliver a priority project of improving the A4 to highlight town centre facilities and provide a more appropriate setting for Thatcham's historic buildings. (which scored 7.5)

The project also has the potential to assist in delivering other objectives including reducing the impact of A4 and making it safer for people to cross (which scored 6.7).

Delivery costs and funding

The priority purpose is to improve the sense of arrival, and to make this area an attractive gateway into Thatcham town centre. To achieve this the improvements to Crown Mead have to be coordinated with the wider improvements proposed to the A4 in this area. In particular it was noted that the improvements should be coordinated with improvements at the Green Lane junction, to include physical improvements to the parking and external appearance of Wiltshire Tyres premises and improved pedestrian crossings between Green Lane, Crown Mead and the Memorial Field facilities.

The cost, and funding, of the public realm elements of the project can be minimised by incorporating into the A4 improvement scheme. A more comprehensive scheme for reducing traffic speeds and improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in this area is already being prepared by West Berkshire Council. It is recommended therefore that this also consider the potential redesign of Crown Mead as an integrated scheme.

Crown Mead is of course in private ownership so the cost of any improvements should in the first instance be borne by the owners and occupiers. Shopfront improvement grants could however be made available to help encourage improvements to the buildings, and such grants are often in the region of £5,000 per shop.

Action and timescale

Consultation on a new design for the A4 is expected to occur later in 2023. It is recommended that the scheme should be promoted as the first stage of a comprehensive strategy to address the A4, reduce traffic speeds, improve crossings and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and improve perceptions of the town centre. Timescale and budget to be discussed with WBC officers.

Medium Term Projects

A4 corridor improvements

The strategic objective for the A4 corridor is to create a sense of passing through the town centre, not bypassing the town centre. The aim should be to slow traffic with a preferred speed of 20mph. A series of potential interventions are proposed at key points to help achieve these objectives:

• High Street arrival (The Beach and Park Lane),
• Broadway arrival (junction of Chapel Lane and Broadway),
• Turnfield Park arrival (junction of The Moors),
• Eastern Gateway (Stoney Lane/Harts Hill Road junctions)

Stakeholder Priorities

Improving the appearance of the A4 was a stakeholder priority project, scoring 7.5. Improving the High Street arrival (at The Beach) scored 6.6 and slowing traffic to 20mph / creating safer crossings scored 6.4.

Delivery costs and funding

The cost estimates for improvements to Crown Mead area of the A4 have been discussed with WBC Highways officers. The initial budget was around £260,000 but construction costs have increased and a budget closer to £500,000 may now be more appropriate. This might also allow wider improvements to be made to the Green Lane junction and associated public realm. The cost of the Broadway junction improvements should be considered within the wider improvements to the Broadway (see above). Other junction improvements are more likely to focus on public realm improvements rather than junction changes, and a budget of around £250,000 should be considered for phased delivery of these improvements in partnership with private landowners.

Action and timescale

The immediate priority for West Berkshire Highways is delivery of the improvements around Crown Mead which is planned to be completed by Summer 2024. Once this is delivered consideration can be given to the delivery of other improvements along the A4 corridor.

It is recommended that the design of improvements to the Chapel Road/Broadway junction be coordinated with delivery of the preferred scheme for The Broadway. The nature of the preferred solution at The Broadway will inform the degree to which traffic movements can be limited at the Chapel Road junction and in turn inform the scale of change which can be made to the junction. The potential for improvements to this junction should therefore be considered in the next 6-9 months to inform consultation on the trial option for The Broadway. Implementation of the scheme should ideally be coordinated with delivery of improvements to The Broadway by the end of 2025.

Medium Term Projects

Brownsfield Road Community Hub

Delivery of improved community facilities has been a policy objective for Thatcham for a number of years, and remains a priority. The preferred location identified by stakeholders for such a facility is at Brownsfield Road, adjacent to the existing health facilities, library and sports facilities at Memorial Park. The brief for a new community hub needs to be defined in more detail than was possible in this study, but potential uses could include community, health, leisure, sports, civic and cultural uses.

Stakeholder Priorities

Delivering a new community hub with new library, health facilities arts space, meeting space and café was one of the top priorities in the survey responses, scoring 7.7 overall and 8.0 with U25s. Improving sports, recreation and community facilities around Memorial Field and the cricket ground was also a priority, scoring 7.5.

A comprehensive approach to a new community hub in this area can potentially also help deliver other priority projects including encouraging use of the car parks in this location (7.3) and creating a meeting place for young people (7.2).

Delivery costs and funding

The cost of delivering a Community Hub is obviously hugely variable – and dependent on the range of uses that it should provide and the scale of ambition for the town. A new sports pavilion and community facilities at Falkland Cricket Club (identified by the workshop as a suitable exemplar) was recently delivered at a cost of £1.5m. The Aveley Community Hub in Thurrock included a new library, café and community facilities and was delivered for around £2m. In contrast a community hub in Kings Lynn has recently been estimated at £12m – with the project described as follows:

"The hub will be a state-of-the-art fully accessible community and learning space in the centre of town. It will play host to not only the library and associated facilities, but a range of Norfolk County Council services and programming from Adult Learning and partners – curated specifically to the needs of King's Lynn residents".

This is a significant project for Thatcham, and should be a priority for CIL (or Section 106) funding to meet the social and community needs from long term housing growth. There should also be other West Berkshire funding streams available to deliver the range of facilities that could be needed. Other funding opportunities could include Sport England and Greenham Trust as well as wider opportunities from Shared Prosperity Fund, future Levelling Up Funding rounds or comparable opportunities. The priority for this area should be to deliver the range of facilities needed by the community, but if necessary there may also be scope for housing development to help meet some of the associated costs.

Action and timescale

Discussions on the range of uses to be delivered by the Community Hub should be undertaken with key service providers, with local stakeholders and with the wider community over the next 6-9 months. Key decisions to be made include:

- Preferred location and size of the library (discussions with officers indicate that there is a need to double the size of the existing library)
- Scale of new/improved health facilities required to serve the expanded population
- The potential for coordinating provision of health, wellbeing and sports facilities in this location
- Feasibility of new community arts/cultural space within Thatcham.

A design brief and business plan should then be prepared in the first half of 2024 that incorporates the existing health facilities, sports facilities, Town Council offices (and adjacent WBC car park), library and former care home. Discussions should also be held with the owners and operators of the Brownsfield Road car park as to whether this can or should be included.

It is anticipated that a phased delivery of the facilities may be necessary, and whilst it is a 'hub' it is likely to be housed in more than one building. Temporary facilities for the library and health services may be required whilst the existing facilities are redeveloped, and this could require short term use of the parking areas or demolition of the care home to create space for temporary structures.

Thatcham Town Centre Strategy

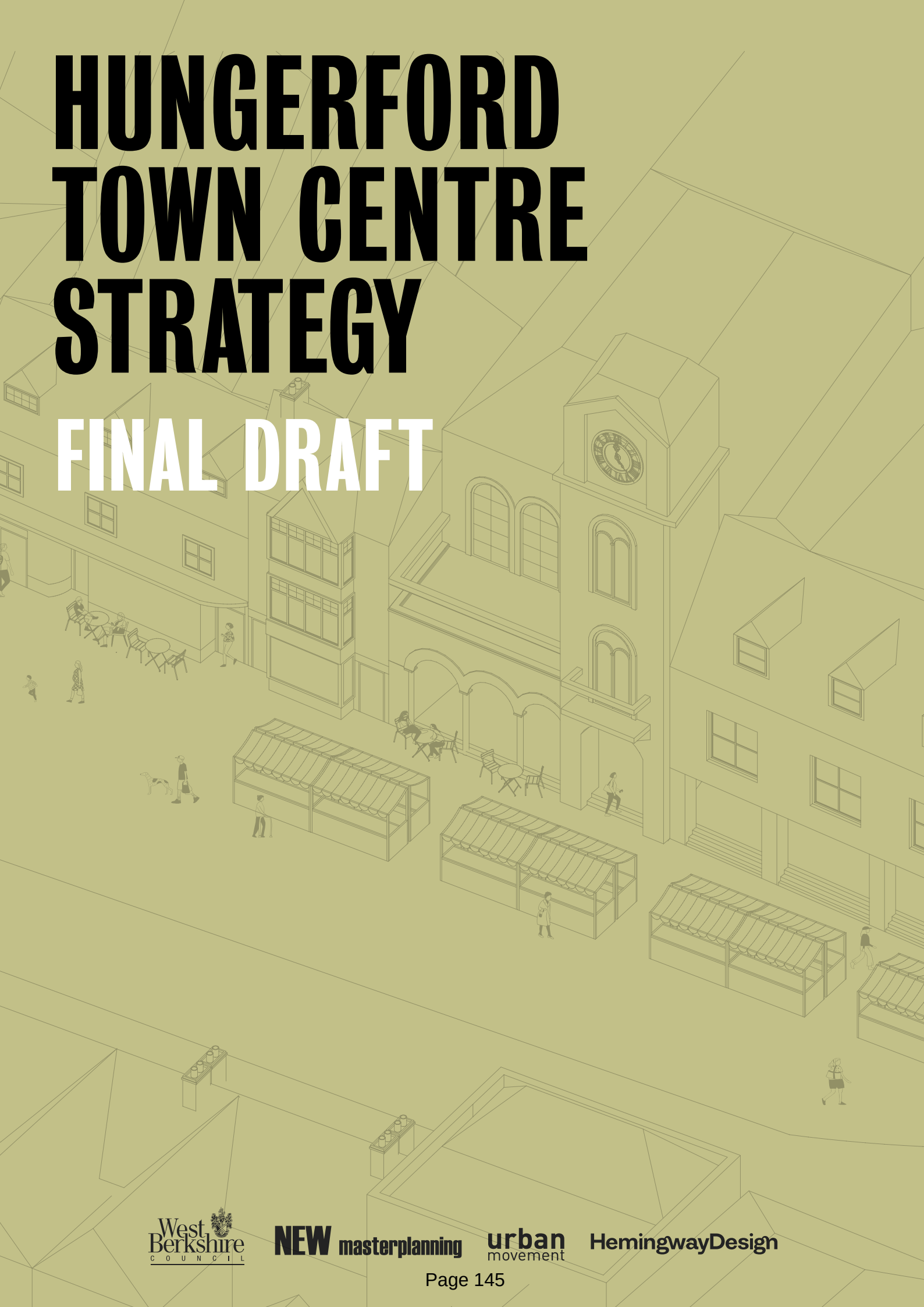
Final Draft

West Berkshire Council
NEW masterplanning
urban movement
HemingwayDesign

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HUNGERFORD TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

FINAL DRAFT



West Berkshire Council

NEW masterplanning

urban movement

HemingwayDesign



Study Area

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01
Purpose and Process

Purpose

This report was commissioned to guide and support the future of Hungerford town centre, in the context of continuing growth of the town, the preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan and continuing change in what society expects and demands from our town centres.

The purpose of this study has been to develop a set of projects and actions that will enable Hungerford town centre to adapt and respond to these changes and to thrive socially and economically. Whilst this report considers Hungerford it should be noted that it has been undertaken in parallel with a similar study for Thatcham. This dual process has enabled consideration of the similar issues that they both face as market towns, to view the different ways in which they are used and perceived by their local communities, and to identify the distinctly different ways in which they need to respond.

Process

Perhaps most importantly, successful market towns are driven by their local communities, and through a 'bottom-up' approach to change that creates a distinctive local identity.

This creates a loyal and committed local catchment. It is attractive to visitors seeking to discover something different from the standard High Street. It creates political consensus and helps support external funding bids. The studies for both Hungerford and Thatcham have therefore been heavily focused on local engagement, through walkabouts, workshops and on-line surveys.

The recommendations within this report are directly linked to the outcomes of this engagement, and the priorities for change. They present a strategy of action, but not a rigid blueprint for its future, enabling Hungerford to continue to evolve and adapt. In some areas there is considerable agreement within the town on how to proceed. In other areas more work will be needed to establish a consensus. Whilst this report represents the outcome of this particular study, it must therefore be seen as the start of a process that continues to involve the community of Hungerford in the development and implementation of the priority projects their town needs and deserves.

02
Key Issues





This study has had regard to the following existing documents and reports:

- Hungerford Neighbourhood Development Plan 2036 Aims & Objectives
- Hungerford Neighbourhood Development Plan 2036 Consultation Responses
- Hungerford Town Plan Refresh 2013
- Western Berkshire Retail & Leisure Commercial Assessment 2016

This existing information has been supplemented by a walkabout with officers and members from West Berkshire Council, members of Hungerford Town Council, representatives of Town & Manor and other stakeholders, together with our own analysis and review of the town centre. We have not sought to prepare a formal 'health-check' for Hungerford town centre, but to proceed as quickly as possible to identify the key issues facing the town centre, test these with stakeholders and local residents and propose potential solutions.

The following key issues were identified through the review of existing information, walkabouts with stakeholders and the first stakeholder workshop:

- Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre
- Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure
- Improving space for indoor and outdoor markets and events
- Increasing opportunities for independent cafés, restaurants, retail, & other start-up businesses
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street
- Improving walking routes to the High Street from car parks and rail station
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre
- Integrating community facilities within the town centre

Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage

Hungerford's strength as a visitor and tourist destination, including the antiques trade, means that it supports more shops, cafés and restaurants than would otherwise be the case for a town with its population. 89% of respondents to the Town Plan refresh stated that it was important or very important to "Promote Hungerford as a tourist destination to support local businesses and help improve facilities for both visitors and residents."

The Town Plan refresh has policies to "Promote Hungerford as an historic market town for visitors", and to "Use Hungerford's location at the heart of the North Wessex Downs AONB to promote it as a base from which to explore the area".

The Neighbourhood Plan notes the importance of tourism to the economy of Hungerford, and the vibrancy of its High Street. The heritage qualities of the town create local civic pride as well as boosting tourism.

Over 80% of respondents to the recent Neighbourhood Plan consultation agreed that one of the reasons they like living in Hungerford is that it is an attractive tourist town.

Despite this, in the consultation responses to the Town Plan refresh, around two thirds of respondents felt that Hungerford did not make the most of its potential as a tourist destination. The walkabout and the stakeholder workshop identified a number of areas where work is being undertaken to improve and promote the tourism offer, such as the Heritage Trail and funding to improve the Virtual Museum as well as the range of events promoted by the Town & Manor, Town Council and other organisations. It also identified areas where the heritage offer can be improved, particularly around the Canal, Town Hall and The Croft. These issues were therefore included in the on-line survey to assess the views of the wider community.









Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre

Hungerford, as an historic market town and a distinctive antiques trade, attracts a large number of visitors. The longer it can keep these visitors in the town, the more they will spend and the more local businesses and services they will support, benefiting the local economy and local residents.

The proposals to develop the Heritage Trail in Hungerford recognise the need to encourage wider exploration of what the town has to offer. This includes not just the Canal and the Common, but interesting independent areas such as Bridge Street, the distinctive offer around The Croft, the history of the Town & Manor and associated festivals and its historic coaching inns.

The study has therefore put emphasis on helping visitors explore more of Hungerford, through wayfinding and interpretation, making it easier to move around the town as a pedestrian, with footway and towpath improvements, and by making existing attractions more accessible and more welcoming as tourist destinations within the town.









Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure

A walkabout along the canal was held with representatives of the Canal & River Trust (CRT), with Rev Saunders of St. Lawrence's Church, Karen Salmon of the Chamber of Commerce and Hugh Pihlens who is responsible for the Hungerford Virtual Museum website.

The CRT identified a clear opportunity to extend overnight moorings in Hungerford, and to increase day visitors who are attracted to historic market towns with interesting, independent businesses. Average spend from such visitors (particularly overnight) in the town centres is significant and would bring substantial benefits to Hungerford. It was considered that improvements would need to be made to the towpath, the facilities along the canal and the connections and signage to the town centre. A clear overlap was therefore identified with the work being undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce to promote the Hungerford Heritage Trail.

The condition of the towpath is of course critical as it is how most visitors will access the canal. The walkabout with stakeholders highlighted areas where the towpath condition is relatively poor, particularly in winter, and areas where it feels narrow and unsafe.





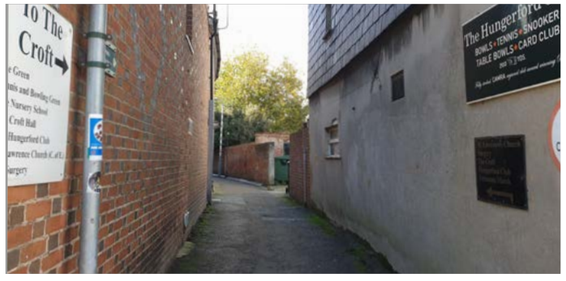



Integrating community facilities within the town centre

The variety of community facilities within Hungerford is considered one of its strengths, but they are often hidden away from the High Street.

The Croft is the most significant area, being of community and heritage importance to the town. Croft Hall, the Field Centre and Hungerford Club and associated leisure facilities, together with the 'village green' quality of the space and the proximity to St Lawrence's Church creates a distinctive environment which would be of interest to visitors, not just local residents. It is therefore part of the proposed Heritage Trail for Hungerford.

This area also hosts festivals and markets, but is connected to High Street by the relatively unattractive and poorly signed Church Lane. Improving this connection was seen as a key issue for Hungerford, as was creating stronger links to the canal which were discussed with the Hungerford Club, the church and the CRT.








Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street

Key objectives of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan include:

- Seeking to improve road safety by considering lower speed limits, junction improvements and possible changes to road layouts.
- Minimising the effects of traffic congestion in the town centre and especially the High Street for the benefit of pedestrians and all road users.
- Encouraging walking and cycling in the town.

The Town Plan refresh also notes the objective of encouraging walking and cycling (to reduce use of the car) and specifically to "Investigate opportunities to improve the access to the Tesco car park, having regard to pedestrian safety".

82% of respondents to the Town Plan stated that it was important or very important to "Increase environmental awareness, reduce carbon footprint and encourage green living" and High Streets are often the most visible indicator of a town's commitment to tackling climate change.

This work has highlighted again the impact of HGVs travelling through Hungerford on the physical environment and historic qualities of the town, an issue noted in the Town Plan refresh. Whilst it was not within the remit of this study to consider alternative routes for HGVs, it has considered measures to slow traffic and give greater priority to pedestrians, which could help mitigate the impact and in the longer term make Hungerford less attractive as a through route for large vehicles.

Market towns generally serve a compact local catchment, with residents having relatively easy walking and cycle routes into the town centre, and a large percentage of Hungerford's residents do walk into the town centre. Hungerford also serves a wider rural population which is increasingly reliant on access by car, and it also attracts relatively large numbers of tourists from further afield. The strategy understands that some people will need to travel by car and looks to make car parking arrangements as straightforward as possible, maximising the usage, efficiency and attractiveness of existing car parks, whilst minimising the visual and environmental impact of traffic and parking on the High Street.

Improving the 'walkability' of a town does however also bring important social, economic and environmental benefits. It improves physical and mental health, it improves air quality and helps address climate change and our surveys regularly show that those people who walk into town centres are more likely to spend their money in local and independent shops and to support the evening economy.

However, footway widths along Hungerford High Street are often narrow, permitting little more than the functional movement of pedestrians from one place to another. The town could and should do more to encourage visitors to pause, explore and enjoy the public realm which would have a significant benefit in extending visitor dwell time in Hungerford and encouraging local residents to walk into the town centre.

It is therefore an important challenge for Hungerford to find consensus within the town on the way to balance between the convenience of on-street parking and the benefits of providing more space for people and businesses.







Increasing opportunities for independent cafés, restaurants, retail, & other start-up businesses

A key objective of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan is to:

"Encourage businesses and support initiatives which promote a vibrant high street and increase the range of shops, services and eating places in the town for the benefit of residents, tourists and visitors of all ages."

The Town Plan refresh also noted the desire to ensure that Hungerford High Street was not filled with the same shops as 'every other High Street'. Independent businesses bring a stronger sense of identity to a town centre, particularly market towns. They also help make a town centre less vulnerable to decisions made at a national level.

Recent national surveys indicate that whilst there has been a decline in demand for retail floorspace from national retailers, those towns which have focused on independent retailers have seen growth. The 2016 retail assessment highlights the level of competition which Hungerford faces from the much larger centres of Newbury, Swindon and Marlborough, which will make it difficult for the town to attract large numbers of national retailers and even more important that it puts in place measures to promote local independent businesses.

Surveys also indicate that a significant number of the working population are spending at least two days a week working from home. The positive impact of hybrid working / working from home on small town centres such as Hungerford is being measured in a raft of studies. This shift in working patterns provides more opportunities as the spend shifts from larger towns and cities to a more local spend which in turn can support more local businesses.

The 2016 retail assessment highlighted that there is expected to be significant growth in spending on leisure & cultural activities and on eating and drinking in the West Berkshire area. The Canal & River Trust also highlighted the level of spend from day trips and overnight moorings and the importance that such visitors attach to being able to spend this in local, independent pubs, cafés and restaurants.

The physical survey of Hungerford identified relatively few opportunities for local pubs and cafés to spill out into the street and the lack of activity along the canal. This activity is far more likely to be concentrated in lanes and courtyards to the rear of buildings but this limits its visibility for visitors and tourists. Where seating is provided on the street it is often squeezed against the building to make room for bins and on-street parking. It is considered therefore that there is scope for Hungerford to widen and improve its offer in this respect.







Improving space for indoor and outdoor markets and events

A key objective of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan is to:

"Encourage a growing range of cultural and community events which appeal to all age groups and help to attract visitors to the town who, in turn, benefit the local economy. "

The Town Plan refresh also notes the importance of the Hungerford's distinctive local events and festivals, and states that it will "Continue to support existing and future cultural events such as Hocktide, HADCAF (the Community Arts Festival) and the Victorian Extravaganza".

Hungerford has a popular weekly market with a strong local food offer in a highly visible location. This is complemented by monthly and seasonal markets and events in The Croft area, which is less visible to casual visitors and tourists. There are also market stalls provided within the Corn Exchange room in the Town Hall.

The workshops identified a clear desire to make more of the opportunities for markets and events in Hungerford, particularly inside and outside the Town Hall.

Markets provide variety and diversity, history and character. They are an expression of community, and help build a strong sense of local identity. They provide affordable opportunities for new businesses to set up and grow, make it easier for young people and new traders to access trading opportunities, offer environmental and health benefits by encouraging people to shop locally, and providing affordable fresh food produce. They are popular with tourists and with local communities so long as they create a distinctive local identity, showcasing local businesses. They are an important 'tool' for driving town centre footfall, increasing dwell time, and ultimately helping to build and promote the 'brand' of a place.







Improving walking routes to the High Street from car parks and rail station

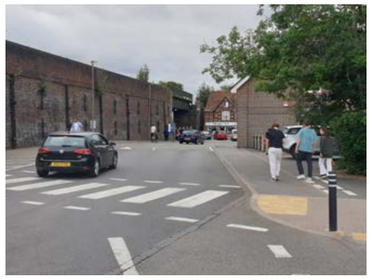
The rail station and surrounding area is an important arrival point for Hungerford, for rail passengers and for those using Station Road car park. It is only a 2minute walk from the High Street (via The Cuttings) but feels significantly more distant.

The availability of car parking in Hungerford was a major issue in the Neighbourhood Development Plan consultation. Tesco car park and Station Road car park are the two most significant car parks in the town centre.

The quality of arrival into Station Road car park in particular does not reflect its proximity to the town centre and it appears to be the least popular car park in the town centre. Addressing this could bring significant benefits to the town centre, reducing parking pressure on the High Street and potentially allow for some relocation of on-street parking.







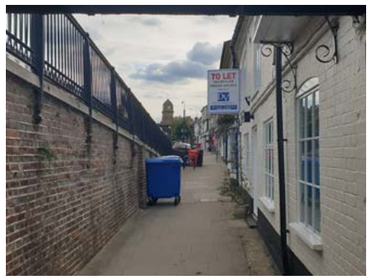
Enhancing arrival to the town centre

The importance of enhancing arrival into Hungerford was highlighted at the walkabout and in the workshops. There are a number of key gateways which would benefit from improvement, for pedestrians, cyclists, rail passengers, canal users and motorists. Arrival points on the edge of Hungerford, from the A4 into Bridge Street, and from the south into the High Street are important indicators to visitors of the quality they can expect from the town centre. Arrival points at car parks are similarly important first impressions for visitors.

The canal is an important arrival point, and the connections to High Street and Bridge Street are in need of improvement and promotion. And the routes for pedestrians, into the town centre from the car parks should not be forgotten and there is a cluster of these important gateways at the centre of the High Street, at The Cuttings, Park Lane and Church Street as well as the exit from the Tesco car park.







03
Engagement Findings

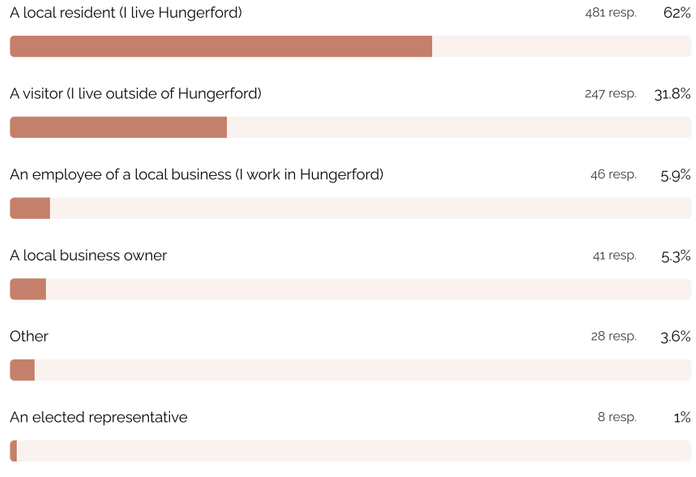


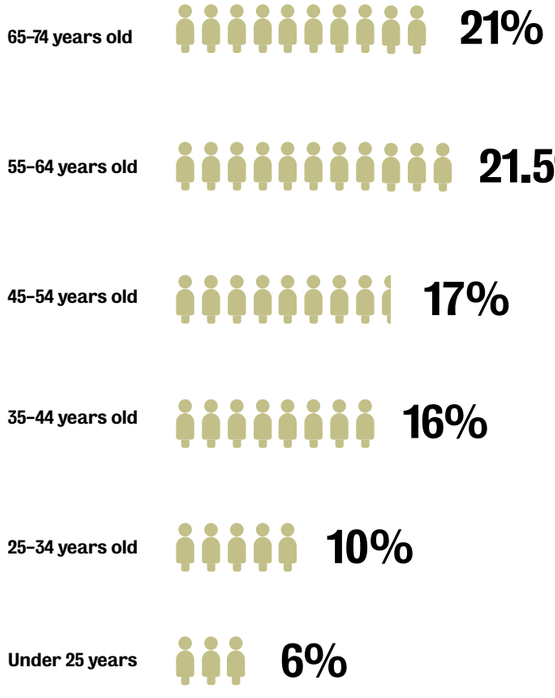
The strategy responds to priorities highlighted through public and stakeholder consultation. The survey questions were agreed with stakeholders via workshops and subsequent correspondence. This section of the report documents the responses from the public survey, which was open from the 5th of December 2022 to the 9th January 2023, receiving 784 detailed completions.

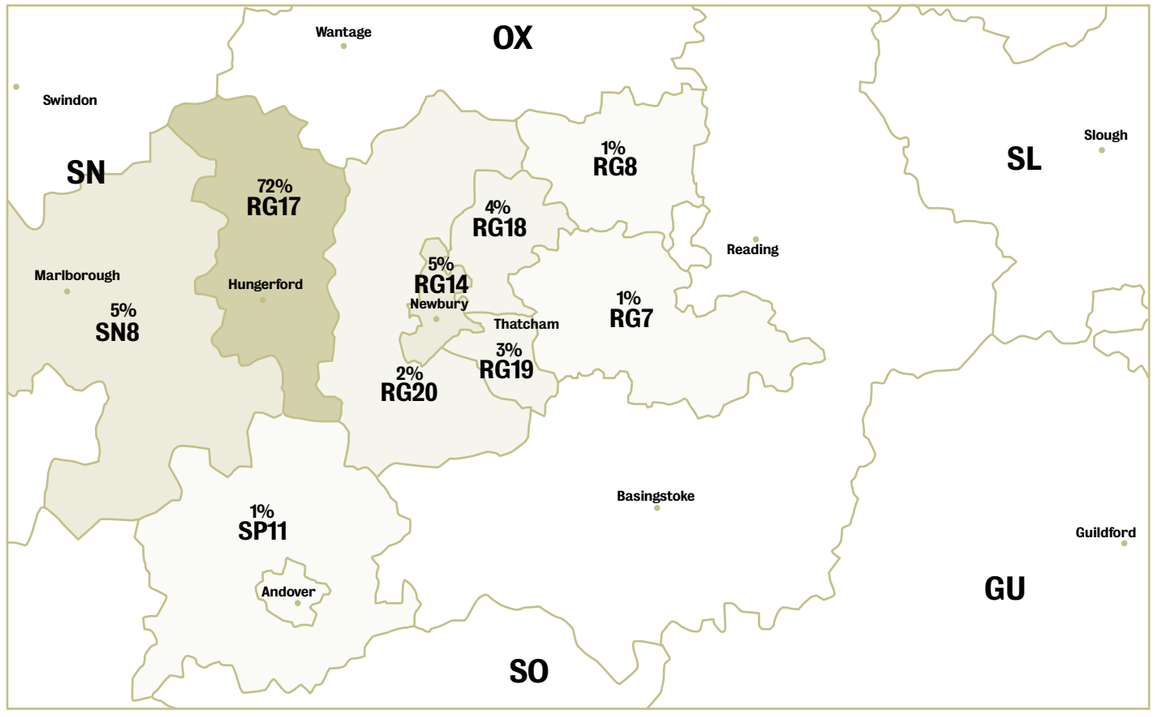
Demographics

The greatest response was in the 55-74 age ranges, 42.5% of respondents were within this range. There was however a good response rate across all age ranges. Around 10% of West Berkshire residents are aged 15-24, and the survey response rate was 6%.

62% of survey respondents identify as local residents of Hungerford, 32% are visitors, 11% of respondents work for or own a local business.



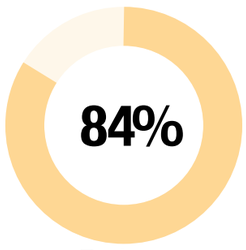




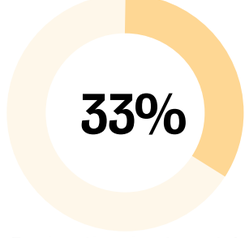
Visiting the town centre

84% of respondents say they usually visit the town centre to shop. 33% are most likely to visit to eat, drink, or socialise in the daytime.

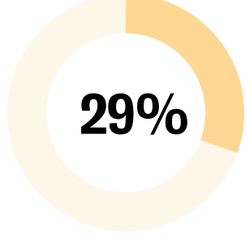
Other common reasons for visiting include visiting family, taking children to school, walking or driving en route elsewhere, and to visit the GP, dentist, post office or library.



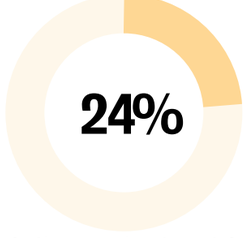
To shop



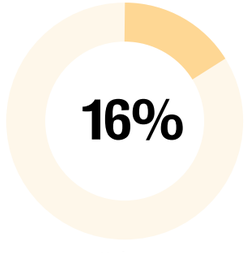
During the day to eat/ drink/socialise



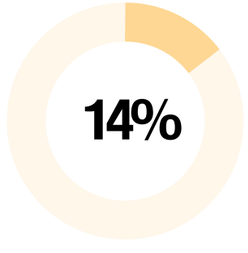
To attend a market or event



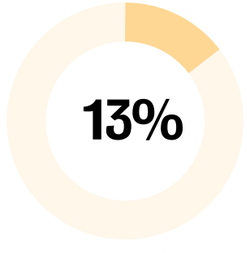
In the evening to eat/ drink/socialise



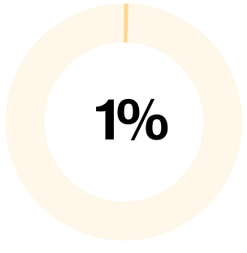
Other



For work



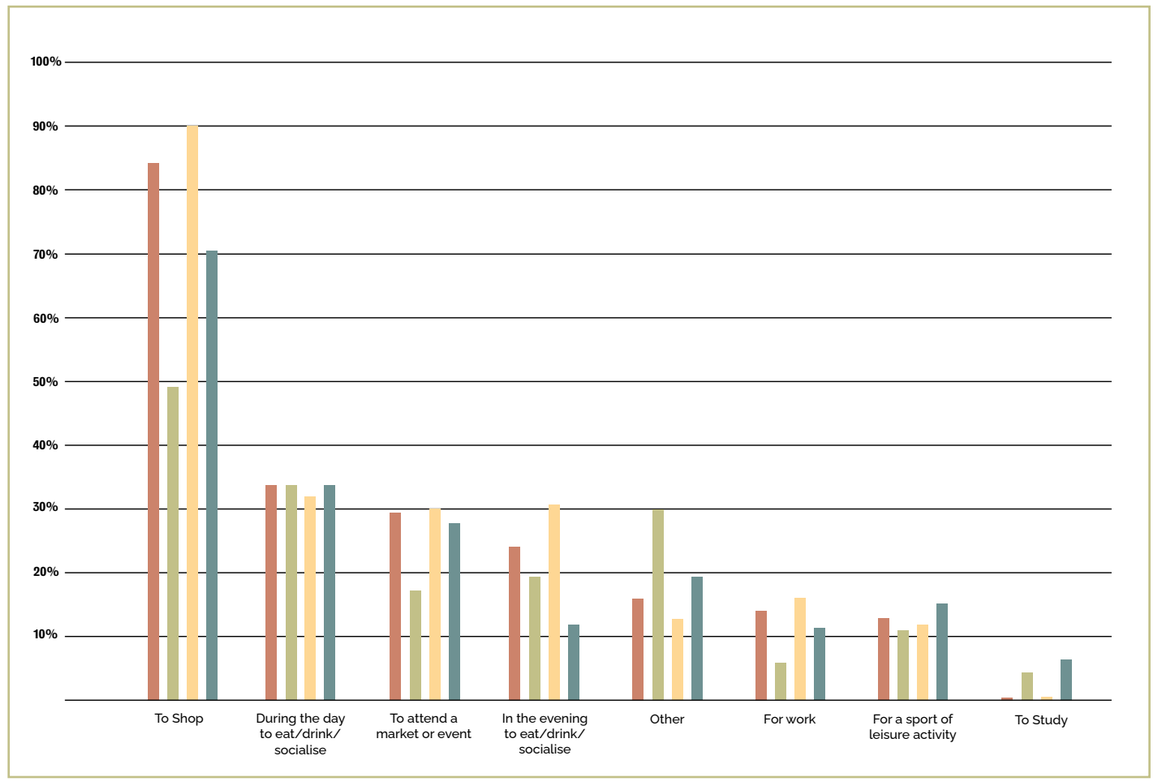
For a sport or leisure activity



To study

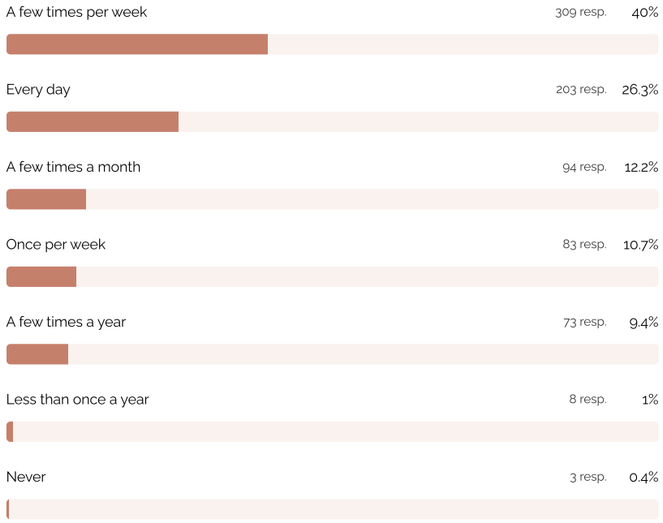
49% of respondents under the age of 25 say they visit the town centre to shop, compared to 84% overall.

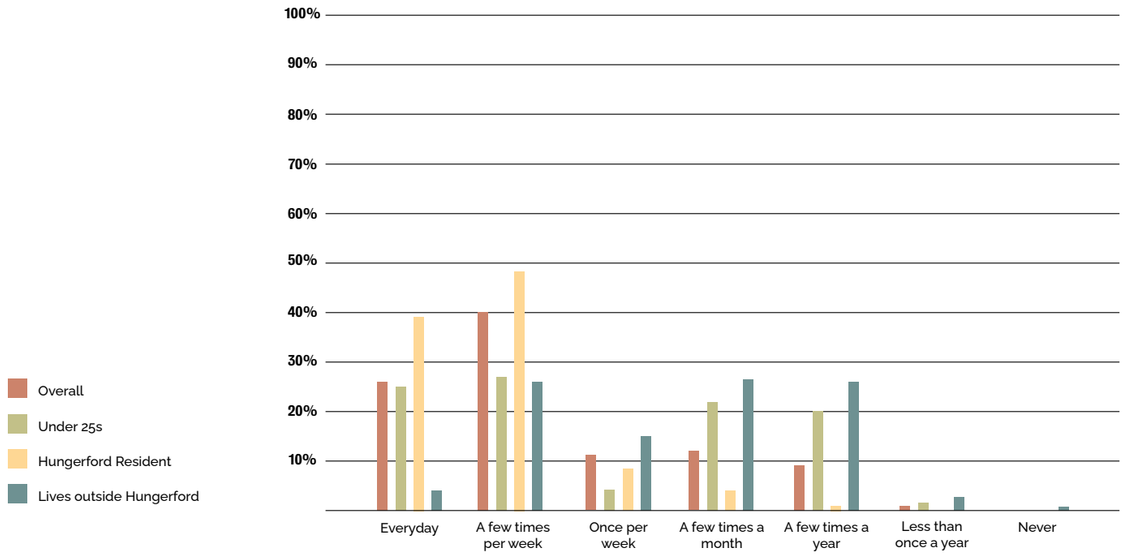
U25s are also less likely to attend a market or event in the town centre than other demographics.



Visit Frequency

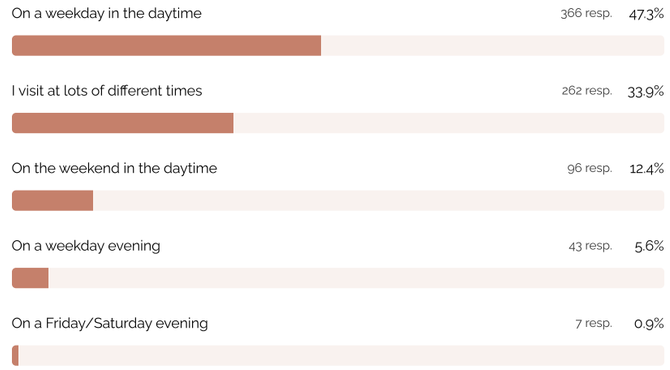
66% of respondents state they visit Hungerford Town Centre a few times a week or more. This drops to 50% for U25s.

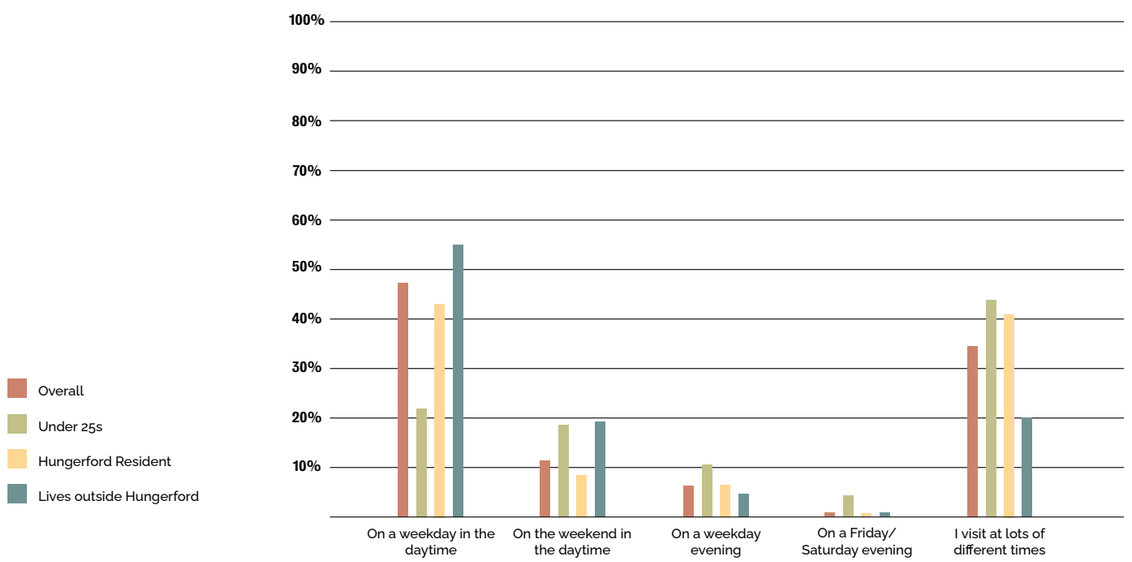




Time of visit

47% of respondents say they are most likely to visit the town centre during the day on a weekday. 34% will visit a various times, whilst 12% are most likely to visit on the weekend during the daytime.

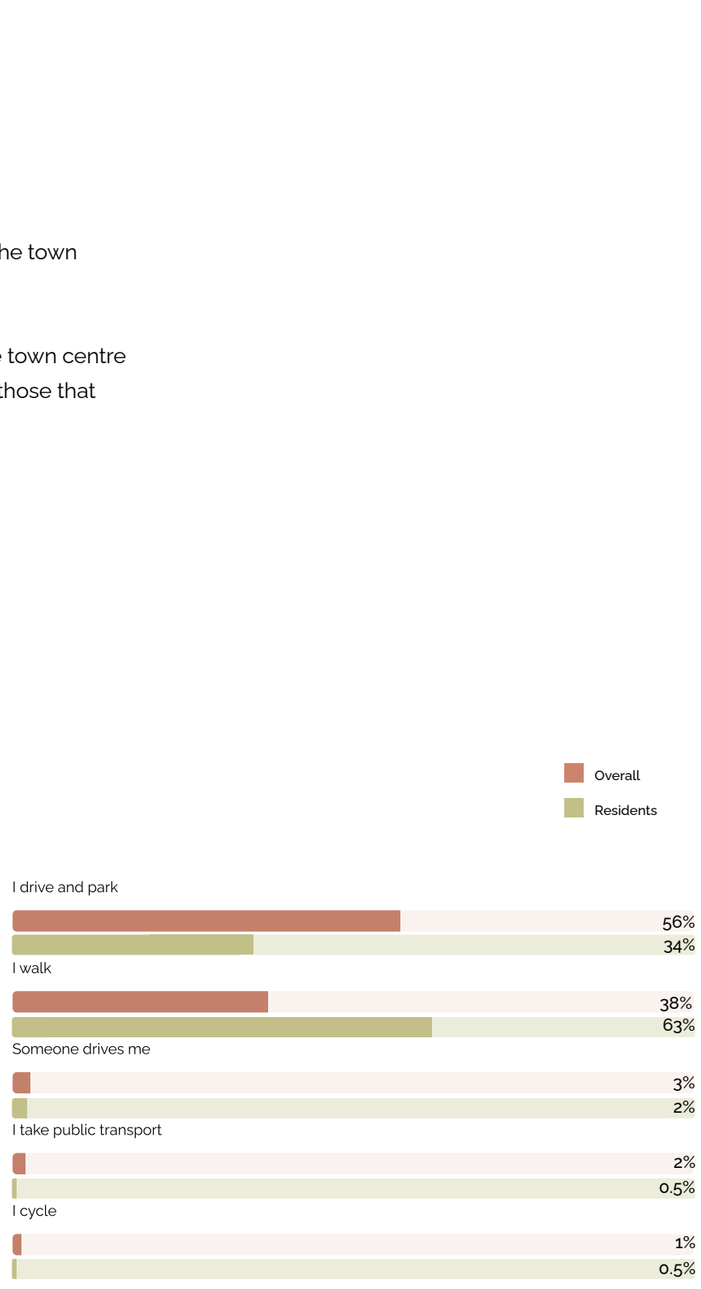


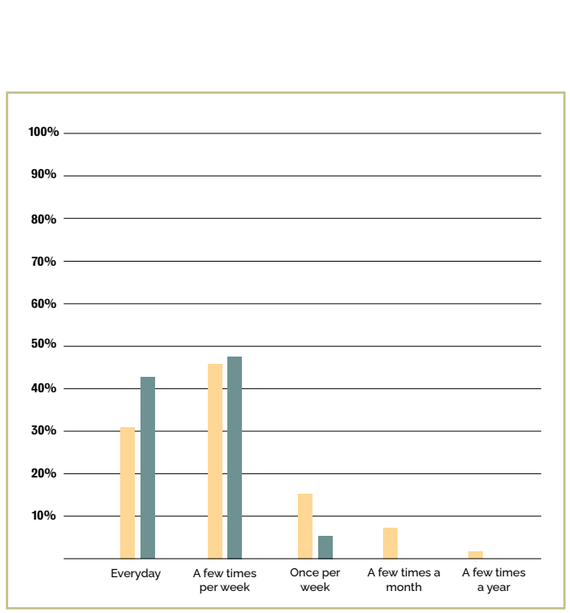


Travel

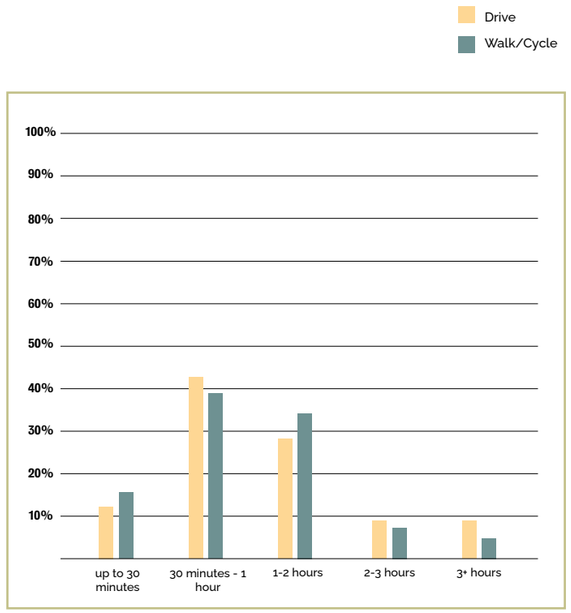
63% of local respondents usually travel to the town centre on foot, whilst 34% drive and park,

Local respondents that walk or cycle to the town centre visit the town centre more frequently than those that drive and park.

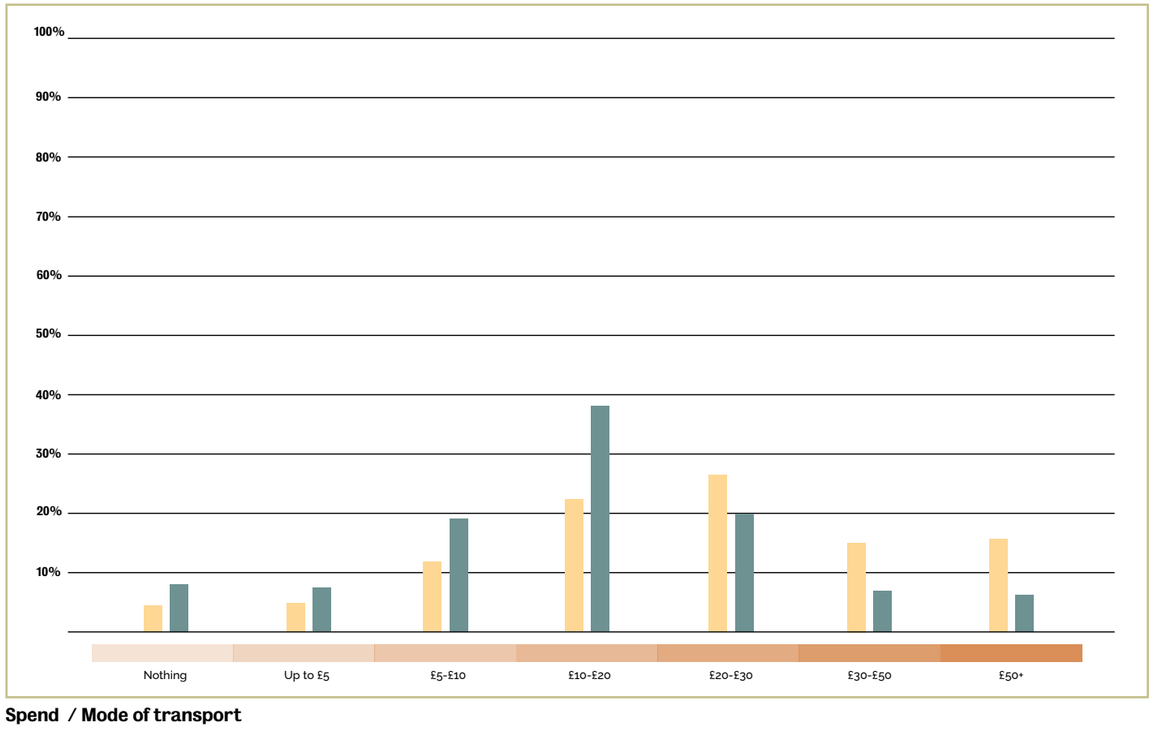




Visit frequency / Mode of transport



Length of visit / Mode of transport



Spend / Mode of transport

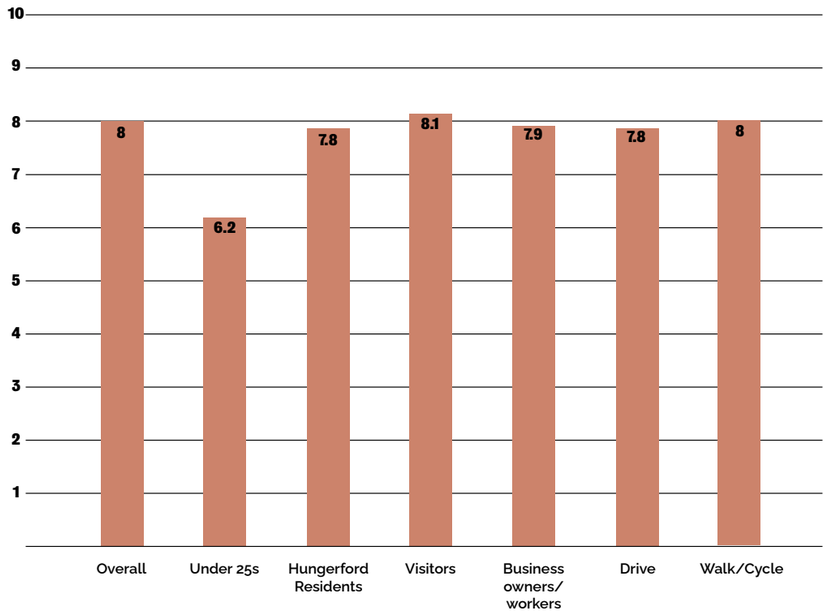
Issues & Opportunities

A number of issues and opportunities were highlighted through stakeholder engagement and initial site appraisals. These issues were then agreed with stakeholders for testing with the wider community via the on-line survey.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these issues and opportunities, from 1 (unimportant) to 10 (vital). The responses are shown here, with the highest scoring issues listed first.

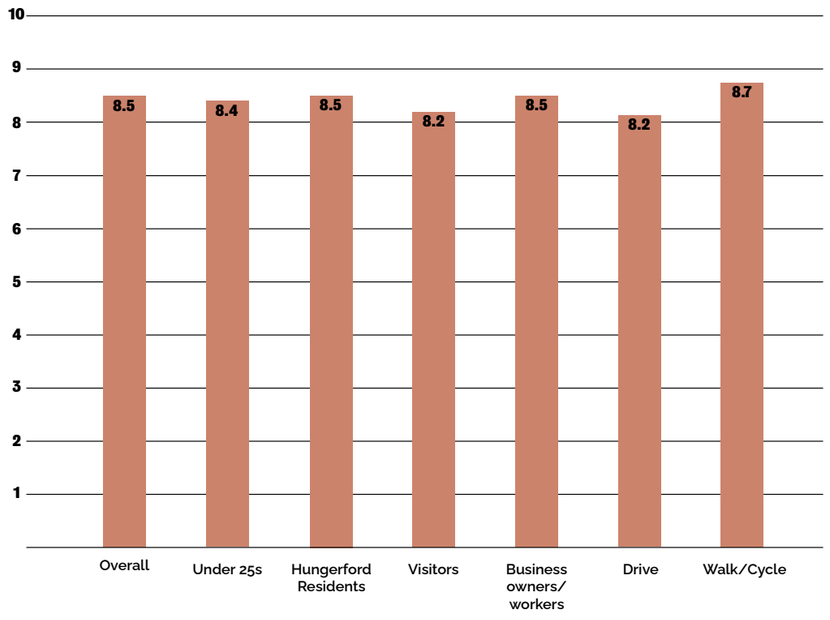
Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure

8.0
Average rating



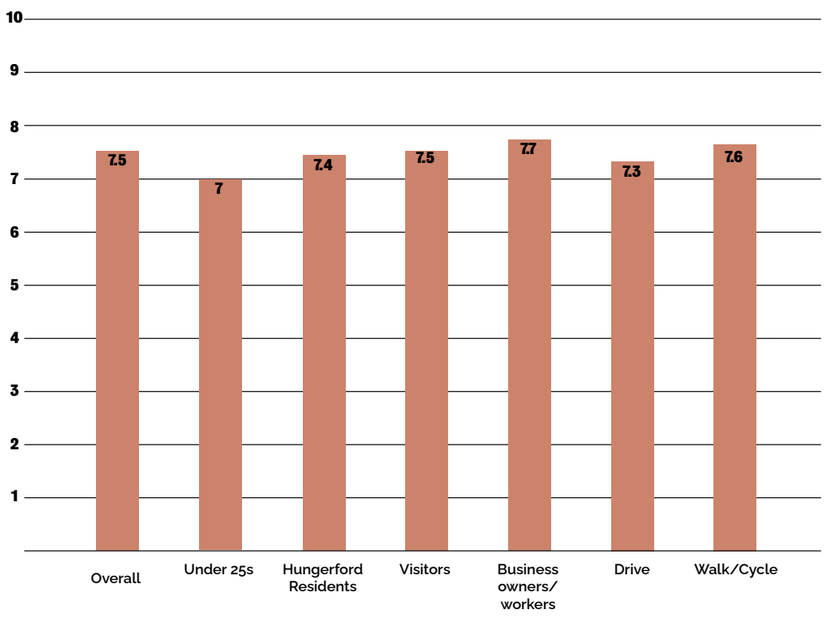
Increasing opportunities for independent cafés, restaurants, retail, & new businesses

8.5
Average rating



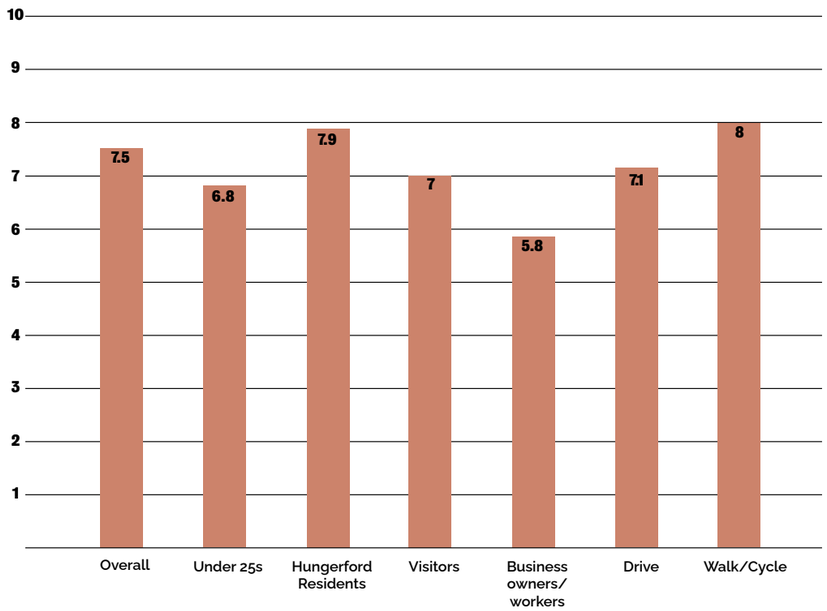
Improving space for indoor & outdoor markets and events

7.5
Average rating



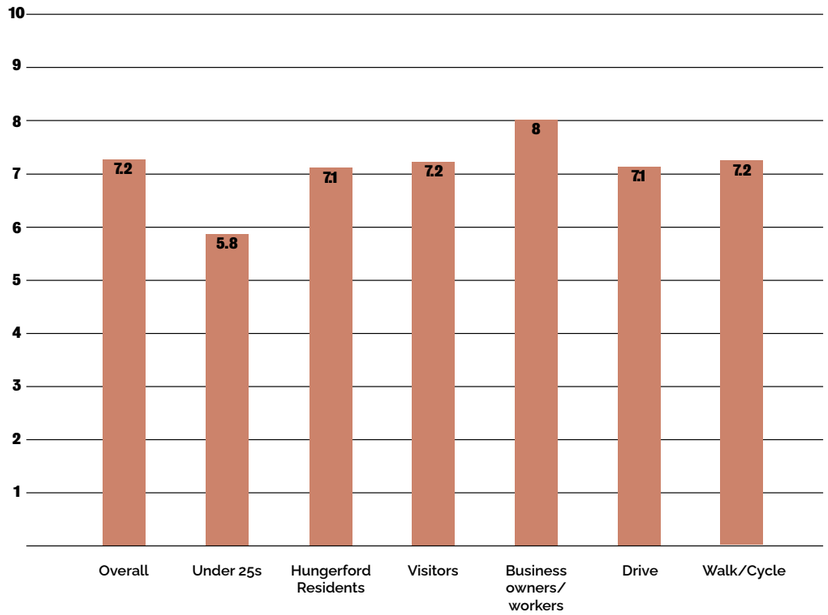
Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street

7.5
Average rating



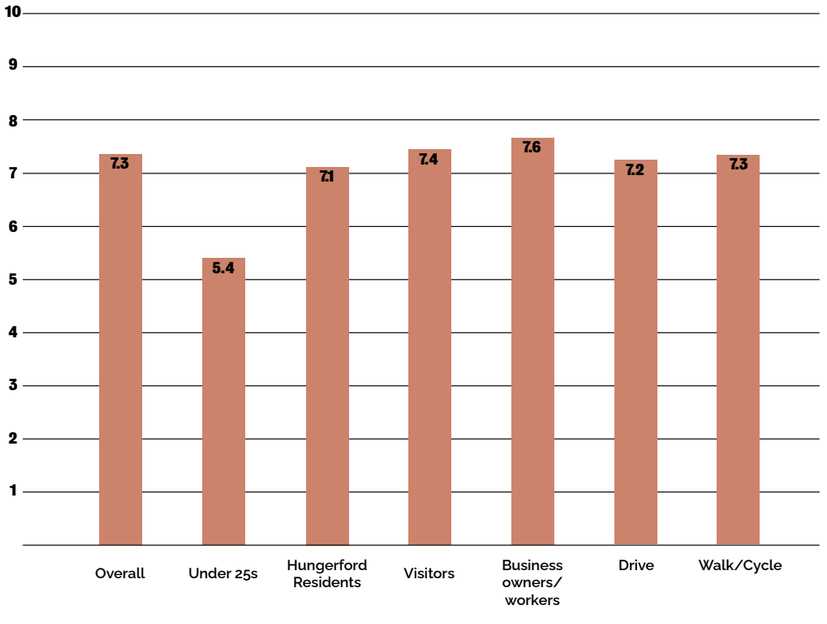
Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre

7.2
Average rating



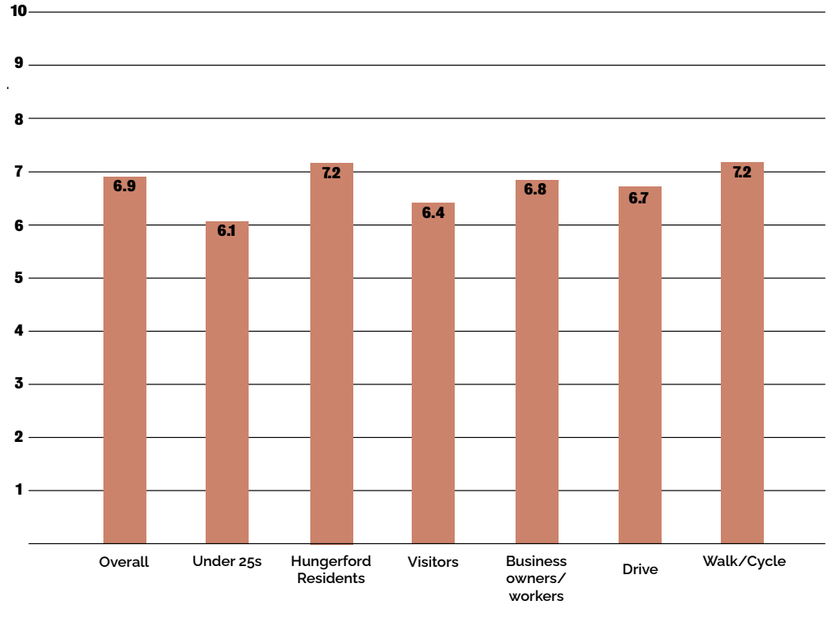
Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage

7.3
Average rating



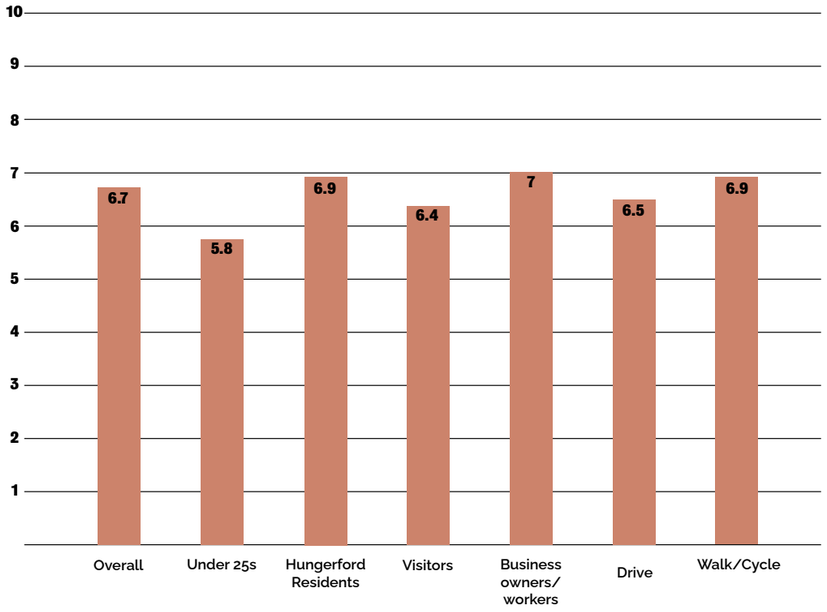
Integrating community facilities within the town centre

6.9
Average rating



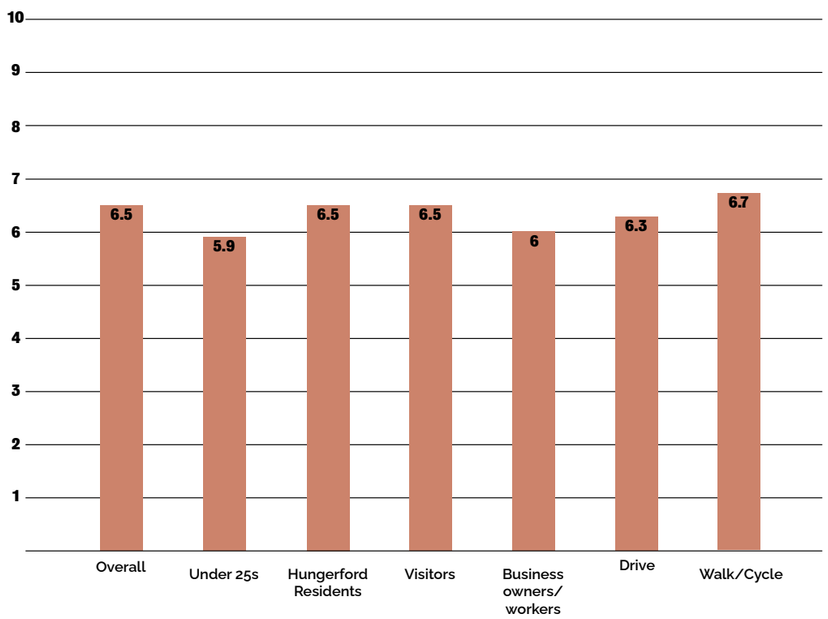
Enhancing arrival to the town centre

6.7
Average rating



Improving walking routes to the High Street from car parks and rail station

6.3
Average rating



When asked if there are any other issues respondents think should be addressed common themes include:



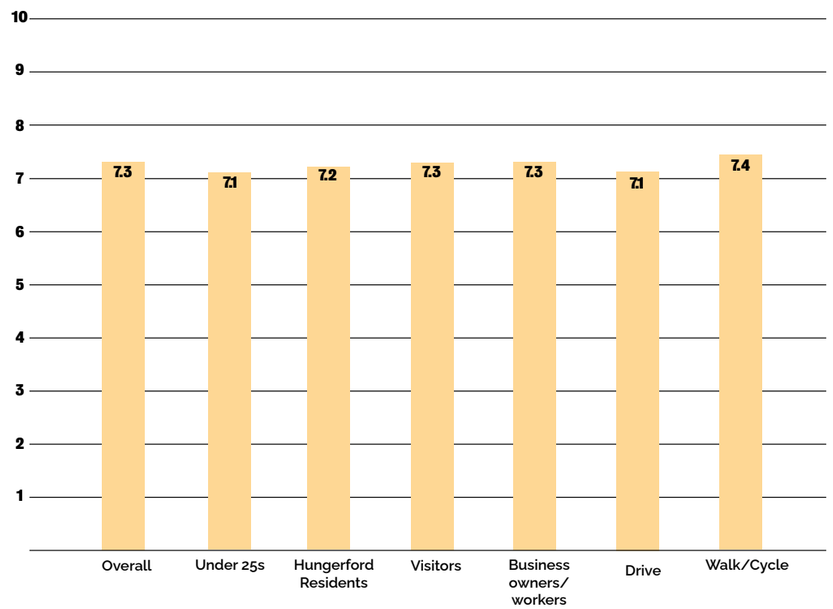
Improvements

At the first stakeholder workshop, attendees were asked to consider ways in which the town centre could be improved. A series of potential improvements were agreed for testing with the wider community via the on-line survey.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of these improvements, from 1 (unimportant) to 10 (vital). The responses are shown here, with the highest scoring issues listed first.

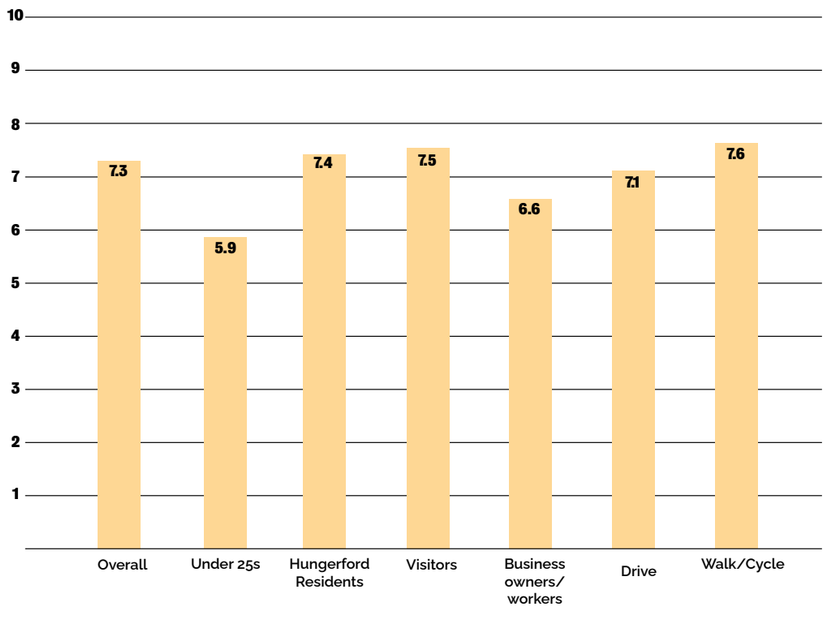
Help the Town and Manor use more of the Town Hall for specialist markets, pop-ups and independent shops

7.3
Average rating



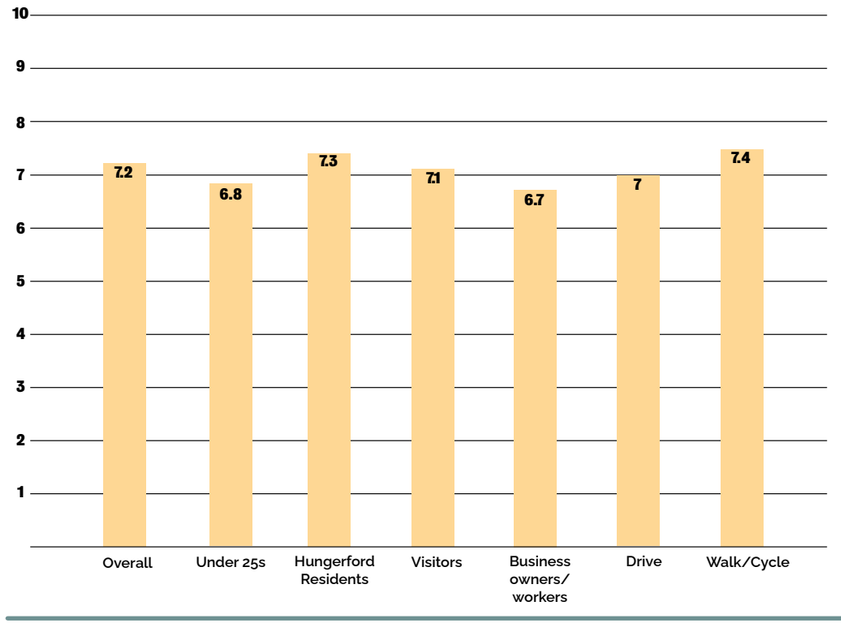
Encourage use of the canal through improved wayfinding, lighting, planting, or art interventions to signal the canal from High Street, alongside improving the canal towpath itself

7.3
Average rating



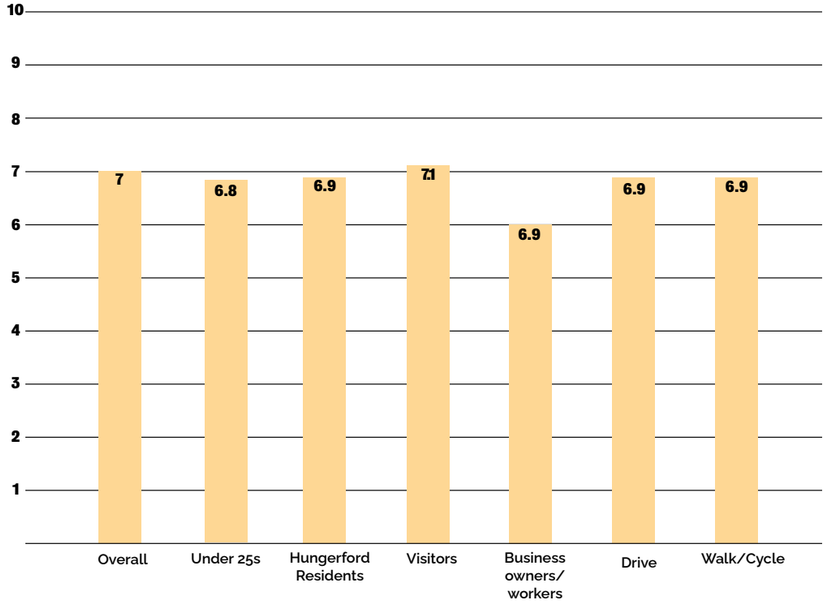
Improve the area outside Town Hall to create a central focal space in the town centre for events & markets and enhance its setting

7.2
Average rating



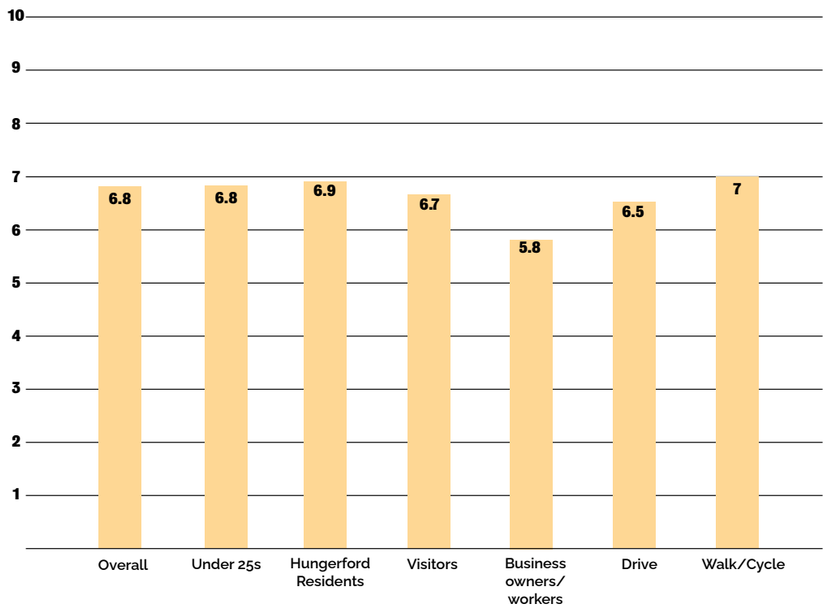
Increase opportunities for play, exercise and social activity along the canal

7.0
Average rating



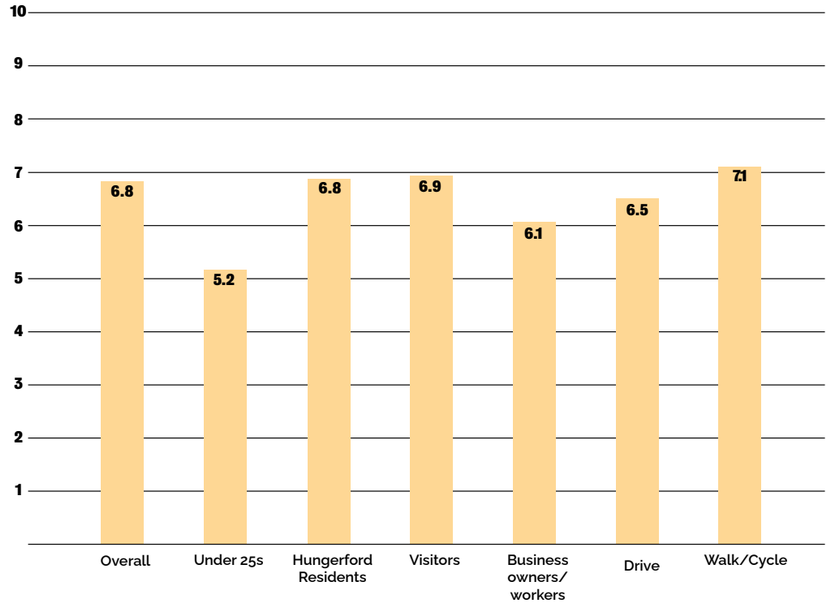
Improve signage, lighting, surfacing & greenery along Church Lane to strengthen connections to The Croft, Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church

6.8
Average rating



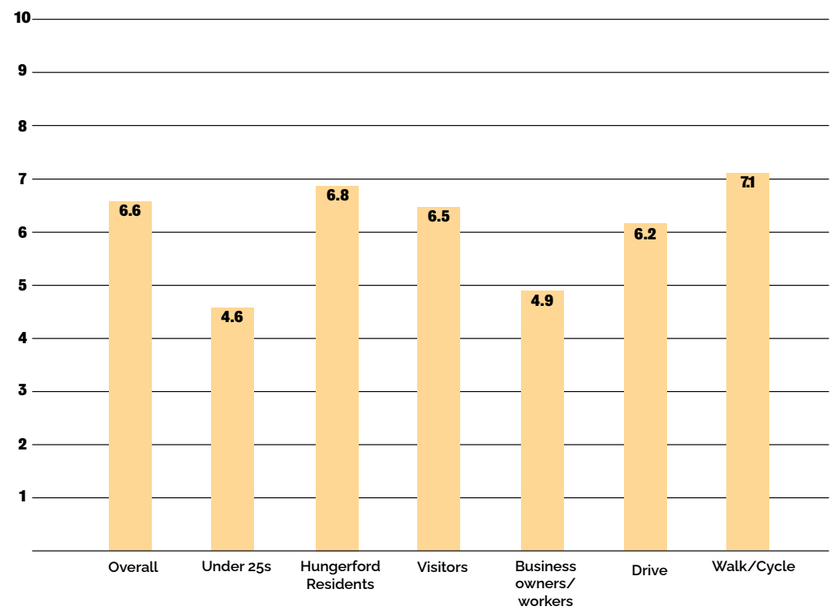
Encourage use of Rail Station car park with better signage and better walking links to High Street

6.8
Average rating



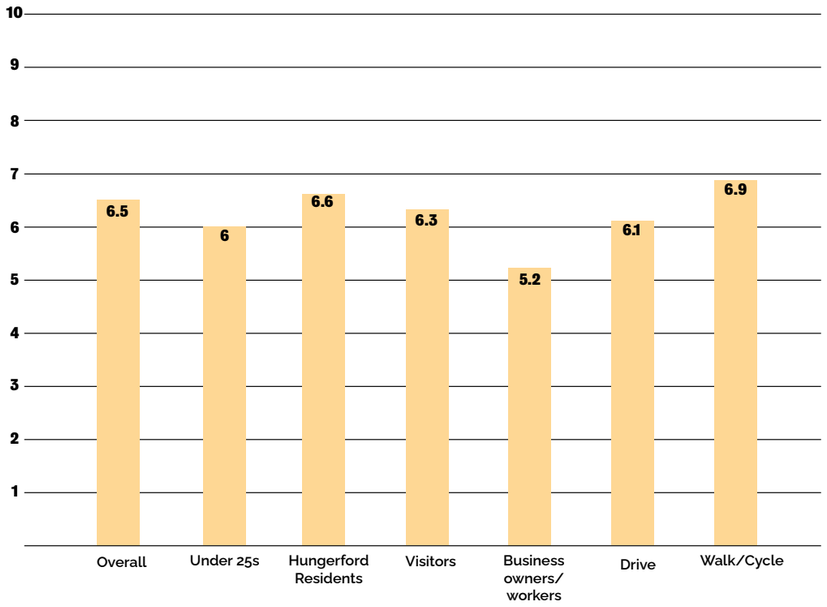
Introduce 20mph zones to reduce the impact of traffic through the town centre

6.6
Average rating



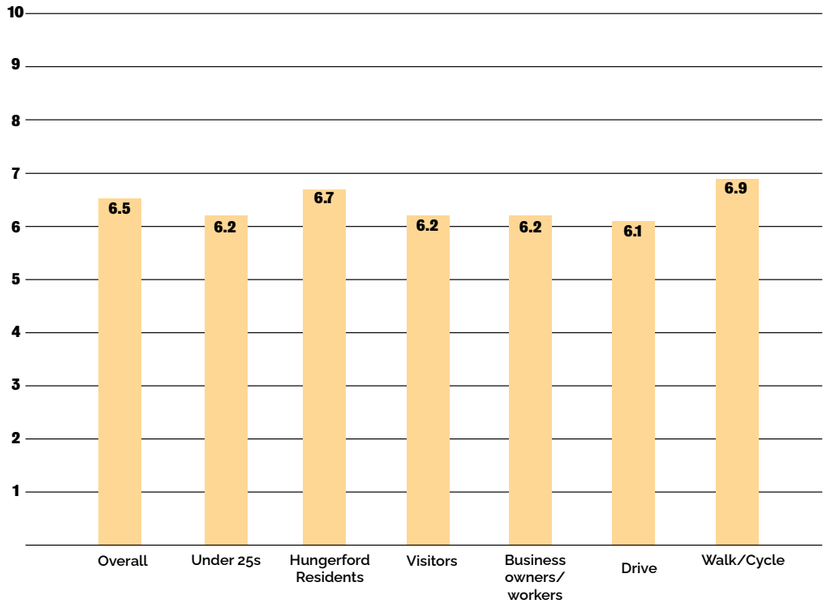
Improve pedestrian journey via 'The Cuttings' to better integrate the rail station and Hungerford Common

6.5
Average rating



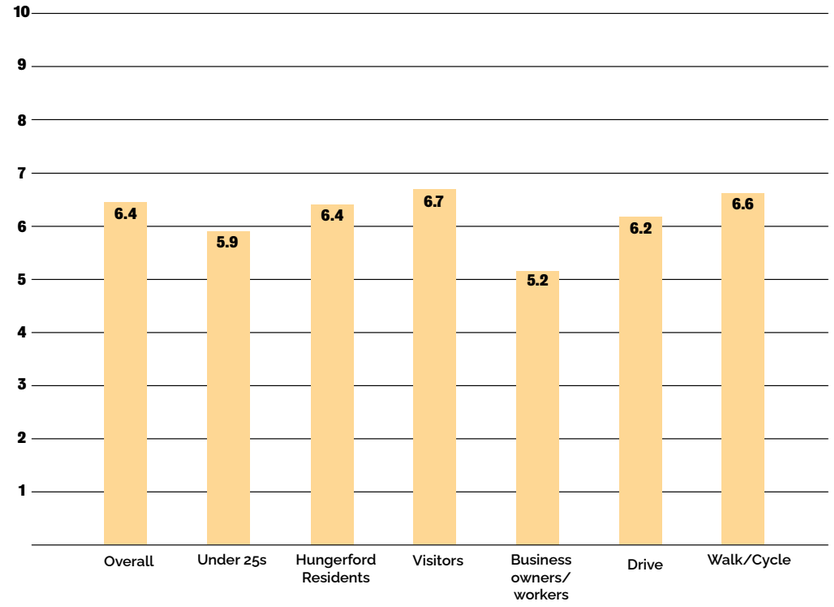
Widen pavements where possible along High Street to allow for dwell and spill-out space, and to improve setting of heritage buildings

6.5
Average rating



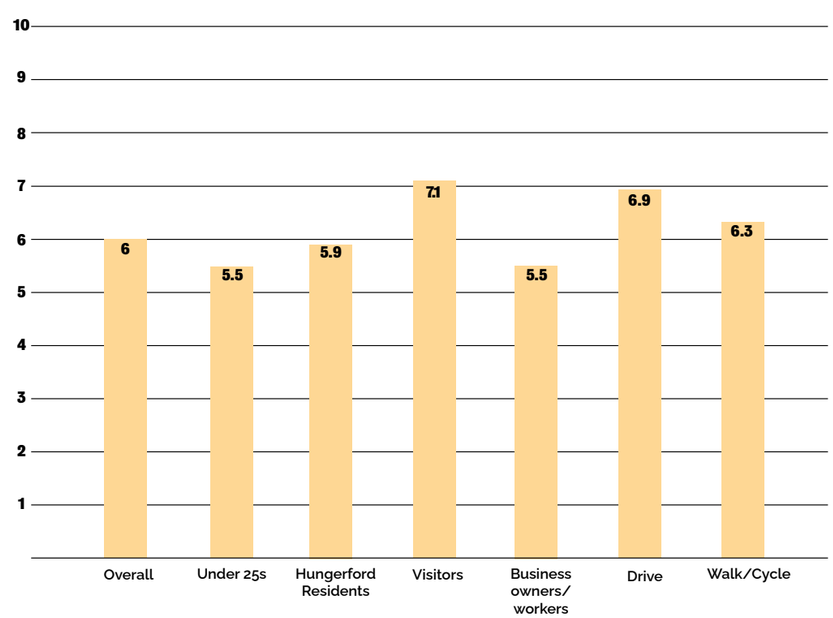
Widen footpath along Church Street to improve connections to car park, Library, Hungerford Hub & public toilets

6.4
Average rating



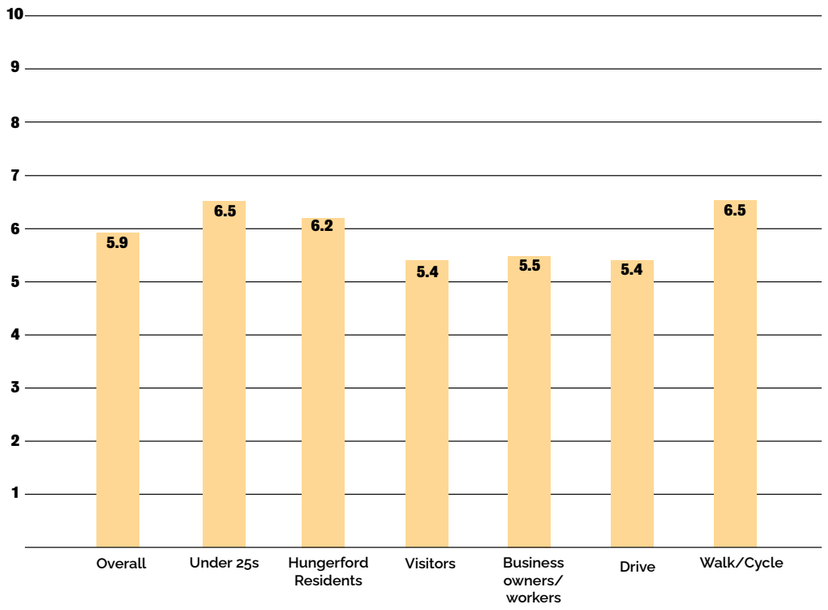
Create space for a physical museum/heritage centre

6.0
Average rating



Remove some on street parking on the High Street to create more outdoor space for cafés and businesses

5.9
Average rating



When asked if there any other improvements required common themes include:



Stakeholder Workshops





Following the initial Stakeholder workshop held in November 2022 and completion of the public survey a follow-up workshop was organised with the help of Hungerford Town Council. This was held on the evening of January 19th, 2023 at the Town Hall.

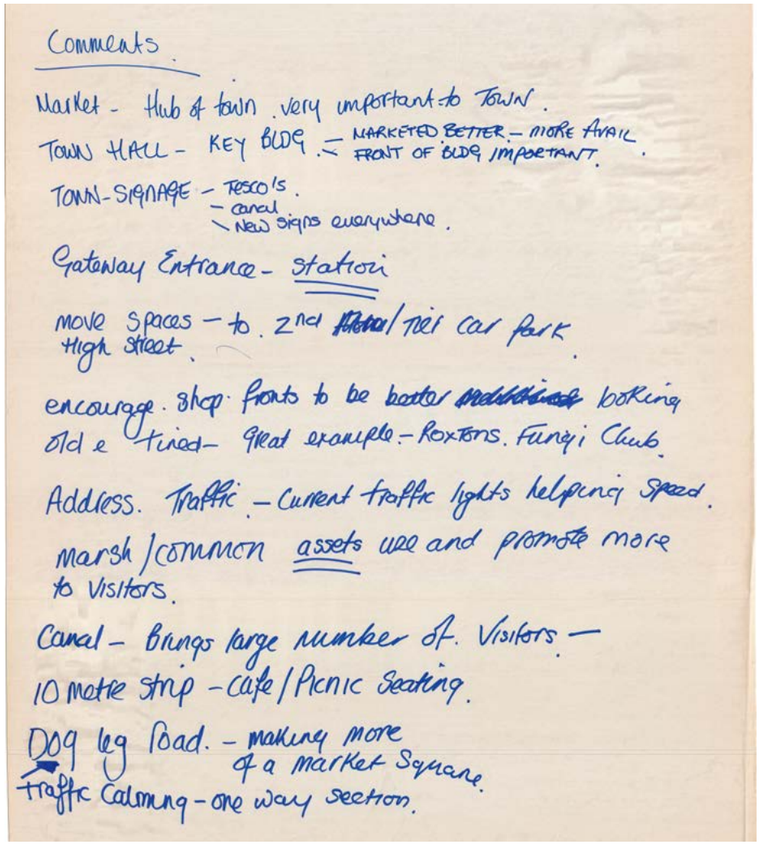
The purpose was to present the findings from the recent survey and to have the invited guests discuss in a workshop session how the priorities for Hungerford could be developed as projects and ideas.

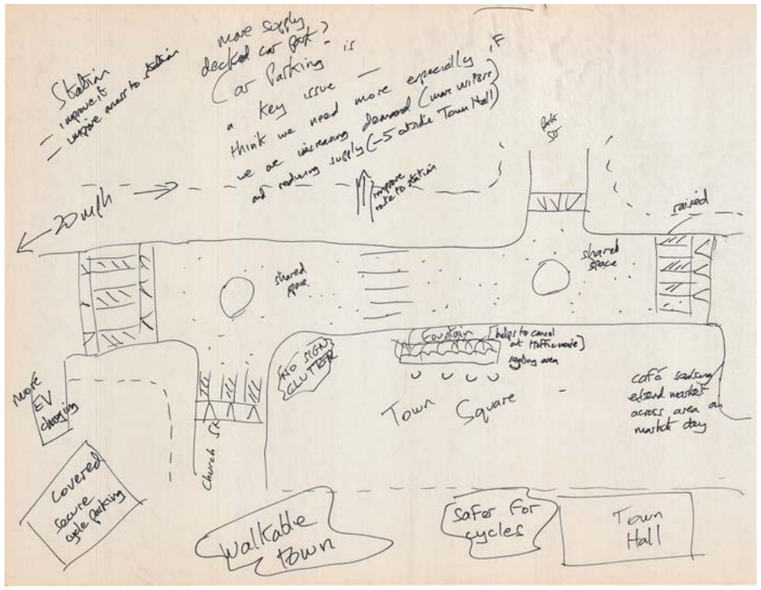
At the end of the workshop each group fed back to the larger audience to share their discussion points.

Discussions centred around improvements to and promotion of the canal for leisure use.

Participants expressed a clear desire for the area outside the Town Hall to become a focal civic space for the town, a place for social and community activity, and activated more frequently with events and markets.

Markets were also a key discussion point. Participants stated desire for more specialist markets, helping to attract visitors that would otherwise visit other market towns in the region.





04
Strategy & Projects

Projects:

The Canal

Hungerford Town Hall

Civic Core

Hungerford High Street

Hungerford Market

Station Road and The Cuttings

High Street (Dods Building)

Bridge Street

The strategy focuses on promoting the distinctive heritage of Hungerford that residents feel needs to be made more of, on integrating the community elements that residents value and on promoting distinctive independent businesses that reinforce both the local identity and the important antiques trade which underpins much of Hungerford's tourist appeal.

Improving the canal was identified in all engagement exercises as a key objective for Hungerford. It is an important green space, community resource, heritage feature and visitor destination. It has significant potential to keep people in the town longer and boost trade for all businesses. There is considerable consensus for delivering these improvements and committed stakeholders willing to help deliver them. It must therefore be a priority project for the town.

The strategy recognises the need to promote local and independent retailers, as well as health, community, leisure, business, residential and recreation uses to create a vibrant town centre. It recognises the strength of the antiques business in Hungerford, its role in bringing tourists to the town, and seeks to build on this strength.

The Canal

The Kennet & Avon Canal is the gateway to Hungerford for many visitors in the summer who arrive by narrowboat wanting to explore historic towns. Creating better connections between the canal and the rest of the town centre should therefore be a priority, encouraging visitors to explore Hungerford as a whole.

There are a number of themes that have been identified for possible improvements along the canal, and the plan identifies opportunity areas along the canal which can help deliver these:

The towpath

There are areas where the towpath condition is relatively poor, particularly in winter, and areas where it feels narrow and unsafe. Discussions have been held with the CRT and other stakeholders about improving the width and condition of trail while maintaining rural feel (e.g. using compacted scalpings/ gravel).

Wherever possible, the canal towpath should seek to provide a minimum width which allows two people to walk side by side, pass other canal users comfortably, cycle where possible and to feel safe alongside canal edge. Areas have been identified where the path can be widened, and combining this with trimming back over hanging/ overgrown planting will make the route more pleasant. Such measures will also assist users with buggies, mobility scooters and wheelchairs to enjoy the canal.

East of Town Bridge, the quality of the towpath rapidly deteriorates becoming muddy / narrow and difficult to navigate. It is important to maintain this green link along the canal for residents but also for visitors moored overnight to ensure that they have safe and inviting routes back to the town centre.

Heritage interpretation

There are already proposals underway to promote a Heritage Trail for Hungerford, both virtually and with a printed leaflet. Discussions with CRT indicate that they would be keen for this trail to incorporate the Canal and its historic importance to Hungerford. Signage and interpretation boards should therefore be coordinated across the canal and the rest of the town centre to present a single heritage 'brand'. It will also encourage visitors to the canal to explore the different heritage attractions and destinations across Hungerford.

Wayfinding and connections to other attractions

The heritage trail can be supplemented by signage to encourage visitors to walk along the towpath to visit other attractions. Wayfinding signage should help encourage residents and visitors to explore the canal but also explore other routes back to the town centre. Signage could include useful information such as distance to next bridge, connection across to marshes, routes to the High Street, Bridge Street, historic pubs, antique shops, cafés and community uses.

To the east, the signage can indicate the presence of a circular walking route along the canal, returning to the town centre via the Railway Tavern and The Cuttings, or further afield via Hungerford Common. These routes are important facilities for visitors but also for local residents who value the towpath as a recreational area.

The most obvious connection is to encourage visitors to walk west along the towpath to St Lawrence's Church, which is also part of the Heritage Trail, and to the Marshes. The church is not visible from the central Wharf area but signage to indicate that is no more than 5minutes walk, and what attractions it has to offer, will help encourage people to venture west along the towpath.

The church is keen to promote such visits and heritage trail would encourage a circular route back to the town centre, via The Croft and Hungerford Club and promoting these important facilities. Creating a more welcoming entrance/ route through church yard, which makes it clear that visitors are encouraged, and links back to town centre and adjacent community uses.

Opportunities can also be investigated to create more connections to the canal from the town, in particular between the Wharf and St Lawrence's church. Initial discussions with stakeholders indicated that routes could potentially be created into The Croft area of town, but these would need to be considered further with Town & Manor and Hungerford Club representatives.

Seating

Places to rest along the canal will be increasingly important if visitors are to be encouraged to explore further afield.

Ideally there should be clear points of interest where seating can be provided, integrated with the heritage interpretation boards, and these should be located where they draw people along the canal. Additional seating could be provided on the Wharf green area, where it is understood that a 'Friendship Bench' is being installed by the Chamber of Commerce, but opportunities should also be investigated along the towpath to the east and west of Town Bridge.

From the Wharf, the first visible point of interest to the east is the lock where visitors would be likely to spend time watching boats navigate the canal. By clearing some of the undergrowth and widening the towpath, an attractive seating area could be created alongside the tennis courts, adding a further point of interest and promoting the leisure activities available. If possible, discussions could be held with the Hungerford Club about occasionally allowing public routes through to The Croft area.

The next point of interest should be on the curve of the canal, to encourage visitors to continue their walk along the canal. This could form part of a space along the rear of the Croft Field Centre, where there is a gate and again discussions could be held regarding formalising this as a route to The Croft and the High Street. An information board could advise visitors of the short distance to the Church which is not visible because of the bend in the canal.

The third point of interest is the church, the swing bridge and the entrance to the Marshes. This is an area where visitors can be directed along a longer natural walk, or back through the churchyard towards the community attractions of The Croft area.





Precedent / Brecon

Brecon has interpreted the heritage of the canal and reused materials from the Locks to create bespoke seating





Precedent / Connecting Colliers Wood

Public realm improvements in Colliers Wood Town Centre create a sense of arrival and celebrate local identity through a series of interventions addressing routes to the high street and re-establishing the presence of River Wandle and Wandle Park.

Charred timber cobbles reference the charcoal burning, while the iridescent tiles referenced the Art and Crafts heritage. Wandle print 'wood block' style bespoke benches were developed in collaboration with a local artist to further celebrate this Arts and Crafts heritage and champion creative practices that still exist in the area. The planting palette responds to the Arts and Crafts heritage of the site and the riverine environment of the River Wandle

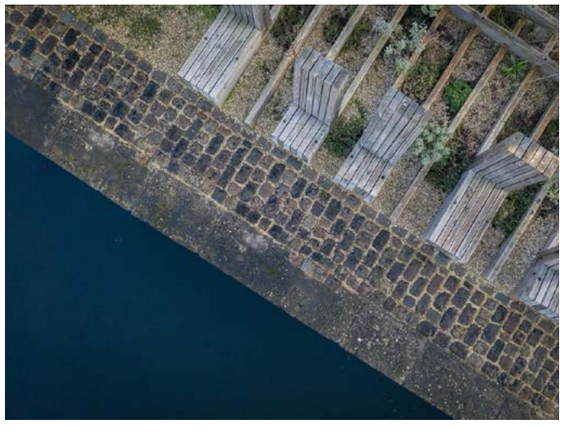




Precedent / Todmorden Public Art Trail

Todmorden Public Art Trail is a small scale regeneration project opening up access to the canal, creating new walkway links, with new paths, eating areas and planting. Public art installations reflect the town's heritage and fruit and vegetable planting reinforce the Incredible Edible Todmorden Green Route.





Precedent / Destock Garden, Long, France

Destock Garden has been designed to evoke the history of trade on the River Somme, with a simple palette of gravel and timber, as if a barge had forgotten one of its loads. Public seating is oriented towards the spectacle of the passage of a boat in the lock, but also to the heritage of the village.

Food & Drink

There is a distinct lack of places to eat and drink along the canal, the closest café being the Tutti Pole Café which has no view to the canal or outside seating. The CRT confirmed that surveys of its members and canal users indicate their support for independent and local cafés. Opportunities should therefore be investigated to address this, through either permanent, seasonal or pop up venues. It is important however that these are relatively 'low-key' interventions which blend with the rural, informal qualities of the canal through Hungerford.

The Wharf is the obvious first location. There is currently a vacant shop unit on the southern side of the Wharf with a small frontage onto the canal and this could provide an opportunity for a new café or for an extension of the Tutti Pole café if they wished. Alternatively there could be opportunities for the Tutti Pole café to operate a high quality 'street van' on the northern green. If opportunities cannot be found on land, then a narrow boat café could be an attractive option, either with seating on board or on the green.

Extending the Tutti Pole 'brand' into a more prominent location along the canal would be beneficial in promoting the wider heritage of the town centre, and be consistent with the canal users desire to see and support individual, local businesses. If the Wharf area was overly busy, the café could also direct visitors to the alternative café south of the Bridge.

Further afield, the Church has expressed interest in hosting a 'National Trust' style coffee and cake van. This could form part of an enhanced space at the entrance to the church and Marsh and create an additional destination to draw visitors along the canal. Alternatively the church itself could act as the café and it has indicated that it would be happy for its toilets to be made available to visitors.



Precedent / Cake on the Cut, Canal boat cafe



Precedent / The Horse Box coffee shop, Bridgewater Canal

Informal recreation and use of the water

The canal is already used by community and leisure groups for activities such as paddleboarding and kayaking. The Wharf provides a relatively safe and easy access to the waterway and is a natural focal point. This should continue to be promoted but opportunities should also be considered to promote such activities to visitors, with paddle board and kayak hire.

It may be that other areas could also be improved to allow access for these groups, particularly during the Summer when there is likely to be increased pressure on the relatively small area of public space with access to the water. Access from Station Road could be one opportunity, given its proximity to public car parking, particularly if the lane was improved for vehicular access.

Overnight stays

The Canal & River Trust (CRT) believe that 'canal tourists' would welcome increased opportunities to moor overnight at Hungerford, and would be attracted to visit its historic pubs, interesting cafés and restaurants as well as its antiques shops and wider heritage. Studies from 2012 indicated that day visitors on narrow boats spend an average of £32 in such towns, and for overnight figures the spend rises to £54 per person. There are therefore significant commercial benefits to local businesses from improving the canal to attract more visitors.

If increased moorings can be provided, it is important that the routes to the town centre are easy to navigate, particularly in the evening. The church is also the first point where canals moored west past the swing bridge will 'arrive' at Hungerford needs to feel welcoming. And the route through the churchyard to the Croft and the High Street should be well signed and well lit. From the east, the route to Station Road needs to be safe and wide enough to navigate with clear directions to the town centre along The Cuttings.





Precedent / Bridge 8 Hub

Bridge 8 Hub is Edinburgh's first canal-based urban outdoor activity centre,

Bridge 8 is housed in repurposed shipping containers on the Union Canal and encompasses a cafe and bike repair facility





Precedent / Super Slow Way

Super Slow Way is a consortium comprising the Canal & River Trust, Newground, Arts Partners Pennine Lancashire (APPL) and the district authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Burnley and Pendle. Working with partners across the area, the Super Slow Way values and develops social spaces where people can express their own cultural identities and celebrate their own everyday creativity.

Project Example - The 'Ripple Effect'

The 'Ripple Effect' utilised unused spaces along the canal stretch through Nelson to creating community hubs - places for people to come together; with a particular focus on engaging local young people in activities. From these hubs Super Slow Way hosted a range of activities including canoeing and water sports, led walks, growing and planting and creative workshop.

Project Example - Church Pocket Park

As part of the Super Slow Way Linear Park project, local artist and members of the community cleared, replanted and tended a small canalside park in Accrington to make it a more pleasant place to stop and rest. Introducing more wildflowers to provide varied forage for pollinators.

St. Lawrence's Church Gateway - Potential area for additional seating, wayfinding & location for pop-up coffee van

Croft Fields - Potential location for seating with improved connections back to the town centre.

Hungerford Tennis Club/ Hungerford Lock - potential area for seating

Towpath Improvements

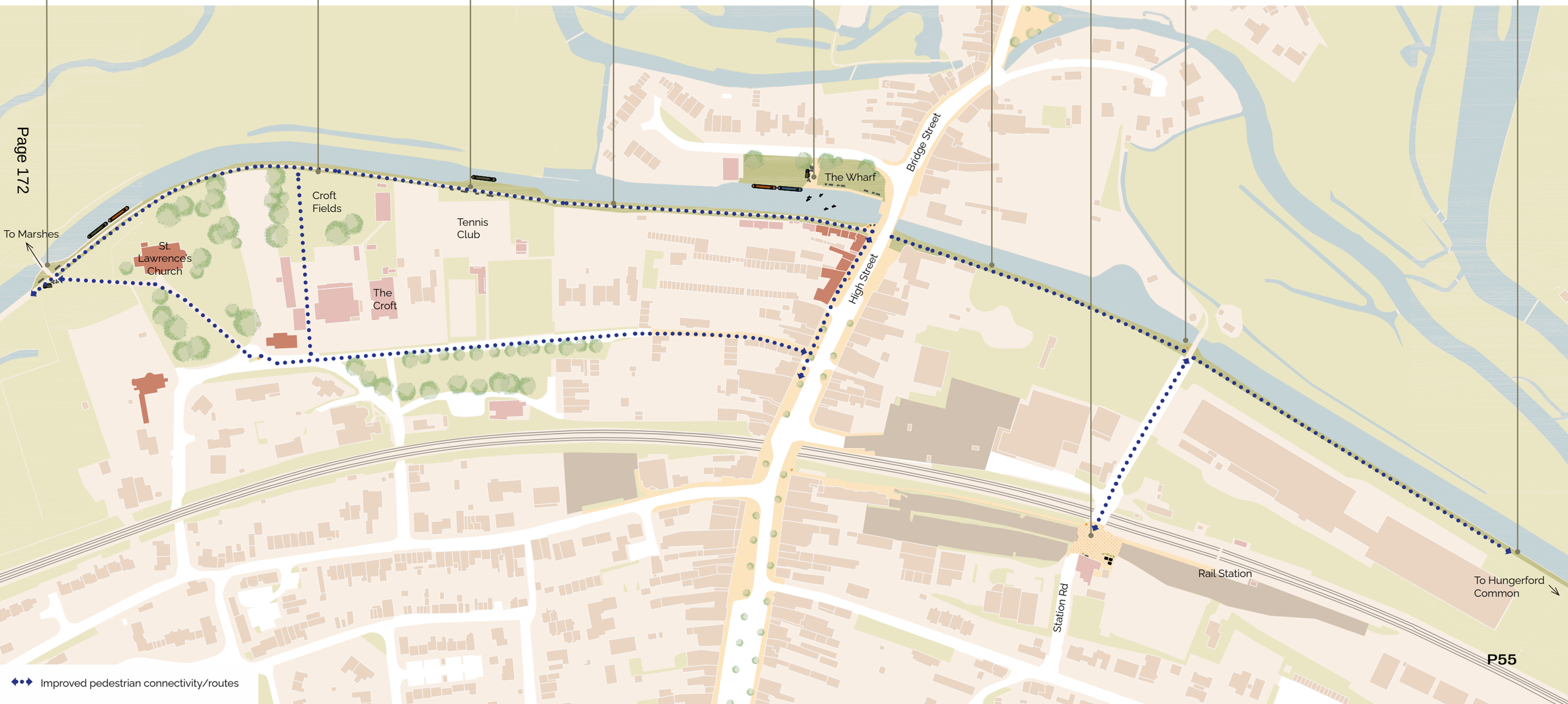
The Wharf/High Street - Potential for landscape improvements including additional seating, new cafe offer, promotion of water-based leisure & improved connections/ wayfinding to town centre and along canal

Towpath Improvements

Rail Station / Car Park - Improved arrival & connections

Everland Rd. Bridge - Improved connections and wayfinding to the town centre rail station & Hungerford Common

Links to Hungerford Common



Hungerford Town Hall

The Town & Manor is a valuable organisation for Hungerford, and an important part of its independent identity and local heritage. Operating the Town Hall is one part of this and the building plays a key role in Hungerford's civic and community life. The survey results confirm this, with the vast majority of respondents prioritising improvements to the external setting of the Town Hall and seeking to make even more use of the buildings meeting rooms for events and activities.

The area outside the Town Hall is currently dominated by highway infrastructure and signage. This undermines the heritage and civic setting of the building, but it also makes it harder for activity within the Town Hall to 'spill out' into the street and advertise the events going on inside. It also creates a disconnect between the street market and the Town Hall. Reconfiguration of these access arrangements could create a stronger civic space at the heart of the town centre, promoting the heritage of the town and reinforcing its distinctive 'Town and Manor' identity.

The new space could allow for an extension of the street market to connect with the Town Hall and with the Corn Exchange within. Increasing the use this space for 'vintage' fairs would complement the antiques trade offer and bring more visitors into the town centre. The Corn Exchange can also be a focus for food halls or local craftspeople, creating a low cost 'pop-up' venue for independent businesses.

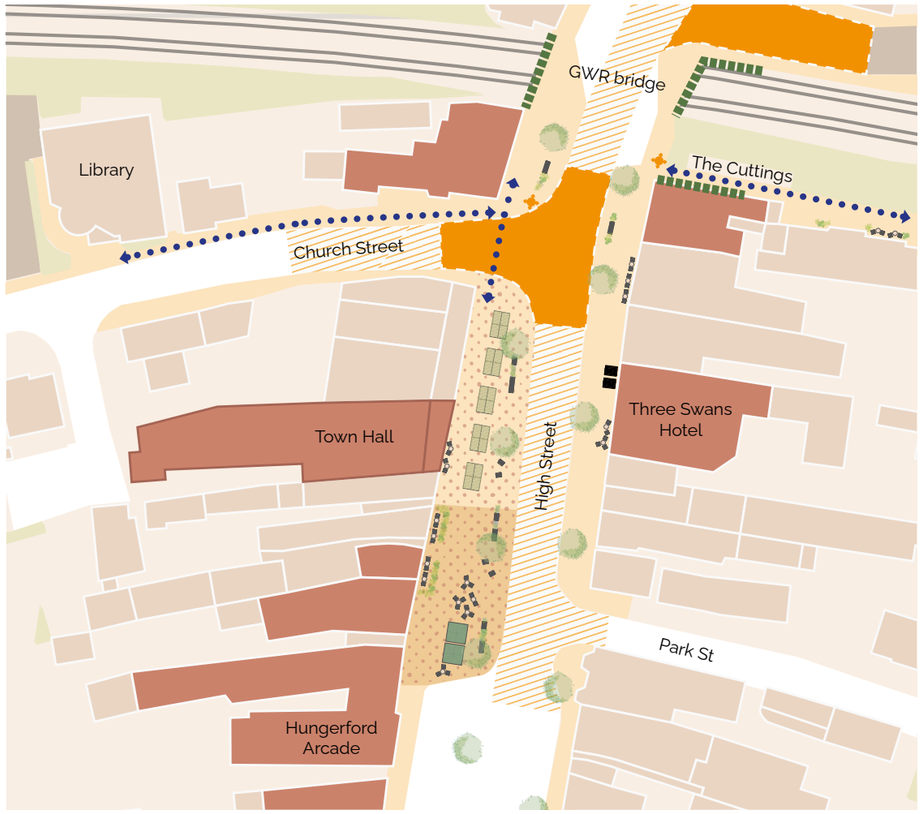
Civic Core

The Town Hall is the most important civic focal point for the town centre. There is the opportunity for the improvements to the Town Hall to create a stronger 'civic core' for Hungerford. Although the highway does of course need to be retained, the design can give the impression that the new space extends across the High Street to enhance the setting of the Three Swans Hotel, which the Virtual Museum describes as "one of the most important of Hungerford's many coaching inns".

The size of the space could potentially be increased by the relocation of 3-4 on-street parking spaces. This would also allow opportunities for the independent bookshop and adjacent café/restaurant (Eliane) to spill out into the street and market their businesses.

Improvements could extend north to incorporate the GWR bridge and railway, also considered important parts of Hungerford's history. Celebrating the bridge and the railway in this location could also help promote the route to the independent businesses along The Cuttings, the town centre car park and of course the railway station itself.

This would create a strong sense of arrival into the town centre from the rail station, Station Road car park and Church Street car park and for motorists arriving from the south. It would create a new public space on the High Street, complementing the green space around the canal. Introducing an informal, or possibly formal, pedestrian crossing facility on Church Street would also encourage north-south pedestrian flow along the High Street.



- Creation of a 'civic space' outside the Town Hall
- Potential extension of civic space
- Public realm improvements
- Potential traffic calming measures
- Improved junctions including new pedestrian crossings
- Possible location for murals/graphic signage
- Improved wayfinding signage
- Improved pedestrian connectivity/routes
- Listed Building







Precedent / The Square, Wimborne

Enhancements to The Square in Wimborne Minster have seen alterations to the traffic flow to create more pedestrian areas and an attractive 'centrepiece' for the town to host markets, events and cafe spill-out.



Precedent / Romsey Market Place

As part of an overall enhancement project for Romsey town centre, improvements have been made to Market Place. The scheme has been designed to create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, provide a new space for public events and markets.







Precedent / Brentford Town Hall & Market Square

The re-configured Market Place now provides a 'living room' for the local community with opportunities for meeting and playing across all generations. Public realm improvements have created an improved setting for the Town Hall, providing flexible space to accommodate regular markets and events.



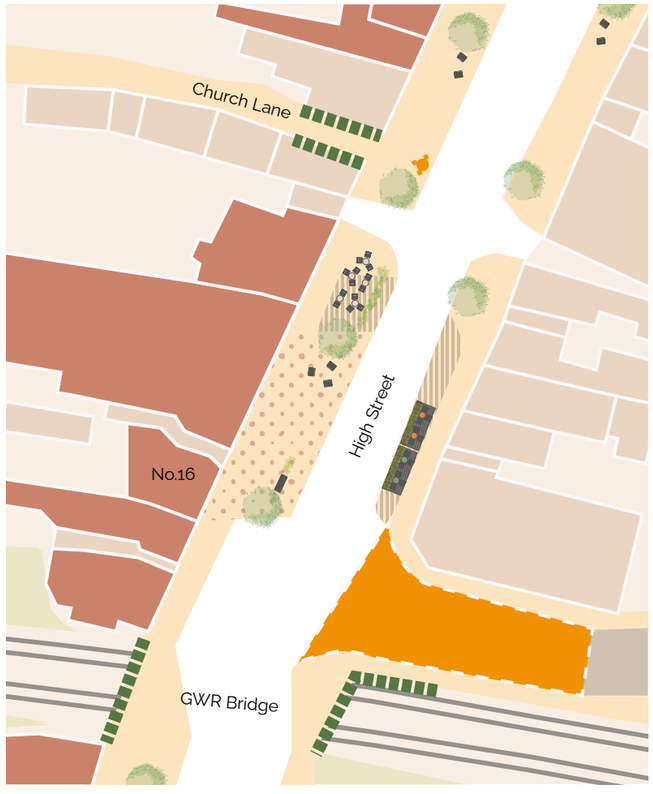
Precedent / Hebden Bridge Town Hall

The new Town Hall combines a range of services for local people and small businesses. Offering a range of office units for businesses, coworking space, cafe, conferencing and event venues, and a programme of events, activities, exhibitions and markets the new Town Hall buzzes with activity – rightfully taking its place again at the heart of Hebden Bridge's rich community life.

Hungerford High Street
(Queen Anne Building, Cafés & Restaurants)

To the north of the GWR Bridge there is an opportunity to create a second 'civic' space, improving the setting of 16 High Street, an attractive listed building which could have potential as a small heritage/arts building, café or small business space for the town centre. Relocating 5-6 on-street spaces would enhance the setting and make the building more attractive for potential café/bar operators as well as creating spill out space for people dining at The Funghi Club (who have expressed interest in additional outdoor seating).

Relocating 3 spaces on the east of High Street would create further space for outdoor seating for Coffee No1 and Amore Italian Restaurant. This could be combined with extending the pavement to reduce the size of the Tesco junction making it easier for pedestrians to cross and extending the area for seating. Outdoor diners are currently either pressed close to the buildings or pushed to the rear of the building adjacent to bins and service areas. It is recommended that discussions be held with these businesses as to whether they would support a trial replacement of parking with temporary parklets and seating.





Precedent / The Branch Community Centre, Chipping Norton

A former NatWest in Chipping Norton is being transformed in to a versatile multi-purpose community space incorporating community hall & kitchen, public cafe, meeting and function rooms, rentable office space, and community garden. The project is led by The Branch Trust charity established by the local St Mary's Church.



Precedent / The Carling Building, Hitchin

The Carling Building in Hitchin is located just off the High Street and has been converted to provide a mix of flexible workspace, meeting rooms and retail space for local artists and designers. People can book 'hot-desks' for a few hours or reserve a permanent 'fixed desk' for those people increasingly not travelling to the office every day but lacking the space and facilities (or desire) to work from home . Discounts are also offered with local independent cafés and deli's to promote the local economy.



Precedent / Abergavenny

Hungerford can learn from other towns which encourage a slower pace of tourism, promoting both the towns and the countryside which surround them. The Cittaslow Movement is an international network promoting 'slow food', local traditions, sustainable and ethical production as part of a wider 'quality of life' message. Abergavenny promotes itself as an independent food destination, with a renowned food festival on the edge of the Brecon Beacons. It has been successful in attracting high quality cafés and restaurants from Cardiff and other areas on the basis of the wider quality of life it offers.

Hungerford Market

Markets provide variety and diversity, history and character. They are an expression of community, and help build a strong sense of local identity. They provide affordable opportunities for new businesses to set up and grow, make it easier for young people and new traders to access trading opportunities, offer environmental and health benefits by encouraging people to shop locally, and providing affordable fresh food produce. They are an important 'tool' for driving town centre footfall, increasing dwell time, and ultimately helping to build and promote the 'brand' of a place.

Hungerford market is located in a prominent location immediately south of the Town Hall. From our visits, it has an attractive range of stalls, with a strong food offer. Reconfiguring the space outside the Town Hall creates the opportunity to extend the range of stalls available and to connect this more strongly with the Town Hall itself and an indoor market offer.

The public survey and stakeholder events demonstrate that there is desire for an expanded indoor and outdoor market programme. The public survey also highlights that young people are less likely to visit Hungerford town centre for a market or event. Ensuring that the market offer excites and actively draws in younger demographics is essential.

In order to have the best possible impact, markets must be carefully curated and rooted in the locale. There's no one size fits all template for a successful market – the very fact that no two markets are exactly the same is one of the reasons why they're so popular. But there are some key elements that come together to form the foundations of a successful, thriving market event:

Retail: Showcasing local independent designers, makers, artists and craftspeople

Food & Drink: Fresh, local, and sustainable produce and an exciting, evolving street food offer

Entertainment: Music & street performance

Workshops: Hands on, creative, and participatory workshops that engage all ages, and add an element of surprise to keep visitors coming back for more.

Extending the market offer into adjacent areas can help encourage pedestrian flow around the town. Consideration could be given to creating an area beneath the railway bridge which could be suitable for music events or street food as an extension of the market, also helping to promote the connection to The Cuttings.

Markets are already held in the Croft area and stronger physical and visual connections via Church Lane and along the canal would help promote these events to casual visitors. The branding and promotion of a market is as important as the curation and it is important that all these areas are consistent in developing a strong visual identity and in their promotion on social media with high quality photography.





Precedent / Holt Sunday Market

Holt Sunday Market is a curated monthly market, whereby on the first Sunday of each month April-Dec (every Sunday during July & August) the town centre is closed to vehicles for a day of Norfolk's best independent, makers and street food traders, alongside communal dining & performances.





Precedent / Second Sundays, Andover

Second Sundays is a new curated street market showcasing Andover's best local talent. Second Sundays brings together some of the best local producers, designer-makers, and artists in the region, alongside street food, live DJs, and free creative workshops, on the second Sunday of every month in Andover town centre.

Station Road & The Cuttings

This is an important arrival point for Hungerford, for rail passengers and for those using Station Road car park. It is only a 2minute walk from the High Street (via The Cuttings) but feels significantly more distant.

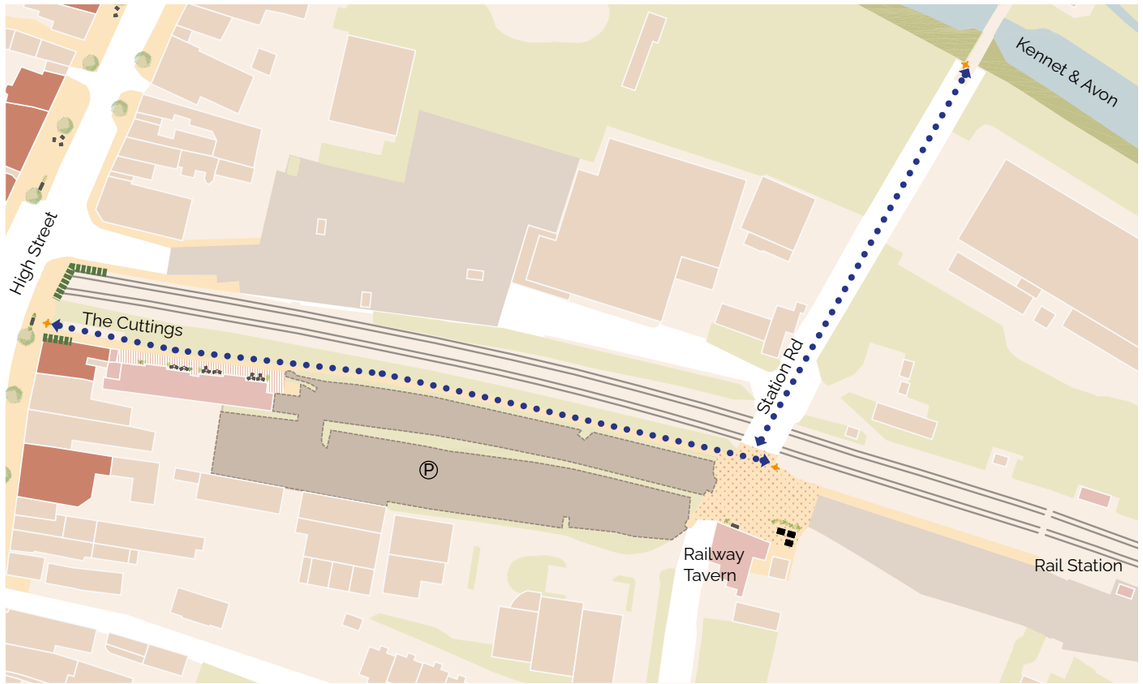
The quality of arrival into the car park in particular does not reflect its proximity to the town centre and despite being the largest car park in Hungerford town centre, it appears to be the least popular. Addressing this could bring significant benefits to the town centre, reducing parking pressure on the High Street and potentially allow for some relocation of on-street parking.

The priorities for this car park should be:

- Remove the barrier, which appears to discourage visitors from using the car park.
- Relocate the recycling containers, which would create a much higher quality of arrival in the town centre, and free up additional parking spaces.
- Reconfigure the parking layout on the 'lower' level to create a single, wider pedestrian route to The Cuttings and High Street adjacent to the railway line.
- Ensure clarity on the extent of public parking spaces (as opposed to private residential or commercial parking).
- Discuss with local businesses the possible relocation of reserved private spaces or making the spaces available to the public at weekends and bank holidays.

Improving Station Road as an arrival space for pedestrians, cyclists, train passengers and motorists would help promote use of the car park but potentially bring wider benefits. A high quality public space could celebrate the Rail Station and the Railway Tavern. It could create stronger pedestrian routes connecting the High Street, Kennet & Avon Canal and The Common, encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of Hungerford. In particular it would create a pedestrian route from The Common and the High Street that takes visitors past the local shops on The Cuttings and avoids the narrow stretch of Park Lane with no footway.

The Cuttings has a cluster of local shops and services and could be promoted with its own identity as a local, specialist lane. The residential surroundings make it difficult for it to be used late in the evening but there is space for cafés to spill out and a 'quirky' environment could be created alongside the railway if the planting was improved and maintained.



Public realm improvements
Improved arrival space
Opportunity for shop/cafe spill out along The Cuttings
Ⓟ Car park improvements
Possible location for murals/graphic signage
Improved wayfinding signage
Improved pedestrian connectivity/routes

High Street (Dods Building)

There is one key area of the High Street (immediately south of the canal) where buildings were identified as in need of physical improvement. This is an important gateway to the town centre, crossing south over the canal bridge into High Street and also a key pedestrian route to the canal from the High Street.

On the western side the frontage of Dods building is clearly in need of improvement, creating a hugely negative impression of the town centre, reinforced by the fact that one of the units is vacant. On the eastern side the properties are not in need of refurbishment to the same degree, but the signage of both Megabet and Hungerford Kebab House undermines the historic quality of the High Street and the quality of the independent businesses which are clustered in this area.

Improving the Dods building, and occupying the vacant ground floor unit, is a priority for the High Street and is an issue that has been considered by the West Berkshire Heritage officers. There is the potential in this area, close to the canal, to create a strong run of independent businesses, building in particular on the presence of the Tutti Pole café and the independent butchers as well as Hungerford Haberdashery.

Extending the blue and white building frontage from the canal to include the Dods building would help create a more coherent image for this area, as well as creating a strong visual presence which would draw visitors north along the High Street and signal the entrance to the canal, which is not obvious to first time visitors.

The pedestrian lane to the canal is also often hidden by vehicles parked in the loading bay in front of the Dods building. Consideration could be given to removing this parking area (which because of the requirement for keep an access clear only has space for 2 vehicles). Widening the footway and reducing some of the railing along the bridge would create a wider and more welcoming gateway to the canal.

The shopfront signage improvements could also be coordinated east of the High Street, with Hungerford Kebabs and Megabet encouraged to support a higher quality Hungerford 'branding'.







Precedent / Shopfront Improvements

Shopfront improvements have been made to 33 businesses across the 7 market towns of Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill, Shefford, Biggleswade, Potton and Sandy, as part of Central Bedfordshire's Market Towns Regeneration Fund.

Bridge Street

Bridge Street is the northern gateway to the Hungerford from the A4, separated from High Street by the canal and bridge. It should be a key part of Hungerford's tourism offer, with a coherent townscape, high quality individual buildings, historic coaching inns, hotels and independent retailers. It has the potential to be marketed as a distinct 'quarter' of the town, but currently feels disconnected from the High Street.

Promoting Bridge Street as a distinct destination with its own identity could help draw people from the canal, and north from the High Street to explore more of the town centre. The heritage trail will also encourage more visits to Bridge Street by directing visitors to particular historic buildings.

Signage from the A4 (utilising the side of the Bear Hotel) could promote both the arrival into Hungerford, but more specifically arrival into Bridge Street. Signage on High Street (south of the canal) and along the canal towpath/wharf area, could also promote the distinctive identity of Bridge Street. Treatment of the highway could announce this arrival, help to slow traffic and encourage pedestrian crossing of the street.

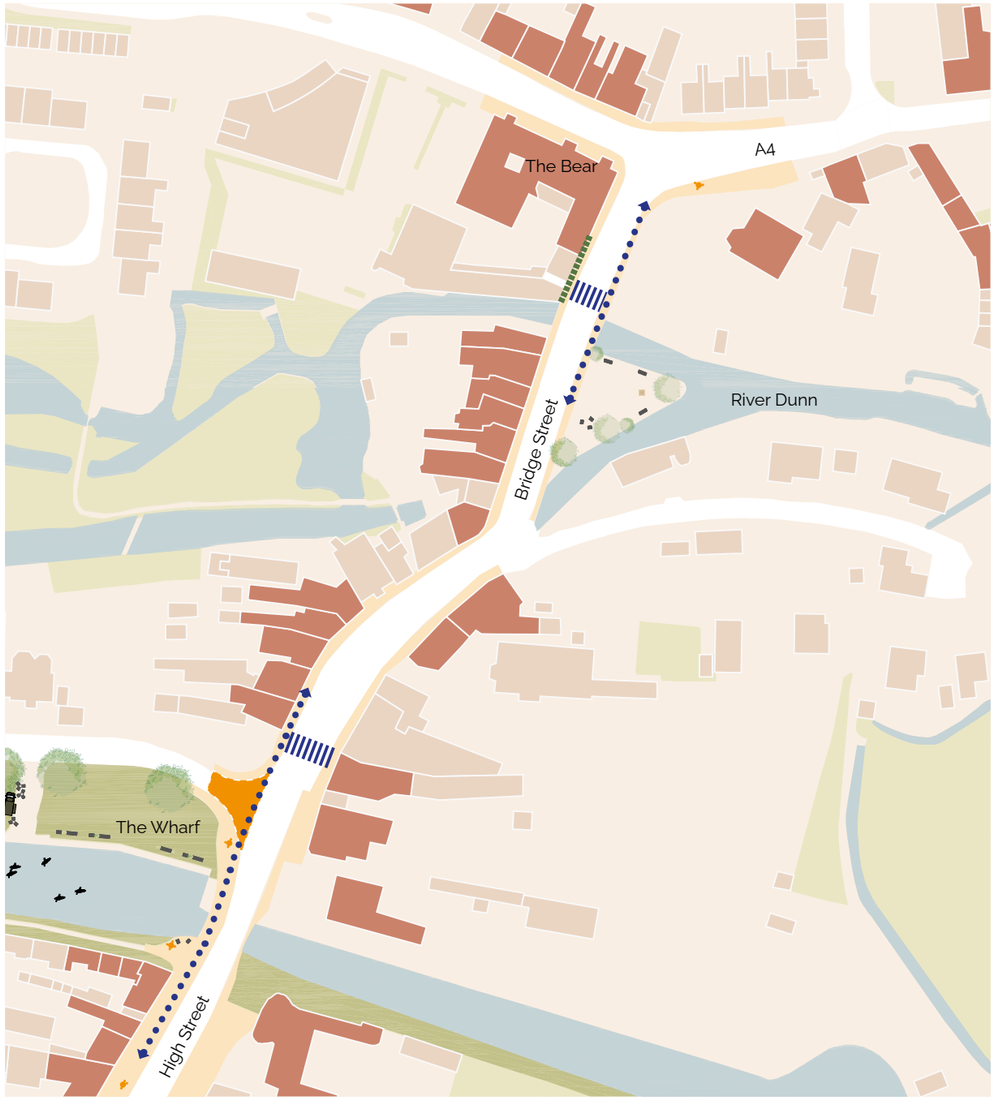
There is a particular need to improve pedestrian connections from High Street and from the canal to Bridge Street. Narrowing of the highway junction into Canal Walk would reduce the barrier it currently presents to pedestrians, whilst the footway treatment could also be made more continuous between High Street and Bridge Street.





Precedent / Sun Street, Hitchin

Hitchin is proud of its independent businesses and local identity. Within Hitchin, Sun Street promotes itself as a distinct shopping street. Individual businesses identify specifically with Sun Street and the gateways are marked with bespoke planting and signage.



- Public realm improvements including signage to promote independent businesses
- Signage and/or treatment to the carriageway to announce arrival in to Bridge Street
- Possible location for wall mural or graphic signage to promote Bridge Street & Hungerford
- Narrowing of the highway junction into Canal Walk to strengthen north-south pedestrian connections
- Strengthen pedestrian connectivity/routes
- Improved wayfinding signage
- Listed Building

05
Action Plan

This section outlines delivery mechanisms for the projects outlined in Section 4. It considers the process for working up the projects in more detail, the stakeholders that should be involved in that process, the potential timescale for design, engagement and delivery together with possible funding options that could be explored.

The Action Plan is designed to help West Berkshire prioritise its future capital funding programmes, to help identify priorities for allocation of CIL funds, and to support bids to external funding bodies. It is also designed to help coordinate activities within Hungerford so as to maximise value for money from the funding allocated.

A variety of projects are outlined which are considered to reflect the views expressed through the on-line consultation and stakeholder workshops, and which address the priority issues identified. Together they present a coherent strategy to improve Hungerford over the course of the West Berkshire Local Plan and Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan period to 2036.

It should be emphasised that this is not put forward as a 'blueprint' for Hungerford. The Strategy and Action Plan present different options in the way in which the projects can be taken forward, and the preferred course of action should be determined by the town itself.

The Action Plan identifies how the projects proposed meet the priorities identified by local stakeholders through the engagement process but more detailed design work is needed before these can be delivered. It is essential that this engagement continues as the projects are worked up and allows local stakeholders to shape the more detailed proposals.

The focus of the Action Plan is on short- and medium-term proposals that can be implemented over the next 5 years but there are some projects that may not come forward until later in the plan period. For many projects, such as the canal improvements, a phased approach is likely to be necessary to reflect the availability of funding. For other projects, such as High Street improvements, a trial approach is recommended to test the benefits of the proposals without incurring significant expenditure and allowing the detailed designs to be refined. They are therefore projects that will be delivered over both the short-term and medium-term, but which elements of the projects come forward in the short term will be determined by the local community and by the availability of funding.

It has been noted that Hungerford is performing relatively well. This is not therefore an Action Plan that proposes large elements of change to the town centre, but focuses on targeted improvements to the Canal, the Town Hall and other key areas of the High Street that can bring the most benefits to Hungerford.



Priority Areas for Change

1. **Canal** - Increasing opportunities for play, exercise and social activity along the canal. Improving the towpath, and creating better connections between the canal and the rest of the town centre.

2. **Town Hall** - Utilising more of the Town Hall for specialist markets, pop-ups and independent shops

3. **Civic Core** - Enhancing the setting of the Town Hall, creating a focal 'civic' space in the town centre for events, markets and community activity, and providing opportunity for the Town Hall and independent businesses to 'spill out' into the High Street.

4. **High Street (Queen Anne Building)** - Creating a second 'civic' space for the town, Exploring new uses for, and improving the setting of the listed Queen Anne building (no.16), and creating space for outdoor seating for the independent cafés and restaurants in this area.

5. **Station Road & The Cuttings** - Improving Station Road as an arrival space for pedestrians, cyclists, train passengers and motorists. Creating stronger pedestrian routes connecting the High Street, Canal and Hungerford Common, and promoting The Cuttings a local, specialist lane.

6. **High Street (Dods Building)** - Public realm improvements and potential removal of the parking area in front of the Dods building to enhance arrival into High Street from the north, and improve connections to the canal. Alongside shop/building front improvements to support a higher quality Hungerford 'branding'.

7. **Bridge Street** - Promoting Bridge Street as a distinct destination, encouraging visitors to explore more of the town and promoting the arrival in to Hungerford.

Short Term Priority Project

The Town Hall

A series of opportunities were presented for inside and outside Hungerford Town Hall in Section 4, including:

- Identify opportunities for vintage markets, craft businesses and events to complement antiques offer,
- Redesign of external space to create spill out areas for markets and events,
- Public realm scheme to enhance 'civic' core of Hungerford and mark connections to local destinations and independent businesses.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results showed that improving the Town Hall is considered a priority project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:

- Help Town and Manor make more use of the Town Hall for specialist markets, pop-ups and independent shops (7.3)
- Improve the area outside the Town Hall for events & markets and enhance its setting (7.2)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street (7.5)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Integrating community facilities within the town centre (6.9)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)
- Introduce 20mph zones to reduce impact of traffic (6.6)
- Widening footpath along Church Street to improve connections (6.4)

Delivery costs and funding

The capital cost of the internal projects would be relatively small, with costs primarily relating to any additional staff needed to help deliver improved events and the costs of marketing and promotion. It is not anticipated that any internal changes are needed to the Town Hall to facilitate these new events.

An area of at least 300sqm should be considered for improvement in front of the Town Hall. The cost of improvements to The Square, in Wimborne town centre, which included the removal of parking and highway infrastructure and replacing with an event space, was approximately £500,000. The size of space is broadly comparable to Hungerford Town Hall but costs will have increased since the scheme was delivered around 10 years ago. It is also considered beneficial for any improvements to be coordinated with wider 'civic' improvements to the mini-roundabout which would increase the costs. The cost of delivering a new public space more recently in Romsey, of similar area but with associated highway changes was stated at £3m.

The cost of the external improvements will depend on the precise extent of the area to be improved along the High Street, whether this extends to consideration of the mini-roundabout and surrounding highways, and to what extent the existing cobbles can be retained within the new design. Until these issues are resolved it is recommended that a budget of at least £1m should be identified for design and delivery of this project.

Coordinating the scheme with wider highways improvements, and measures to slow traffic and improve crossings for pedestrians, opens up West Berkshire Council capital funding as well as potential LEP funding. The social, community, economic and cultural benefits of the project could potentially open up opportunities for funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund or from Greenham Trust.

Action and timescale

Discussions should be held with Town & Manor regarding the potential for widening the range of markets and events held inside and outside the Town Hall. Enquiries should be made to identify any new local traders, crafts people, artists or other businesses who may wish to be part of such an event.

A coordinated series of market and events could be prepared (including The Croft area) for potential trialling in the new external space in Summer 2024, ideally in parallel with improvements at The Wharf and possible trialling of improvements elsewhere on the High Street (see below). Discussions would need to be held initially with bus and taxi operators to confirm that the current arrangements can be changed.

The trial period would allow the relative success of the proposals to be evaluated and the views of businesses and the wider community obtained. If appropriate, a specification could then be drawn up for a permanent scheme. It should be noted that delivery of an additional major scheme in this timescale could put pressure on the resources available within the West Berkshire Highways team.

Short Term Project

High Street Dods Building

Section 4 identified the importance of creating improved connections between the High Street and the Canal, via the Dods Building and highlighting the cluster of independent shops in this area.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results showed that improving this area is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:

- Encourage use of the Canal through improved wayfinding and interventions to signal the canal from High Street (7.3)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street (7.5)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)

Delivery costs and funding

Costs for improving the Dods building should be borne primarily by the owners, but it may be appropriate to provide grants or funding to support refurbishment, particularly shopfront improvements. Such grants could be used to promote the space for local, independent businesses, as well as promoting tourism by encouraging use of the Canal.

Funding could come from the West Berkshire capital budget, from the LEP, Shared Prosperity Fund or Greenham Trust.

Action and timescale

Improving the appearance of the Dods building should be a short term priority as its appearance has a significantly negative effect on this important part of the High Street. Ideally any improvements should be made at the same time as improvements to the Wharf area of the Canal, and at the very least the frontage should be painted and 'refreshed'. Improving the public realm outside the Dods building should be coordinated with refurbishment of the building with a target date of Spring 2024. The improvements should also be coordinated with improvements to Church Lane (see below).

Short Term Project

Bridge Street Identity

The promotion and marketing of Bridge Street as an independent 'destination' was identified in Section 4 as an opportunity for Hungerford.

Stakeholder Priorities

Supporting Bridge Street businesses was identified as a project following the on-line survey and would address a range of stakeholder priorities, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)
- Introduce 20mph zones to reduce impact of traffic (6.6)

Delivery costs and funding

The capital costs associated with the proposals relate primarily to signage. A budget of £50,000 would provide for a branding exercise and 3-4 signs/planters at the entrances to Bridge Street. This is in addition to any wayfinding signage as part of the Heritage Trail and could also include mural/signage on the side wall of The Bear Hotel.

The project could be extended with treatment of the carriageway to mark arrival into Bridge Street, either through slight narrowing of the carriageway, through a change in materials or a change in colour. All would help reinforce the identity of Bridge Street, announce arrival into Hungerford town centre and reduce traffic speeds.

Action and timescale

There is no set timescale for this project. Implementation is wholly dependent on support from the range of businesses located along Bridge Street. The priority therefore would be to engage with those businesses to gauge the levels of support for marketing Bridge Street as a distinct, independent quarter of Hungerford.

Short Term Project

Church Lane

Section 4 identified the importance of creating improved connections between the High Street, The Croft and St Lawrence's Church via Church Lane.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results showed that improving this area is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:

•Improve signage, lighting, surfacing & greenery along Church Lane to strengthen connections to The Croft, Hungerford Club and Church	(6.8)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

• Increasing opportunities for independent businesses	(8.5)
•Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage	(7.3)
• Encourage use of the Canal through improved wayfinding	(7.3)
• Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more	(7.2)
• Integrating community facilities within the town centre	(6.9)
• Enhancing arrival to the town centre	(6.7)

Delivery costs and funding

Costs for improving Church Lane can vary according to the level of ambition. The absolute priority is to sign and light the entrance from High Street to create a welcoming and visible route to The Croft Area. Wall signs/murals and wall lighting could be installed for a budget of £50,000 but needs to be coordinated with the proposals for the Heritage Trail.

The scope of the project could be extended with additional signage, lighting and interpretation boards around The Croft or through treatment of the paving to indicate the route between the High Street, the Church and the Canal. It could also be integrated with the Canal project, to create well lit and inviting routes to the town centre from the areas where overnight moorings are provided.

Funding could come from the West Berkshire capital budget, with potential contributions from Town & Manor as Trustees of The Croft.

Action and timescale

Any improvements would need to be worked up in partnership with Town & Manor, Hungerford Town Council, Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church (with other stakeholders in the area) as well as the Chamber of Commerce as promoters of the Heritage Trail.

Ideally the improvements to Church Lane should be coordinated with the Heritage Trail but also with delivery of towpath improvements along the canal and improvements to the Dods building and link to the Wharf. This will help create a comprehensive circular heritage route for visitors.

Short – Medium Term Priority Project

The Canal

A series of opportunities were identified for improving access, information and activities along the Canal, including:

• Improvements to The Wharf green space, seating and seasonal (local) café operator,
• Promote additional mooring opportunities and promote links to town centre pubs, cafés and shops,
• Improved signage and interpretation (linked to Heritage Trail)
• Opportunities for low impact visitor recreation (such as paddleboarding and kayaking)
• Narrow junction of High Street with Canal Walk to create stronger pedestrian entrance.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results confirmed that improving access to the canal and the activities along it were both considered priority projects by residents and visitors, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

• Promoting the use of the canal for recreation and leisure (8.0)
• Encourage use of the canal through improved wayfinding, lighting, planting etc. alongside improvements to the towpath (7.3)
• Increase opportunities for play, exercise and social activity along the canal (7.0)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

• Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
• Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
• Improve space for indoor & outdoor markets and events (7.5)
• Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
• Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)
• Widen pavements to improve setting of heritage buildings (6.5)

Delivery costs and funding

Discussions have been held with the Canal & River Trust (CRT) regarding potential costs of improving the towpath. The priority area for Hungerford is approximately 1 km in length. Improvement schemes in other areas such as Sandwell and Loughborough suggest that around £1m per km should be budgeted for improvements such as resurfacing, signage/interpretation boards, lighting, wayfinding, benches, planting and increasing mooring sites. The CRT has indicated that implementation costs can potentially be minimised by involving volunteers and the Church has also indicated its support for this.

Funding from CRT is likely to be limited but they can provide resources and volunteers which may be considered as 'match funding'. The scheme can bring significant social, economic, cultural, health and environmental benefits and could attract funding from the LEP, Sustrans, Greenham Trust as well as West Berkshire capital funding. Match funding through complementary improvements, or resources could be investigated in discussions with Town & Manor, Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church. The opportunity should also be taken wherever possible to seek improvements to the towpath from any future planning applications along the canal.

Action and timescale

Over the next 6-9 months the priority should be to scope out the design of possible improvements to the Canal.

This should include:
• Engage with Canal & River Trust and local stakeholders on range of activities to be encouraged
• Engage with Canal & River Trust and local stakeholders on improvements to the towpath, signage and seating
• Coordinate interpretation boards content and design with wider Hungerford Heritage Trail
• Engage with Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church on connections from towpath to Croft Area
• Engage with CRT, local businesses (including Tutti Pole café) and stakeholders on opportunities for temporary cafés along the canal
• Engaging with Canal & River Trust on preferred locations for increased overnight moorings.

Further discussions need to be held with CRT on realistic timescale for implementation, however the trialling of temporary/floating food outlets at The Wharf could potentially be 'fast tracked' for this Summer, along with opportunities for informal recreation.

The design of wayfinding and interpretation boards should be prioritised so that it can be coordinated with the wider Heritage Trail and improvements to the Virtual Museum.

Wider improvements will almost certainly need to be phased over the next 2-3 years to respond to the availability of funding and CRT resources. Priority should however be given to improving the towpath, seating and signage from The Wharf to St Lawrence's Church. Delivery of additional moorings should ideally be coordinated with towpath improvements and potential new routes to the town centre through the Church and Hungerford Club in particular.

Short – Medium Term Project

Queen Anne Building - High Street improvements

Alongside the Town Hall, other opportunities were presented for improvements to the High Street in Section 4, including improvements focused on Queen Anne Building and the cluster of cafés and restaurants in this location.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results showed that improving the High Street is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:

- Widen pavements to allow for spill-out space and improve setting of heritage buildings (6.5)
- Remove some on-street parking to create more space for cafés and businesses (5.9)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street (7.5)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)

Delivery costs and funding

The action plan identifies discrete areas which can be taken forward independently, or as part of a comprehensive scheme of improvements.

In front of 16 High Street (Queen Anne building), areas for improvement can be as small as 3-4 parking spaces or more comprehensive and up to 10 parking spaces. The more comprehensive scheme would provide wider pavements and spill out space for 3 or 4 cafés and restaurants clustered in this area as well as space and improved setting for the currently vacant listed building. This would help promote bringing the building back into use, for a café, heritage or community use or a combination of those. Interest has also been expressed in delivering small business space in the town centre and this could be incorporated.

Costs can therefore vary, from small scale changes of around £200,000, up to £500,000 with improvements around the Tesco car park junction to make pedestrian crossing easier and safer. A comprehensive scheme for the whole area could therefore require funding of up to £1m, depending on the degree to which existing materials can be retained or reused.

Action and timescale

It should be noted that whilst the majority of respondents favoured replacing some areas of car parking with more seating and areas for eating and drinking, a number of respondents are not supportive and it is important that a consensus be achieved within the town. It is recommended therefore that smaller trials be conducted to test the level of support for the schemes, the impact on traffic and the impact on businesses.

Trials should be conducted during the Summer when visitor numbers are highest and there is more opportunity for sitting out in the evening. Priority areas for trials should be agreed with the businesses closest to the parking spaces affected, particularly Coffee No1, Amore and The Funghi Club, and implemented in those areas which have business support. Provision of temporary planters and parklets in the parking bays will create separation from the traffic and allow more space for pedestrians and tables and chairs outside the restaurants. The cost for 4 parklets would be in the region of £50,000, but they can be moved and reused.
Consideration should also be given to identifying temporary or 'pop-up' uses for the vacant Queen Anne building. This is a priority heritage building in a prominent central location, and could, for example, provide a 'pop-up' home for the virtual museum or to launch the Heritage Trail.

Providing temporary arts, cultural or craft uses, small business space and a community café would bring additional life to the street, particularly if undertaken at the same time as the High Street improvement trials. It is recommended that discussions be held with Coop (the building owners) about the potential for such activity.

Short - Medium Term Project

Station Road and The Cuttings

Improving arrival at Station Road and promotion of The Cuttings as an independent business location was identified in Section 4 as an opportunity for Hungerford.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results showed that improving Station Road and The Cuttings is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:

- Encourage use of Rail Station car park with better for signage and walking links to High Street (6.8)
- Improve pedestrian journey via The Cuttings (6.5)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street (7.3)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)

Delivery costs and funding

The capital costs are associated primarily with reconfiguring the entrance to the car park and creating a stronger sense of arrival with a new public space. A budget of around £100,000, depending on the nature of the public realm improvements, could be sufficient to relocate the recycling bins, create a more attractive entrance and potentially combine the pedestrian routes along the railway. Coordinated signage to announce arrival into The Cuttings from the station car park and from High Street should be included within this budget. Funding should come from West Berkshire Highways and capital budgets, and some funding should be sought from Network Rail for improving and maintaining the planting along the railway line. Consideration should also be given to seeking contributions from future planning applications around Station Road.

Action and timescale

The priority would be to find an alternative location for the recycling bins, enabling more parking spaces to be provided and the entrance to be redesigned. Further surveys should be undertaken to establish the degree to which the barrier dissuades visitors from using the public car park, and whether it would be preferable to maintain a consistent approach to payment across all the West Berkshire car parks in the town centre.

Ideally, the recycling bins should be relocated, and additional spaces provided at Station Road car park, by Summer 2024 the likely date for the first trials for High Street improvements, ensuring replacement parking spaces were available in the town centre. Creation of an arrival space on Station Road, and improved pedestrian routes to the High Street and The Common could be implemented as funding becomes available.

HUNGERFORD TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

FINAL DRAFT

West Berkshire Council
NEW masterplanning
urban movement
HemingwayDesign

Renewal of the BBOWT partnership for Countryside Management.

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Richard Somner
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	5 January 2023
Report Author:	Paul Hendry, Countryside Manager
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4313

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To set out the current arrangement we have with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) for the management of this councils countryside assets and to seek approval for the continuation of this arrangement for a further 10 year term.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive resolves to:

a) approve the continuation of the current partnership arrangement with BBOWT for a further 10 years from the 1st April 2024 until the 31st March 2034; and

b) delegate authority to the Service Lead (Legal and Democratic Services) in consultation with the Service Director (Environment) to negotiate and make amendments to the agreement with BBOWT.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	An annual grant of approximately £360,000 revenue and £100,000 capital is paid to BBOWT towards the management of the countryside sites which transferred into their care. There are no additional financial implications as a consequence of the recommendation set out in this Report however, were the Executive minded not to approve the continuation of the current arrangement for a further 10 years

	then the partnership with BBOWT would end on the 31st March 2024. Under that circumstance all assets, land and buildings, and all staff engaged on reserve management work would transfer back to the council. Additionally approximately £170,000 per annum of BBOWT investment would be lost with the consequent negative impact on site management and staffing. Implementing an in house management service or other alternative arrangement will therefore become more expensive.
Human Resource:	None as a consequence of this recommendation. If however the Executive were minded not to approve the continuation of the current agreement for a further 10 years then there will be a TUPE implication as staff will have to transfer from BBOWT to WBC.
Legal:	The current agreement makes provision for a 10 year extension of term unless terminated on 12 months' notice. The current agreement was assessed for compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2006 and the State Aid rules at the time of commencement. Legal Services will now need to review the current agreement, in consultation with the Service, and make any necessary amendments to ensure compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Subsidy Control Act 2022.
Risk Management:	All risks relating to the management of council assets, both land and built property, and staffing risks passed to BBOWT in 2014. BBOWT retains the required level of professional and public liability in order to continue to manage countryside assets under the agreement. The agreement includes adequate provision for dispute resolution and a means to exit the partnership. If the agreement is not continued and the countryside assets, including a number of important Sites of Special Scientific Interest, are returned to WBC care the council has a statutory duty to ensure that these sites do not fall into poor condition, or otherwise become damaged through neglect. Any alternative management arrangement therefore needs to address this risk.
Property:	BBOWT have a 50 year lease on all the countryside assets. These leases are however co-terminus with the expiry of the agreement. If the Executive are minded not to approve a continuation to the current agreement then these leases will come to an end on the 31st March 2024 and all the countryside

	assets will revert back to this council along with the associated risks and costs.			
Policy:				
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			BBOWT have access to a greater number of trained staff with expertise in equalities who are specifically assigned to advise on the management of nature reserves and education facilities. Reserve staff have an in-depth knowledge of the full range of experiences sites can offer the whole community. The aim of the partnership is to ensure an equal quality of experience to the whole community. Working with a diverse range of people will help ensure a more inclusive service is developed for all future visitors.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		There should be no negative impact, in fact BBOWT have access to a greater number of trained staff with expertise in equalities who are specifically assigned to advise on the management of nature reserves and education facilities.
Environmental Impact:	X			There is likely to be a positive impact's as BBOWT invest in the partnership on an ongoing basis.

Health Impact:	X			There is widespread evidence to show the health and social benefits that come from spending time outdoors. Countryside and open spaces are central features of local community life. This is where public recreation takes place, and where people can connect with the natural world and with each other.
ICT Impact:		X		BBOWT supply their own IT services.
Digital Services Impact:		X		As above
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Priority 6. Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships. This proposal brings together the strengths of both organisations to provide the most effective, long term and sustainable future for the management of the countryside in West Berkshire.
Core Business:		X		Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults BBOWT through the partnership have provided specific services for older people and vulnerable adults including regular volunteering opportunities and the popular 'memories café' which caters specifically for adults with dementia.
Data Impact:		X		No significant impact. BBOWT do gather and hold data but this is in accordance with legislation and there is a specific provision within the agreement, the *Data Processing agreement*, which sets out both organisations obligations in terms of Data.

Consultation and Engagement:	Full consultation took place with statutory consultees and other consultees including the Local Access Forum and the Greenham Commission prior to signing the agreement in 2014 and leasing the key sites to BBOWT. There was general approval for the proposal and recognition of the potential benefits. All the consultees recognised the value of having a locally respected body involved as a partner and the added value this offers. There was some concern about the balance of management that BBOWT might deliver and specifically how a conservation focussed organisation will manage the often conflicting needs of people, communities and wildlife. Over the last 10 years we have had very few concerns in this respect, other than concerns raised about local voluntary restrictions to protect ground nesting birds from disturbance by walkers and dogs. There were also some concerns raised about the impact of Parkrun which was resolved amicably after detailed discussions. All consultees understood that the intention was to form a long term relationship with BBOWT.

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This council has been in partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) since April 2014. BBOWT provide nature reserves, commons and country park management at 10 council owned or managed locations across the District. This partnership has been extremely successful in delivering benefits for wildlife and the public who use the countryside for leisure and recreation, and mental health and wellbeing purposes. To our knowledge a partnership of this kind, delivering the management of publicly owned countryside assets with the local wildlife trust is unique in this country.

4.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to continue the current agreement with BBOWT to continue for a further 10 years from 31st March 2024.

4.3 The council entered into a partnership with BBOWT in order to place these highly valued assets into the management of an organisation with the necessary expertise to develop their capacity to support key species and to balance the needs of these species, some of which are rare or threatened, against the needs of the wider public for leisure and recreation. Prior to the agreement this council were under significant financial constraints such that it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the ecological status of the sites in the face of increasing visitor pressure and environmental influences.

4.4 Forming a partnership with BBOWT immediately increased the revenue funding available for site management and also significantly increased the likelihood of capital investment as BBOWT are able to attract sources of funding which are not otherwise available to the council. Since 2014 BBOWT have on average invested around £170,000 of funding, both revenue and capital per annum to the ongoing management of the assets and have attracted funding from 3rd party sources to match the capital

investment from this council. This investment is greater if the significant volunteering effort on reserves is factored into the calculations.

4.5 In return BBOWT have a 50 year lease on all the council owned sites, a security which allows them to attract 3rd party funding. Some of these sites are of very high ecological value, sitting well in their portfolio and allowing them to recruit new members and volunteers locally. BBOWT receive an annual sum of £360,000 of revenue funding and £100,000 of capital funding per annum as a contribution towards the overall investment made by BBOWT. In return BBOWT deliver annual budget and work programme for the delivery of broad conservation and visitor management objectives, including environmental education.

4.6 Over the period of the agreement, wildlife and habitats across the Council's key countryside sites have seen a considerable improvement. Since 2015 47% of target habitat features have improved in condition, 34% of the features have maintain the status quo whilst 17% are in unfavourable condition. Overall 87% of habitat features are either Favourable or in a Recovering condition.

4.7 In conclusion, BBOWT provide significant added value to the management of West Berkshire Council owned and managed countryside assets, both in terms of funding and expertise. The benefits that this partnership attract will continue despite the current financial challenges and ensure that our countryside assets are managed appropriately for a further 10 years beyond the initial funding term.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 In 2014 the council entered into an agreement with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust for the management of all the council's key countryside assets including Greenham Common, Snelsmore Common and the Nature Discovery Centre. A number of staff also transferred to BBOWT under TUPE provisions. The agreement has an automatic renewal clause which allows the partnership with BBOWT to be continue for another 10 years after the initial agreement term unless either party wishes to withdraw. Should either party wish to withdraw then they must give 12 months' notice prior to the end of the initial agreement term, 31st March 2024. The purpose of this Report is seek approval to allow the agreement to continue for a further 10 years.

Background

5.2 Due to the time which has elapsed since the start of the agreement, it is perhaps worth revisiting some of the background which led to the current partnership being established and the agreement being signed.

5.3 In the years prior to 2014 the Countryside Service and countryside maintenance budgets had been gradually reduced as part of a package of measures to address the various financial challenges that the authority faced at that time. These challenges presented an opportunity to look at an alternative model for the delivery of countryside services. Officers considered a number of options at the time, including the formation of a countryside trust, partnering with the private and voluntary sector, and a more conventional contracting option with the private sector.

5.4 Discussion with other local authorities very clearly indicated that a conventional contracting arrangement with a private contractor would not work as the habitats and species that West Berkshire nature reserves support are influenced by many competing environmental factors. A management approach which is appropriate in one year many not be appropriate the following. Most often, management principles have to be adjusted in year, from season to season. Consequently it is very difficult to specify management prescriptions for conservation operations. Notwithstanding this there are very few, if any, suitably qualified countryside management contractors operating in the UK.

5.5 Another option considered was to set up an independent countryside trust. This is an option whereby the Council would set the Countryside Service up as a separate entity, funded by the Council through a grant which is reduced over time in order to realise savings, with the shortfall being recouped from 3rd party sources and income. There are a number of issues with council managed/owned 'Trusts' however. Many funding bodies do not recognise these trusts as being essentially separate from the parent council. Further, trusts remain heavily reliant on core funding unless there are significant 'income generators' within the countryside portfolio. There are no significant income generators within the council's portfolio of countryside sites.

5.6 Officers opened up initial discussions with BBOWT and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) with regards forming a countryside management partnership. Both parties were very keen if initially cautious and several discussions took place. The RSPB however stated their intention only to take on management of Greenham and Crookham Commons. BBOWT on the other hand saw the advantages of a wider partnership arrangement, and were committed to taking on all the key sites managed by the Countryside Service.

5.7 The benefits of working with BBOWT were immediately apparent. BBOWT is our local Wildlife Trust. They have over 60 years' experience of managing sites with a significant and sometimes threatened wildlife importance. They also have considerable experience in managing and balancing the needs of wildlife with the needs of local communities who expect to have access to these locations. BBOWT are also excellent at unlocking 3rd party funding streams, most of which are not available to local authorities.

5.8 Consequently the council took external legal advice on the potential to enter into a formal legal agreement with BBOWT for the delivery of countryside management services on behalf of the council. Procurement of such an arrangement with the charitable sector was a significant hurdle. The council was advised however that as the various regulations which apply to public service contracts do not encompass grants to charitable bodies, then an agreement with BBOWT was possible. This is an approach which has been previously used by local authorities with leisure and cultural assets where charitable companies have been established to take on the discretionary services and associated facilities.

5.9 On this basis an agreement was drawn up between both parties that saw the transfer of the countryside assets on a long lease and a number of staff to BBOWT. In return an annual grant is paid to BBOWT for the delivery of an annual work plan setting out in general terms what BBOWT will deliver in each year of the agreement.

5.10 All the sites owned by this council were consequently transferred under a 50 year lease to BBOWT. These leases are critical as they provide a clear separation between the council's influence and BBOWT's management. These are full repairing leases and sit alongside the current agreement. Regardless of the lease term, they are coterminous whenever the current agreement comes to an end.

5.11 In 2022/23 the Grant paid to BBOWT was as follows: £360,000 revenue funding including a contribution towards staffing costs, and £100,000 of capital (community infrastructure levy) to help develop and improve the sites and improve their resilience to increasing visitor pressure from development. It should be noted that the overall costs to BBOWT for the management of these sites is significantly greater and therefore annually BBOWT contribute around £170,000 of their own reserves, both revenue and capital towards the delivery of set objectives.

5.12 An ongoing revenue saving of £45,000 was achieved through efficiencies from the second year of the current agreement onwards.

Key principles of the agreement.

5.13 In summary these are set out in the following table:

10 year agreement period with an additional 10 year extension by agreement.	Provides sufficient security for BBOWT who endeavour to find additional funding from 3rd party sources. Ten year funding agreements are often required by the larger grant funding bodies in order to protect investment.
Dispute Resolution and Exit Strategy	Both parties can leave the partnership at the end of every ten year period after 12 giving months' notice, or otherwise by mutual agreement at any stage. The agreement can be terminated if there are significant breaches. Dispute resolution is built in to try to resolve less serious issues.
50 Year leases, co-terminus with expiry of the agreement.	Conservation management objectives are often achieved over this kind of timescale. 50 year leases also prove some separation between the Council and BBOWT, again essential for some large grant funding bodies who cannot fund local authority provision. If the agreement ends for any reason then the leases lapse.
Annual Work Plan	In order to ensure that the partnership with BBOWT reflects a grant arrangement and not a service arrangement the Work Plan sets out the broad outcomes to be achieved by BBOWT each year. BBOWT then has discretion as to how these

	objectives are to be delivered. The annual work Programme does however allow for active performance management, including regular partnership Meetings with senior BBOWT Management.
Grant funded	An annual grant of approximately £360,000 revenue and £100,000 capital is provided to BBOWT for the delivery of the Service. Note that on top of this Grant BBOWT invests £170,000 of its own resources and capital towards the management of the countryside assets.
An ongoing saving from Year 2 of the agreement	£45,000 of ongoing revenue savings from year 2 onwards.
Managed by a Joint Steering Group	This Group oversees the partnership. This ensures governance, scrutiny and performance management. The Group includes; Portfolio Member, Service Director and Countryside Manager, and a similar representation from BBOWT. As the delivery of countryside management under the agreement is not specified or directed by the Council this group has an important role to ensure that the grant is spent appropriately and that the broad objectives set out in the Work Plan hare achieved.

What has been achieved since 2014

5.14 BBOWTs achievements have been many and varied and probably too many to list here in full. They were however tasked at the outset with 2 key objectives, firstly to improve the conservation status of the key countryside nature reserves which were transferred into their stewardship, and secondly to manage public access on the countryside sites in a way which balanced the needs of the public and the wildlife which exist there.

5.15 As a measure of ecological status BBOWT carries out annual ecological surveying of the nature reserves under their management to monitor the condition of key habitat features and species found on the reserves. This data is collected by their ecologists and 200 local ecology volunteers, it is then analysed, and the results fed back to reserve managers to inform site management plans and enable work programmes to be adapted as required.

5.16 At the start of the agreement with West Berkshire Council in 2014 BBOWT recorded the condition of the following 23 habitat features across the 6 key countryside sites. This is the baseline both parties use:

- 8 habitat features were in 'favourable' condition
- 8 habitat features were in 'unfavourable recovering' condition
- 7 habitat features were in 'unfavourable' or 'unfavourable declining condition

5.17 The condition survey results for 2021 now show:

- 14 habitat features are now in favourable condition
- 5 habitat features are now in 'unfavourable recovering' condition
- 4 habitat features are in 'unfavourable no change or declining'

5.18 The above illustrates that since 2014 47% of the habitat features have improved in condition, 34% of the features have maintain the status quo and 17% have declined or remain in unfavourable condition. 87% of habitat features are either Favourable or in a Recovering condition. This is just short of the 95% KPI BBOWT set themselves to measure which reserves are 'Rich in Wildlife' across BBOWT's landholding.

5.19 There is still some work to do to improve the condition of the habitats found on the West Berkshire Countryside sites. Overgrazing by commoner's livestock is a significant problem, having a deleterious impact on the condition of the habitats found on Greenham and Crookham Common. BBOWT, West Berkshire Council and the Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission have been working hard to try and introduce regulations to control grazing, and subsequently reverse the decline in habitat condition. Both parties are hopeful that regulations will be passed by DEFRA in the next 12 months. Further improvements are therefore expected over the following ten year period.

5.20 With respect to visitor management and provision of public access, the best example of BBOWTs inputs in this respect can be found in the document, *Annual Seasonal Wardens Report*, which is attached as Appendix 1. This Report is used to evaluate visitor numbers at key sites and measures taken to mitigate impact whilst promoting public access. It is a very good indication of the effort that BBOWT is engaged in to make sites welcoming to the public whilst protecting species.

Financial investment

5.21 It should be noted that despite the ongoing savings that the agreement has realised, BBOWT has, over the last 9 years of the partnership, invested approximately £1,046,000 of its own revenue resources, including back office support costs, and £482,000 of capital funding to develop and improve the sites now under their care. Most of this capital investment comes from funding sources which are not available to local authorities.

5.22 Overall, the average grant paid to BBOWT over the last 9 years, a sum of £450,000 per annum has attracted investment of £170,000 per annum from BBOWT.

Volunteering Input

5.23 If we factor in to these investment calculations the thousands of hours of BBOWT volunteer effort on West Berkshire nature reserves this investment is significantly greater than the figures quoted here. Volunteering figures for last year (2021/2022) show that BBOWT volunteers carried out 5667 hours of conservation effort. The

generally accepted formula for converting this to monetary value assumes 5 hours per day per volunteer at a rate of £50 per day. 5667 hours converts to 1133 volunteer days at £50 per day, which is an annual sum of £56,670 of investment.

5.24 This of course takes no account of the health, and metal wellbeing benefits experienced by those members of the local community who participate in conservation volunteering.

Agreement Review and recent legislation

5.25 The imminent end of the first 10 years of this agreement provides an opportunity for a review of the partnership agreement. The council needs to review the agreement to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and compliant with the new legislative landscape.

Proposals

5.26 The partnership with BBOWT has had significant benefits for the nature reserves, country parks and commons in West Berkshire. It is proposed that the Executive agree to allow the continuation of the current arrangement from the 1st April 2024.

5.27 This proposal will allow the current benefits to continue for another 10 year period from the 1st April 2024. This proposal presents the best possible opportunity to further the good work and projects that the partnership has delivered over the years whilst meeting the challenges which this council will face over the next decade.

5.28 The current agreement was assessed for compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2006 and the State Aid rules at the time of commencement. Legal Services will during the period of the continuation review the current agreement, in consultation with the Service, and make any necessary amendments to ensure compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Risks associated with not continuing with this agreement.

5.29 Were the Executive minded not to allow the continuation of this arrangement then on the 1st of April 2024 the current leases on all the assets; nature reserves, commons and built assets such as the Nature Discovery Centre, and the office and storage facilities at Greenham Common, will come to an end and will have to be maintained by the Countryside Service. The council would then bear the risks associated with these sites, specifically public liability risks.

5.30 All staff engaged on countryside management work will also transfer back to the Service. Approximately 11 members of staff (9.6fte) transferred to BBOWT. Some of these staff were retained and still work for BBOWT within the partnership and have progressed through the BBOWT structure.

5.31 Most concerning however is that the investments made by BBOWT, approximately 170k per annum of revenue and significant capital investment will cease. Without this investment the Countryside Service cannot maintain these important sites for the benefit of wildlife and the public. Consequently the service provided would have to be reduced accordingly.

6 Other options considered

6.1 Prior to the current agreement in 2014, officer's explored alternative delivery models for the management of countryside nature reserves in the face of significant funding challenges. Officers explored the option of partnering with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), and the formation of a Countryside Trust, neither of which offered the same advantages as working with BBOWT.

6.2 The council may of course determine not to continue with the contract. Officers consider that this is not a viable option as, under this circumstance, then all the countryside nature reserves and the staff engaged on reserve management work would transfer back to the council. Additionally approximately £170k of BBOWT investment would be lost with the consequent negative impact on site management and staffing.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Continuing the current partnership arrangement for a further 10 year period provides an opportunity to build on the current excellent relationship we have established with BBOWT in order to enhance this valued front line service, protect key nature reserves whilst adding value and utilising the skills and expertise of an established voluntary sector partner.

7.2 The Service therefore seeks the authority of the Executive to:

c) approve the continuation of the current partnership arrangement with BBOWT for a further 10 years from the 1st April 2024 until the 31st March 2034; and

d) delegate authority to the Service Lead (Legal and Democratic Services) in consultation with the Service Director (Environment) to negotiate and make amendments to the agreement with BBOWT.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

8.2 Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment

8.3 Appendix C - Annual Seasonal Wardens Report

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Officer details:

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Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	The Executive approves the continuationof the current partnership agreement with BBOWT for a further 10 years from the 1st April 2024 until the 31st March 2034.
Summary of relevant legislation:	
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships	**Yes ☐ No ☒** **If yes, please indicate which priority and provide an explanation**
Name of Budget Holder:	
Name of Service/Directorate:	
Name of assessor:	
Date of assessment:	
Version and release date (if applicable):	

Is this a …. ?		**Is this policy, strategy, function or service … ?**	
Policy	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**New or proposed**	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Strategy	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**Already exists and is being reviewed**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Function	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**Is changing**	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Service	**Yes ☒ No ☐**		

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed

decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	Effective management of council assets
Objectives:	To ensure the ongoing effective (both cost and practical) management of the council's countryside nature reserves, commons and built assets.
Outcomes:	Ongoing management by the local wildlife trust
Benefits:	

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation)

Group Affected	**What might be the effect?**	**Information to support this**
Age	Improved access and provision.	BBOWT support volunteers from older age groups, semi and fully retired. They are critical to their business model.
Disability	Improved access and provision.	BBOWT have undertaken projects, supported by capital to improve facilities for the less mobile and disabled.
Gender Reassignment	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign
Marriage and Civil partnership	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign
Pregnancy and Maternity	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign
Race	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign
Religion or Belief	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign

Sex	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign
Sexual Orientation	Provision and equality of opportunity	BBOWT Diversity and Equality Policy. 'Legal right to nature' campaign
Further Comments:		

(3) Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
The BBOWT partnerships designed principally to improve the environment for nature and people and have the necessary expertise to do so. The partnership also opens up funding opportunities hitherto not available to WBC.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
The BBOWT partnerships designed principally to improve the environment for nature and people and have the necessary expertise to do so. The partnership also opens up funding opportunities hitherto not available to WBC.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a EqIA 2.

If an EqIA 2 is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the EqIA guidance and template – http://intranet/index.aspx?articleid=32255.

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqIA Stage 2 required	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Owner of EqIA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqIA Stage Two:	

Name: **Paul Hendry** **Date: 30/12/22**

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Environment
Service:	Countryside
Team:	
Lead Officer:	Paul Hendry
Title of Project/System:	BBOWT partnership
Date of Assessment:	30/12/2022

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
Will you be processing SENSITIVE or "special category" personal data? Note – sensitive personal data is described as "*data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation*"	☐	☒
Will you be processing data on a large scale? Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both	☐	☒
Will your project or system have a "social media" dimension? Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?	☐	☒
Will any decisions be automated? Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual's input is "scored" or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any "profiling" of data subjects?	☐	☒

	Yes	No
Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?	☐	☒
Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?	☐	☒
Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes? Note – this could include biometrics, "internet of things" connectivity or anything that is currently not w idely utilised	☐	☒

If you answer "Yes" to any of the above, you will probably need to complete Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two. If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

Appendix C

Annual Seasonal Wardens Report

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Seasonal Wardens Report 2022





Zoë Burfitt

David Jewsbury

Tom Wills

Berkshire Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

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Executive Summary

Greenham and Crookham Commons

- Total visitor count data indicates that fewer people visited GCC than in either 2020 or 2021. This decline in visitor numbers can be seen across the three main entrances to the common (Control Tower, Pyle Hill, Crookham Pools)
- The main exception to this is weekday morning visitors to Pyle Hill where the average number of visitors counted has increased by 30%
- Although overall visitor numbers are down the average proportion of visiting groups that have dogs, across all entrances, has increased from 55% to 63% on weekdays and from 39% to 64% at the weekends. The majority of visitors to the common are now using the site to walk their dogs
- This is further confirmed in the visitor survey data where 70% of this year's respondents stated their main activity as "dog walking" compared to 56% last year.
- This year 102 visitors completed the visitor survey undertaken on site. A further 36 people responded to the online survey.
- The number of regular visitors to the common (visiting at least weekly) has increased to 84% of all survey participants, up from 77% last year.
- 59% of survey respondents have been visiting GCC for 5+ years, dropping from 74% the previous year. These longer-term visitors seem to have been replaced by those who have visited the site for between 1-5 years (29%), possibly reflecting new visitors who found the site during the Covid lockdowns in 2020/21.
- 70% of survey respondents view GCC as both a common and a nature reserve, 25% see GGC as a common only, and 5% see GCC as a nature reserve only
- Awareness of both the roam zones and the GNB protection measures have dropped slightly this year, from 72% to 65% (roam zones) and from 84% to 81% (GNB measures).
- Visitors are starting to move away from the idea of red zones. This year only 7% of all visitors mentioned them as opposed to 18% in 2021 suggesting that the change in message towards sticking to the paths/out of certain areas is becoming more embedded.
- Awareness that BBOWT manages GCC has dropped from 44% of respondents last year to only 25% of respondents this year
- Only 28% of respondents were aware of the Greenham & Crookham Common Commission (GCCC) – no respondents were able to give an adequate response when asked what the role of the GCCC was.
- Respondents who believe that dogs should be on a short lead during the GNB season has dropped to 50% this year from 68% last year.
- Based on home postcode data collected during the surveys, most visitors to the common travel from either southern Newbury/Greenham or Thatcham. The vast majority of journeys are <10km and the average and median journey lengths are 5.88km and 4.23km respectively.
- A total of 290 interactions took place in 2022, compared with 561 in 2020 and 358 in 2021.
- 262 of these involved visitors off the main paths or the roam zones. Wardens spoke to the visitors in 203 of these occasions, with the remaining 59 being records of visitors seen off the main path but too far away to speak to.

- The firebreaks, particularly the one opposite the Control Tower, continue to be where the majority of off-path interactions take place. This issue is being considered separately by the Greenham & Crookham Commons Conservation Management Committee.
- 49% of off-path interactions involved regular (weekly or more) visitors
- 80.5% of off-path interactions involved a visitor with a dog, an increase from 67.9% in 2021
- The most common reason given for being off a main path/roam zone was that the visitor was not aware of the ground nesting bird protection measures
- Provisional results from a breeding bird survey completed by Adrian Hickman and supplemented with records from the seasonal wardens show that the number of territories on Greenham and Crookham Common have increased on 2021 for woodlark, Dartford warbler, nightingale, stonechat and meadow pipit. Number of lapwing and little ringed plover have remained stable. The number of skylark and linnet territories have fallen compared to last year.
- Results from the nightjar surveys indicate a probable increase of birds at Greenham and Crookham Commons.

Snelsmore Common

- Total visitor count data indicates that overall fewer people visited Snelsmore than in either 2020 or 2021. However, there were some periods where the visitor count was higher this year than in 2021. There periods were 0700-0900 & 1300-1500 on weekdays and 0700-0900 on weekends.
- No cyclists were registered entering the site during any of the survey periods, weekday or weekend
- 31 surveys were conducted at Snelsmore. The sample size is small, potentially reducing the significance of the results
- As with Greenham, although visitor numbers are down the average proportion of visiting groups that have dogs, across all entrances, has increased from 42% to 72% on weekdays and from 40% to 50% at the weekends
- The most common activity for those visiting Snelsmore is dog walking, with 68% of survey respondents giving this as their main activity.
- The number of regular visitors to the common (visiting at least weekly) has increased slightly to 61% of all survey participants, up from 58% last year. Snelsmore appears to have a higher proportion of occasional visitors than GCC
- A high proportion of surveyed visitors (84%) have been visiting Snelsmore for more than 5 years, well up on the 65% of those surveyed last year
- The top facilities used by visitors to Snelsmore are the carpark (97% of visitors surveyed), easy access route (61%), other marked routes (52%), and café (32%). In contrast, none of the visitors surveyed said that they used the BBQ platforms. This is likely because they had been discouraged from doing so during the hot & dry weather this summer.
- Awareness of the green dog route has dropped from 68% of those surveyed to 61%. However, usage has remained stable with 52% of those surveyed using it.
- Awareness of the GNB protection measures has increased significantly with 87% of surveyed visitors aware that measures are in place, up from 77% last year. Understanding of the message was varied with 35% believing the message to be “keep away from nesting areas”, 26% “keep to main paths”, and 23% “keep dogs on a lead/under control”

- When asked to look at the GNB signage only 55% of visitors gave the main message that they took from it as “stick to the main paths”, indicating that the signage at Snelsmore Common needs to more clearly reflect this key message.
- Awareness that BBOWT manages Snelsmore has dropped from 48% of respondents last year to only 35% of respondents this year. None of those visitors surveyed were a current member of BBOWT
- Respondents who believe that dogs should be on a short lead during the GNB season has dropped to 58% this year from 74% last year.
- Based on home postcode data collected during the surveys, most visitors to Snelsmore travel from northern Newbury. The vast majority of journeys are <10km and the average and median journey lengths are 10.87km and 6.07km respectively. The average is pushed up by 14% of the journeys being >20km
- Results from the nightjar surveys indicate a probable increase of birds at Snelsmore Common.

Introduction

From mid-February to mid-August 2022 three Seasonal Wardens, Zoë Burfitt, Tom Wills and David Jewsbury, were employed as part of the BBOWT West Berkshire Land Management team.

The main objective of the Seasonal Warden role is primarily to help protect ground nesting birds at Greenham and Snelsmore Commons, by engaging with visitors in whatever ways are appropriate to achieve the objective.

The primary role of the Seasonal Wardens is to help protect ground nesting birds at Greenham and Snelsmore Commons through visitor engagement to educate and promote sensitive use of the commons by ensuring sensitive nesting areas remain undisturbed by visitor access.

Whilst West Berkshire Council own the site, BBOWT is the lease holder for Greenham & Crookham Commons and in respect of wildlife conservation is responsible, along with the Greenham and Crookham Common Commission, for implementing the requirements of the Greenham and Crookham Common Act 2002.

The main provision of the Greenham and Crookham Common Act 2002 is to "***conserve the Common as a peaceful place of natural beauty and, in particular, conserve its flora, fauna and ecological features […and] any part of the site which is a site of Special Scientific Interest***".

Subject to this conservation provision, it is also a requirement of the GCC Act 2002 to promote educational activities and public awareness of the ecological significance of the Common and maintain the Common as a place for the public to visit.

The 2022 Ground Nesting Bird Season – Summary

- Ground nesting bird signage for Greenham Common was redesigned with minor changes and produced by BBOWT's Comms Team to incorporate new branding and some suggestions made by the Seasonal Warden team.
- Five more Log Lecterns ("logterns") were installed on Greenham Common in strategic areas to communicate the ground nesting bird protection measures. There are currently 49 logterns on Greenham Common.
- New signage was installed on the Green Dog route at Snelsmore Common to inform users of the route of sensitive heathland areas. More informal paths were blokced to help reduce disturbance of potential nesting areas.
- A programme of events was re-established after two years of very few events due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with no events being run for members of the public in 2020 and four guided nightjar walks running in 2021 with attendees ranging in numbers from 4 to 16.
- The partnership with the Wildlife Crime Officer at Thames Valley Police was maintained throughout the season. The Wildlife Crime Officer attended an event at the beginning of the season and also communicated with visitors who persistently carried out activities with the potential to disturb ground nesting birds. The use of Thames Valley police logos on ground nesting bird signage caused BBOWT to receive a number of complaints. After some discussion the size and placement of the police logo was amended.

This end of season report focuses on the main issues around people and ground nesting birds at Greenham and Snelsmore Commons. The report contains recommendations from the 2022 Seasonal Wardens for the 2023 season and beyond. These recommendations are supported by evidence collected by the wardens, most of which is included within the appendices of this report and references to it are cited where appropriate.

Evidence Collected by Seasonal Wardens in 2022

- **Seasonal Warden Interactions with visitors.** The seasonal wardens logged most of their interactions with visitors using ArcGIS Survey 123. This included data on where, when, group size, number of dogs, and activity. Since many interactions took place off the main paths, the visitor's reason for being off the main path as well as their response after being spoken to was recorded. Wardens recorded 265 incidences of visitors being off the main paths at Greenham, Crookham and Snelsmore Commons. Wardens spoke to visitors on 206 of these occasions informing them of the ground nesting bird protection measures.
- **Car Park Counts.** The number of cars in car parks was recorded whenever the opportunity arose.
- **Annual Visitor Surveys.** Annual visitor surveys were conducted in June/July and tally counts of visitor numbers took place on site at the same time. A total of 133 in person surveys were completed at Greenham, Crookham and Snelsmore Commons and online surveys had a total of 36 respondents. Further details of these can be found in Appendices D – G.
- **Visitor Behaviour Monitoring.** During the season visitor behaviour was monitored with respect to where on the Common visitors were walking and the activities they were undertaking
- **Ground Nesting Bird sightings.** To support the official GNB survey work of Adrian Hickman, Seasonal Wardens recorded sightings of specific species using ArcGIS Survey 123. The recorded data included species, location, number of adults/juveniles and activity observed. The Seasonal Warden recordings focused on Little Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Skylark, Woodlark, Meadow Pipit, Nightingale, Stonechat and Dartford Warbler.
- **Formal Nightjar surveys.** Three nightjar surveys were conducted with BBOWT staff and BBOWT volunteers.

Greenham Common

Several species of ground nesting bird[1] breed on the Greenham Common heath (heather, gorse, grass and gravels) and have done so for as long as records have existed. Since 2009, BBOWT has endeavoured to communicate with visitors about the need to restrict where they walk during the bird breeding season (March-July) in order to reduce disturbance to ground nesting birds.

[1] Ground nesting bird species breeding on Greenham Common include lapwing, little ringed plover, woodlark, skylark, Dartford warbler, nightingale, stonechat, meadow pipit and linnet.

This is achieved through signage, events and interacting with visitors to the Common, both in person and using social media in the form of a Facebook group named 'Greenham Grapevine'.

Signage Changes

The ground nesting bird messaging over the years has remained constant in its approach. However, BBOWT have been working to modify the signage to make the messaging clearer and more effective in achieving its aims. Following on from feedback during the 2021 season, there were some minor changes made to gate signage (Figure 1) and onsite signage in an attempt for further emphasise the main message of “Keep to the main paths” and also promote the Roam Zone (previously known as the Green Zone) as an area where people, particularly dog walkers, could explore off the main path.

An online survey was created for visitors to the Common to provide feedback on the new signage in 2022. The survey had 15 respondents. Overall, the comments made were positive with multiple respondents commenting that the signage (particularly the gate signage) was the clear and well designed. Some respondents felt that the tone of the signs was "high-handed" and "officious", particularly in reference to the logtern sign which includes the Thames Valley Police logo. The log tern sign was subsequently adjusted to move the TVP logo to a less prominent location and reduce it in size.

Full details of these signage changes and visitor responses to the new signage can be found in Appendix A.



Figure 1: 2021 gate signage (left) compared to 2022 gate signage (right)

Visitor Interactions

As in previous years, the Seasonal Wardens recorded all of their interactions with visitors throughout the season using Survey123. Analysis of this data shows that while the number of interactions has

decreased year on year since 2020, the percentage of interaction off the main path has increased (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of visitor interactions 2020-2022

	2020	2021	2022	Change (2020-22)
Total Interactions	561	358	290	-271
Interactions off main path/roam zone	453	312	262	-191
% of interactions off main path/roam zone	80.7%	87.2%	90.3%	+9.6%

Visitor interactions remain most common in the firebreaks on Greenham Common, particularly the one opposite the Control Tower (Figure 2). Opening up a path along some of the firebreaks was requested by the Greenham Parish Council. Visitor opinion gaged through the surveys show that 85% of respondents (c.85 people) felt there was adequate provision of short routes (see Appendix D). This information will be passed onto the Conservation Management Committee to make an informed decision whether some of the firebreak paths should be open to the public during the breeding season.

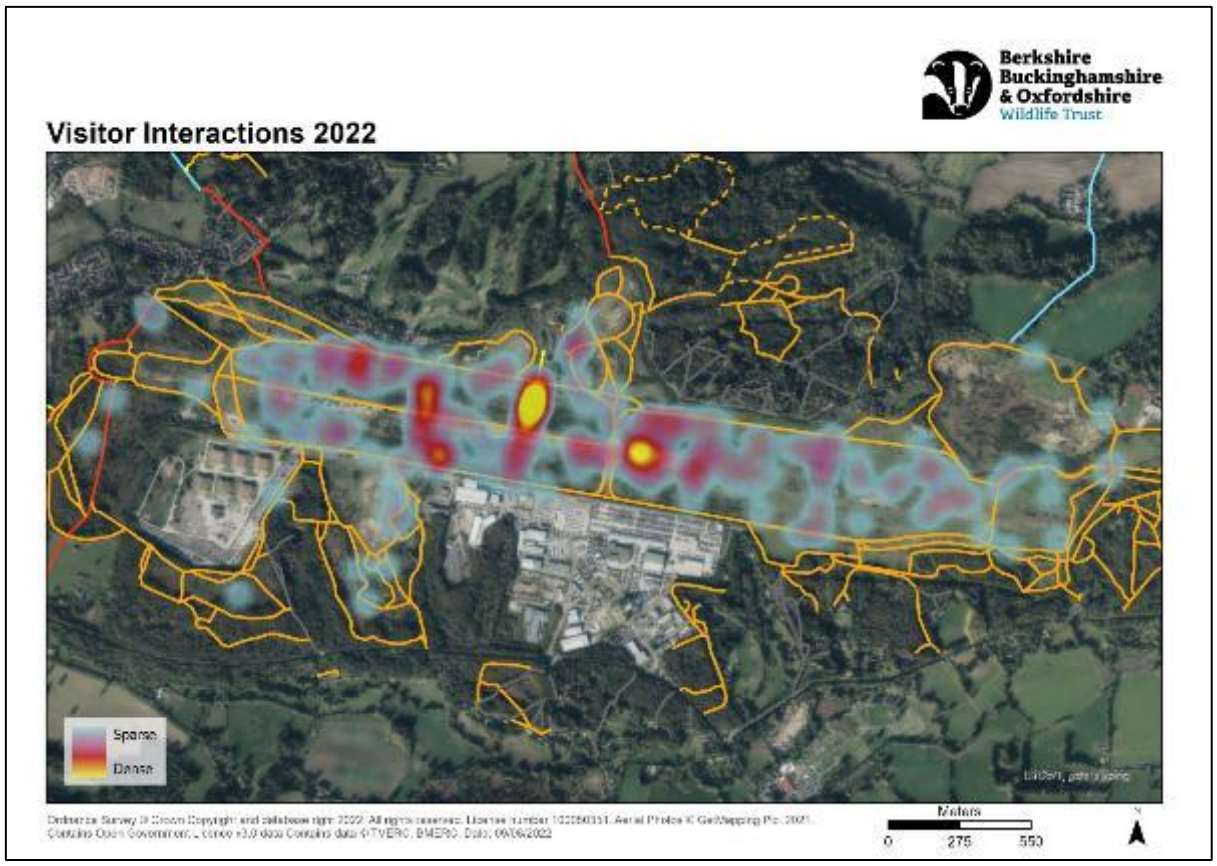


Figure 2: Heat map of visitor interaction on Greenham and Crookham Commons in 2022

Further data and analysis of these interactions can be found in Appendix B.

Ground Nesting Birds

A formal bird survey was carried out on Greenham and Crookham Commons by Adrian Hickman in 2022, with a final report being produced later in the year. Bird records were also logged by Seasonal

Wardens on Survey123 and were consolidated into the formal survey data. At the time of writing this report, the provisional key points are as follows:

- High and provisionally record numbers of Stonechats, Dartford Warblers, Woodlarks and Meadow Pipits with 36, 16, 16 and 30 territories respectively
- Nightingale numbers recovered after dropping last season, with evidence of some birds establishing territories at the Crookham end in new patches of scrub due to habitat succession; Roam Zone scrub east of the pools; scrub south of pools on south side of Common, and in scrub south of main pool
- Skylarks continue to decline, with only two confirmed territories in the west lozenges
- Crookham pools hosted a single Reed Bunting territory the first since 2019
- Appeared to be fewer Linnets than the last few seasons. Provisional analysis of the data suggests a moderate drop from 58 to 50 territorial males/pairs. Still very common
- No Tree Pipits recorded
- A pair of Little Ringed Plovers nested on gravel north of the fire plane and probably fledged three chicks. Up to 4 Little Ringed Plovers at Crookham pools but no evidence of successful breeding
- Three-four pairs of Lapwing made at least four nesting attempts at Crookham pools. Most failed but two small chicks, possibly about a week old, were seen on the last survey visit and were still present on 25 July when judged to be about half grown

The provisional survey results with annual comparisons can be found in Appendix H.

Nightjar Surveys

The annual BBOWT nightjar surveys were successfully conducted at 14 sites around Greenham Common (Figure 3), Snelsmore Common and Newtown Common. Surveyors included 16 BBOWT staff members and 30 volunteers. The surveys took place on 27th May, 10th June and 24th June 2022.

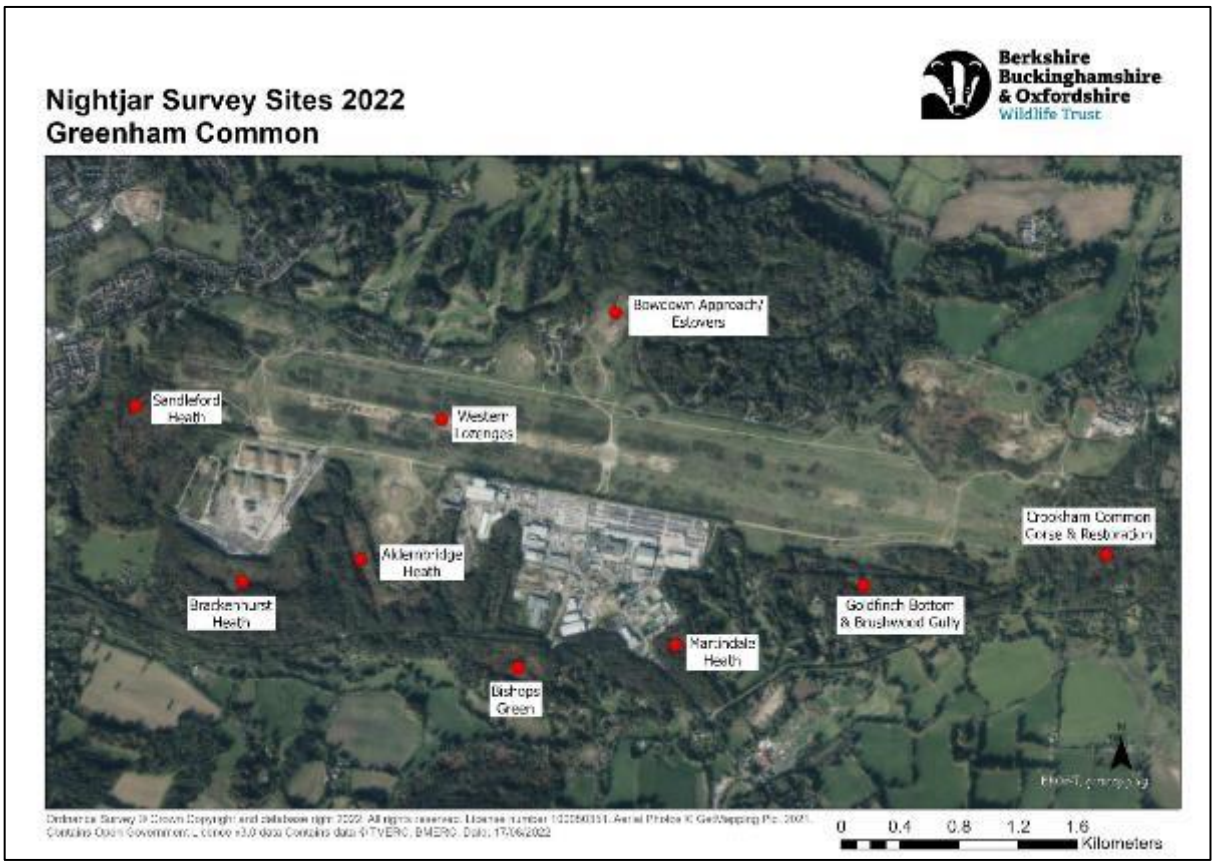


Figure 3: Nightjar Survey Sites on Greenham and Crookham Commons

Some initial analysis of the results was completed by the seasonal wardens (Table 2), however the full analysis will be completed by the BBOWT Ecology Team over winter.

Table 2: Provisional nightjar numbers from 2022 surveys

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
Number of males after cross referencing	14	15	13
Total number of nightjar	22	21	21

It should be noted that the totals in Table 2 are a minimum number from each survey taken in isolation, however where records from different survey sites were very obviously the same bird it was not counted. A more accurate analysis would need to consider all the data as a whole and try to account for the same birds moving between different sites during the survey period.

Good numbers of nightjar were heard and seen, with all survey sites recording evidence of nightjar activity on at least one of the survey evenings.

Historically, the south western heaths at Greenham (Sandleford, Brackenhurst and Aldernbridge) have been the sites with the most nightjar activity recorded. However, in 2022 many sites recorded as much activity as these south western heaths and in some cases even more. Across the three survey evenings there were only four sites which were surveyed and recorded no activity on one occasion each – Snelsmore (survey site 1), Martindale Heath, Goldfinch Bottom and Crookham Common Restoration.

The addition of the lozenges on Greenham Common as an official survey site proved to be very positive with activity recorded on each of the survey evenings. This increase in nightjar distribution into the lozenges further highlights the success of the ground nesting bird control measures and further emphasises the important role the seasonal wardens play in helping manage the site.

There was also plenty of activity recorded at all three survey sites at Snelsmore (with the exception of survey spot 1 on the first evening) which is very encouraging as nightjar was absent at Snelsmore Common as recently as 2018.

Surveyors at Newtown Common recorded activity on all three survey evenings. A family of nightjar (two adults and a juvenile) was also seen on the 16th July suggesting at least two nesting attempts on Newtown Common, one of which was confirmed to be successful.

Full details of the survey data for each site can be found in Appendix I.

Other Wildlife Observations

Throughout the season, a number of passage migrants and summer visitors were recorded by the wardens including wheatear, willow warbler, garden warbler (in seemingly good numbers), whitethroat and lesser whitethroat. Other notable bird sightings included a green sandpiper that was seen on a couple of occasions on the old runway path, and a kingfisher that was also seen on a couple of occasions at Crookham pools.

Silver-washed fritillary was recorded on multiple occasions in July and a grayling was recorded during a butterfly survey in the same month. Grizzled and dingy skippers were also recorded at the fireplane gravels and Crookham pools.

Adders were regularly seen during Spring at their usual location. There were also multiple sightings of both adders and grass snakes reported throughout the season.

Pool frogs appear to have expanded their range across the whole site having been seen and/or heard in most permanent ponds, most notably the small pond to the south east of Estovers and the newt ponds to the south of the fireplane gravels. They have also been heard as far east as the wildlife ponds at Crookham pools.

Events

During the 2022 season, wardens organised and/or attended nine events in total on Greenham and Crookham Commons, and also attended an event in Hamstead Marshall giving a presentation on Greenham Common. The majority of events were very successful with good attendee numbers, however there were a couple of events with very few attendees which are highlighted below.

Pop-up display in Control Tower Car Park
Before the start of ground nesting bird season, the wardens organised a pop-up display in the Control Tower car park with information about ground nesting birds and how visitors could help to protect them during the nesting season. The event was also attended by the TVP Wildlife Crime Officers (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Seasonal Warden team and Wildlife Crime Officer at Control Tower Pop-up event

Joint event with Greenham and Crookham Commons Commission

The wardens joined representatives of the Greenham & Crookham Commons Commission (GCCC) and Natural England to increase public awareness of the GCCC and provide an understanding of its

role as guardian of the common. The wardens also raised public awareness of the measures in place to protect GNBs on Greenham Common.

Hamstead Marshall Presentation
The wardens gave a presentation to the Hamstead Marshall Wildlife Group with information about the history of Greenham Common, the seasonal warden role and ground nesting birds and other wildlife that can be found on the Common.

Waggy Wildlife Walks
In an attempt to engage with dog walkers who use Greenham Common, the wardens organised two 'Waggy Wildlife' walks. The purpose of these walks was to promote the Roam Zone as an alternative area for dog walking and show visitors areas which they may not be aware of. Unfortunately, there were no attendees at either event.

Joint event with Heathland Hounds
A pop-up event took place by the Control Tower in partnership with Nicola Buckland from Thames Basin Heath's Heathland Hounds. As well as interacting with visitors to the Common it was also a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss different issues that both the Greenham Wardens and the Thames Basin Heaths Wardens face and brainstorm about how to interact further with dog owners. It is recommended that this partnership is maintained and that, if Heathland Hounds is in agreement, an event is organised involving both organisations to engage with dog walkers.

Nightjar Walks
As in previous years, the wardens organised three guided nightjar walks. Each of these events were fully booked (16 bookings) and well attended. There was nightjar activity on both evenings, as well as woodcock and sighting of bats and glow worms.

Wildlife Walk
A wildlife walk was organised in May 2022. Unfortunately, there was only one attendee but it was an otherwise successful walk with sightings of a variety of species.

Pond Dipping
A pond dipping session was organised for families using the ponds west of the Control Tower. The event was fully booked (7 family bookings) and well attended with all families that attended saying that they enjoyed the session.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were made in the 2021 Warden Report. These recommendations are outlined in Table 3 in Appendix K, exploring the recommendations that required action by the 2022 wardens and how they were achieved.

2022 Recommendations

- Recommend that the Greenham & Crookham Commission approve the implementation of the the ground nesting bird measures as they were this year in 2023.
- BBOWT continue to employ season wardens in 2023.

- Continue to collect data in the 2023 season through visitor activity monitoring, car park counts and visitor surveys. Review the data collection methods to ensure that the data being collected is relevant and useful and put together a data collection schedule.
- Use signage/other material as a way to provide education to visitors on why certain areas are protected
- Provide an appropriate range of additional interpretation to help people understand and care about the wildlife interests on Greenham Common
- Continue to organise regular guided walks and events for visitors.
- Develop methods to engage with dog owners about responsible dog owners and behaviour on sites, including specific events aimed at dogs and dog walkers.
- Continue to develop partnership with TVP, including running join events with Wildlife Crime Officer. However, after consideration of the use of Thames Valley Police logo on signage is not considered appropriate and will be removed from 2023 log tern signage .
- Formalise the 2022 amendments to the signage with the production of professional produced printed materials.
- Promote and enhance accessibility in the Roam Zone as an area to explore off the main path with signage at the main access points
- Make more use of local social media channels and local contacts to promote the online visitor surveys to ensure a wider range of options are sought.

Snelsmore Common

Visitor Interactions

Roughly 25% of the warden's time was spent at Snelsmore Common and 18 visitor interactions were logged at this year. Most interactions were recorded because a conversation with the visitor contained useful information, rather than behaviour damaging to wildlife was seen.

Only in three cases was behaviour logged that might adversely affect wildlife on site. In two cases the visitor was on the main path but dogs were out of control running onto habitat. In one case the visitor was taking a shortcut on a minor desire line with dog to heal.

After a nightjar survey a small group of visitors were discovered with a campfire in a woodland area. Evidence of other campfires were observed during the ground nesting bird season.

Other conversations with visitors, some of which were not logged, commonly concerned litter around the rubbish bins, and overflowing dog poo bins.

Blocking Desire Lines

Due to the large number of small trails causing habit fragmentation, desire lines have been blocked, although it is not always clear whether they have been created by people, dogs or ponies. In previous years this has been successfully achieved with brash barriers, sometime backed up by a sign. These have been maintained this year and a new technique of laying over live birch trees has been trialled to see if this creates a more permanent blockage.

Evidence for the success of these techniques can be seen as the season progresses, and bracken gradually takes the old path over (Figure 5).

Anecdotal evidence is that the pubic perceive these methods as being “more natural” compared to a proliferation of signs, and have a high level of acceptance by visitors. Due to the nature of the vegetation at Snelsmore along the path network, and lack of high levels of grazing these methods are easier to employ at Snelsmore compared to Greenham.

The logterns recommended in last year’s report are now available on site, and can be put out with interpretation or other posters as required next season.

A map of blocked access points, and related habitat areas in shown in Figure 6.



Figure 5: Vegetation growing over a blocked desire line

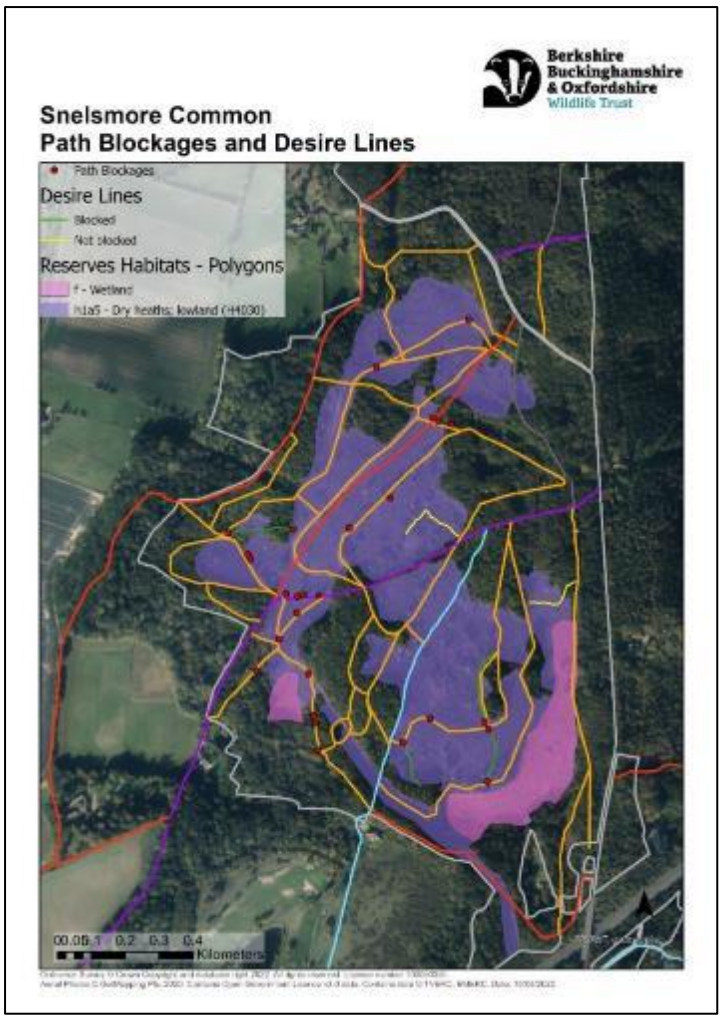


Figure 6: Path blockages, desire lines and sensitive Habitat on Snelsmore Common.

Signage and the Green Dog Friendly Route

The main gate and Green Dog Friendly Route signs were unchanged from last year.

Concerns were raised in last year's report that the Green Dog Friendly Route passed close to good mire and heathland. As mitigation, extra signs asking for dogs to be kept on lead were added for two lengths close to more sensitive habitat. We have no evidence for how much impact these had, but from observation wear on paths in the heathland and mire areas seems light, except where dogs have accessed small pools in the valley mires.

From visitor surveys it is clear that the Green Dog Friendly Route is a popular feature of the site, because visitors believe they can let their dogs run off-lead, without damaging wildlife. Due to the rebranding within BBOWT these signs will soon require updating, which will allow an opportunity to refine their message.

Ground Nesting Birds

Nightjars had a good season on Snelsmore, with numbers probably increasing from 2021. More details of the nightjar surveys can be found in the Greenham and Crookham Commons section of this report.

On a less positive note, Dartford warbler and tree pipit continued not to be recorded. Stonechat and meadow pipit were also not seen on the open heathland in spite of the habitat appearing suitable.

A woodlark was heard singing for several days in early June, but was probably displaced from another site and unlikely to have been paired up.

Other Wildlife Observations

Other bird of Conservation Concern seen on site include, a cuckoo, recorded during one of the nightjar surveys, and a pair of marsh tits in July.

A pair of common buzzards nested in a scots pine along the Green Dog Route and raised three chicks.

Reptiles appear to be doing well on the site with regular sightings of adder, common lizard and slow worm.

Green tiger beetles were frequent on the sandy paths in warm conditions. A great diving beetle was found at the south pond in April, and a purple hairstreak seen low down on a car park oak in August. in June the local wolf spider *Xerolycosa nemoralis* was found on a burnt but recovering area of heathland.

Events

During 2022 the wardens ran two public events attended by a total of 20 people.

A moth trapping and display event took place over the Jubilee weekend, assisted by two local moth recorders. Three light traps ran overnight in rainy conditions. Although nothing unusual was found, a wide range of common species were caught in good numbers. Despite the event being free and widely publicised, only four people came to see the moths. More signage or flags may be able to draw in people passing by if this event runs again.

A nightjar walk was organised in late July, to coincide with Heath Week, promoted by the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership. This event was fully booked. Nightjars were seen and heard, although noise from the A34 intruded a little.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were made in the 2021 Warden Report. These recommendations are outlined in Table 4 in Appendix K, exploring the recommendations that required action by the 2022 wardens and how they have been achieved.

2022 Recommendations

- BBOWT continue to employ season wardens in 2023.
- Review and update Snelsmore signage based on templates used at Greenham Common.
- Continue to discourage use of desire lines primarily using living or dead wood. Prioritise blocking access points from the Green Route onto sensitive habitat, as an alternative to supplementary signs.
- Consider monitoring of Green Route usage to inform site interventions required
- Install log terns at suitable locations to convey wildlife information about the site.
- Work with café to promote BBOWT and wildlife messaging at the Snugg.
- Consider installation of bike racks at entrance to encourage sustainable transport alternatives, and work with local access forum to improve footpath links where appropriate.

Appendices

Appendix A – Signage Changes at Greenham Common

Ground nesting bird signage at Greenham Common has evolved over the last few years. Figure 7.1 shows the signage produced originally back in2012 and was the main signage used on site until its review and update in 2021. Whilst the messaging has remained constant, improvements have been made in an attempt to effectively convey the messaging of keeping to the main paths during the GNB season. The understanding of red and green zones was clear to the public; it was the orange zones i.e. the paths, that were hard to convey in a map from. The 2012 signage relied on users to actually read the text to understand the full ground nesting bird messaging that was approved for implementation.

The signage was updated in 2021. Then this year (2022) prior to the start of the ground nesting bird season in march when signage is put up on site, additional changes were made based on feedback received in 2021 *(see Seasonal Wardens Report 2021 for more details)*. We feel that the 2022 signage is now clearer, helps increase visitor understanding of the main message, and also has been updated to align with BBOWT's new branding (see Figures 7 to 10).



Figure 7.1. Ground nesting bird signage used from 2012 to 2020



Figure 7: Gate signage 2021



Figure 8: Gate signage 2022



Figure 9: On-site signage 2021



Figure 10: On-site signage 2022

Logtern signage was also updated with new branding (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Logtern signage 2022

Green Zone to Roam Zone

Another change that was made for the 2022 season was renaming the 'Green Zones', the areas in which visitors are welcome to explore off the main paths. Visitor surveys in 2021 revealed that only 27% of survey respondents knew what the Green Zones were for. Surveys also revealed that some visitors believed that Green Zones were the areas where birds were protected, due to the link between 'green' and 'environmentally friendly'. In an attempt to increase visitor understanding of these zones and minimise confusion, the Green Zone was renamed as the 'Roam Zone'. New signage was developed (Figure 12) as well as online maps being updated.

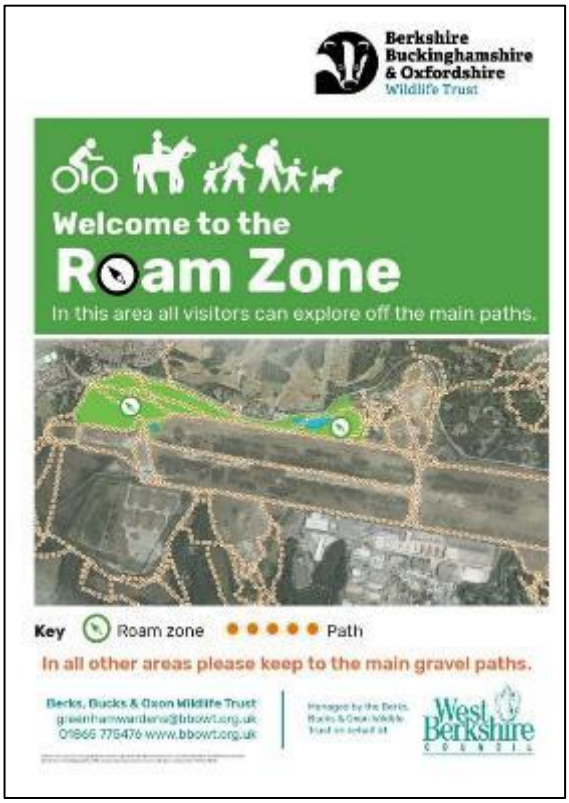


Figure 12: Roam Zone signage

Online Signage Survey

To understand how these signage changes had been received by visitors to Greenham Common, an online survey was put together and advertised on gate signs. Respondents were shown images of all the new signage and asked for their comments. There was a total of 15 respondents.

As Table 5 shows, there were mixed responses to all the signage. For each of the signs multiple people said that they were clear and well-designed. The majority of negative comments were focused more on the 'tone' of the signs rather than the actual design. This suggests that the message of keep to the main paths is better understood than in previous years, even if not well received.

Multiple respondents also raised that they would like to see more educational signage informing visitor about which birds are nesting and why it is important that they are protected. It is recommended that future wardens continue to focus on educating visitors about GNBs through events, social media and signage.

Table 5: Responses to new GNB signage in an online survey

	Positive Comments	Negative Comments	Suggestions
Gate Sign (Figure 8)	• Clearest version so far • Well designed • Informative	• Use of TVP logo is threatening • Signs at entrances are too small and the text/graphics are too small • High-handed tone	• Additional information about rights on the Common • Better wording – use 'gravel paths' consistently • Updated signage to make TVP logo smaller and less prominent
A4 Sign (Figure 10)	• Clear • Well designed	• 'Stick' is not good English – 'keep' would be better • Some signs say 'gravel paths' and others don't – could be confusing	• Put the words 'visitors' and 'dogs' in bold • Information about which birds are nesting • Information about whether dogs should be on leads or not
Logtern Sign (Figure 11)	• Clear • Well designed	• Mention of W&C Act is aggressive and inappropriate • Misleading and offensive • Too officious • TVP logo shouldn't be on there	• Updated signage to make TVP logo smaller and less prominent
Roam Zone Sign (Figure 12)	• Clear • Well designed • Clear and thoughtful policy • Great idea	• Some logtern signs have green band at the top – contradicts with the green on the roam zone signs • Patronising	• Mark Control Tower on the maps • Could point out that the Roam Zones are a relaxation of CROW legislation – a more dog friendly area

Additional Comments

- Roam Zones are not big enough
- Phrase all the signs so it is clear that it applies to everybody, not just dog walkers e.g. birders, horse riders
- The interests and priorities of one group should be balanced fairly with those of other groups
- Appreciate being able to use the roam zones to wander off path
- Education rather than nay-saying would be more productive and engaging
- Blocking firebreaks is too much – it's too far to walk all the way around
- More information of which birds are nesting is needed
- Additional monitoring and enforcement needed
- Using TVP logo is laughable. BBOWT is making themselves look absurd. The police are not interested and polite requests rather than threats work better
- Laminated signs are often torn or blown off – stapling is not sufficient for attaching them
- Logterns are far better than the red posts used in previous years
- Support inclusion of TVP logo

Appendix B – Visitor Interactions Data Analysis (Greenham Common)

All interactions between visitors to the Common and the seasonal wardens were recorded using the ArcGIS Survey123 app. This allowed for precise locations of interactions to be recorded, along with further details such as activity, number of visitors and reasons for being off the main path.

Number of interactions

Table 6: Number of visitor interactions on Greenham Common 2020-2022

	2020	2021	2022	Change (2020-22)
Total Interactions	561	358	290	-271
Interactions off main path/roam zone	453	312	262	-191
% of interactions off main path/roam zone	80.7%	87.2%	90.3%	+9.6%

Table 6 shows how the number of visitor interactions has decreased year on year since 2020. However, it can also be seen that the percentage of interactions that are taking place off the main paths or roam zones remains high and has increased over the last couple of years.

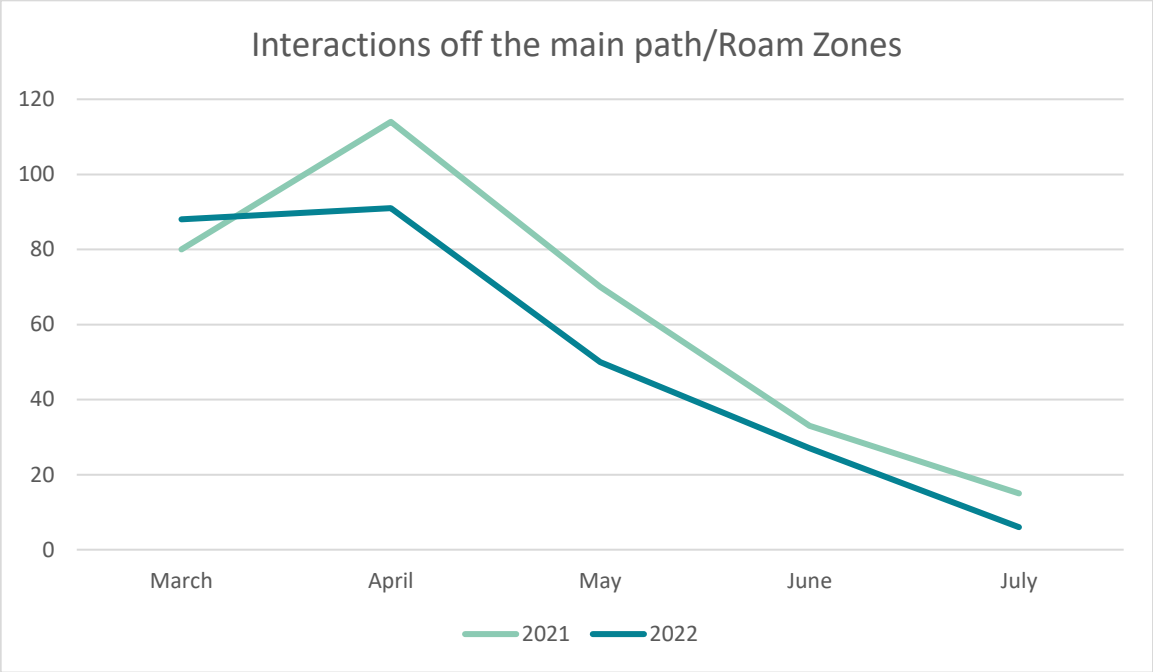


Figure 13: Number of interactions off the main paths/Roam Zone 2021 vs 2022

Figure 13 shows how the number of visitor interactions changed throughout the 2022 season. This pattern is very similar to that of 2021 It suggests that as the season progresses, increasing numbers of visitors are understanding and heeding to the protection measures. However, there are a number of factors that could influence these results such as weather conditions and total visitor numbers. It is also likely that the low number in July is a direct result of wardens undertaking other activities e.g. visitor surveys.

Location of interactions

In 2022, the majority of interactions involved visitors who had been using the lozenges (Table 7). It is recommended that wardens continue to focus their efforts on the lozenges next season.

Table 7: Number of visitor interactions in each area of Greenham Common

	Number of interactions	% of interactions
Lozenges	244	79.22%
Main Paths	23	7.47%
Roam Zone (West)	5	1.62%
Crookham Pools	5	1.62%
Estovers East	5	1.62%
Fire Plane	4	1.3%
Sandleford Heath	2	0.65%
Brackenhurst Heath	1	0.32%
Woodland	1	0.32%
Roam Zone (East)	0	0%
Aldernbridge Heath	0	0%
Old Thornford Road West	0	0%

When looking at a heat map of all visitor interactions (Figure 14) it can be seen that the firebreaks continue to be hotspots, as was the case in 2021. There is also a hotspot to the east of the central runway cross. This was an area where wardens often interacted with visitors coming off the eastern lozenges.

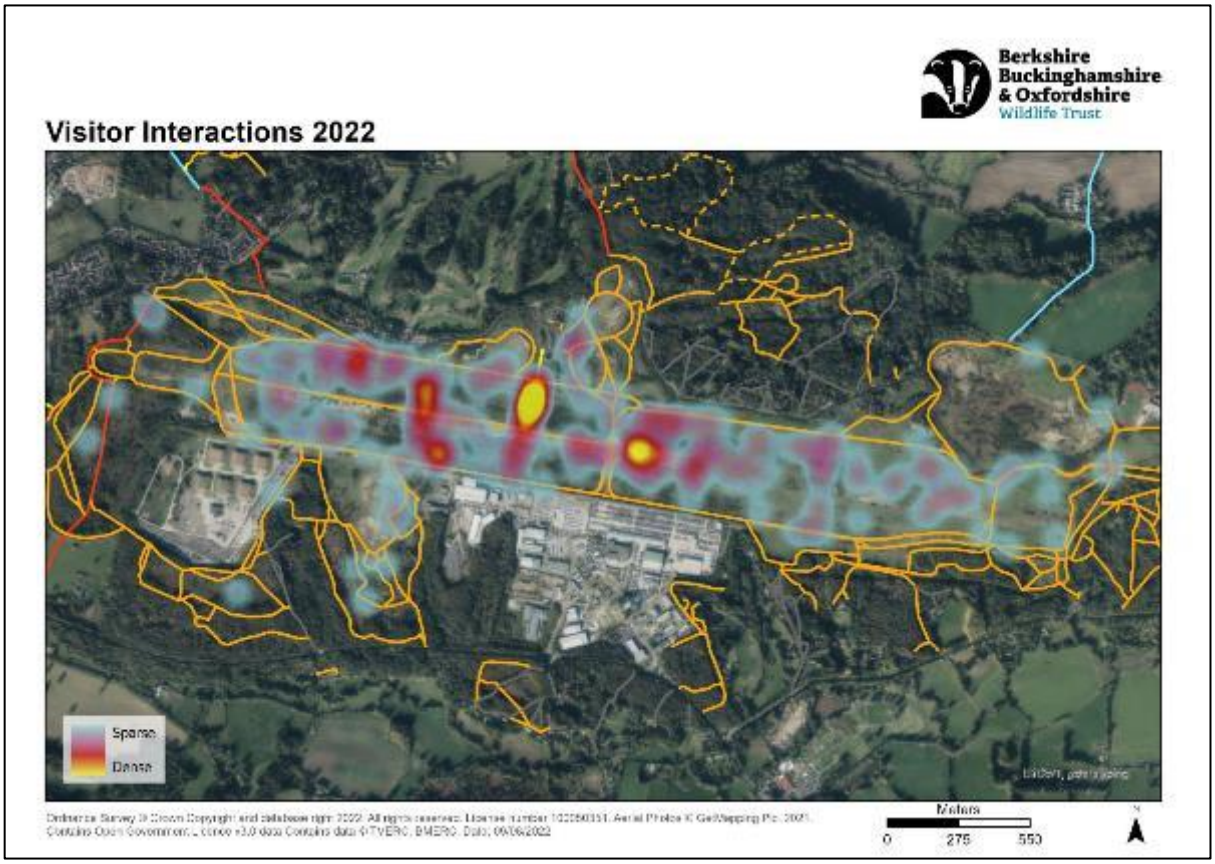


Figure 14: Heat map of visitor interactions on Greenham and Crookham Commons

Visitor Activities

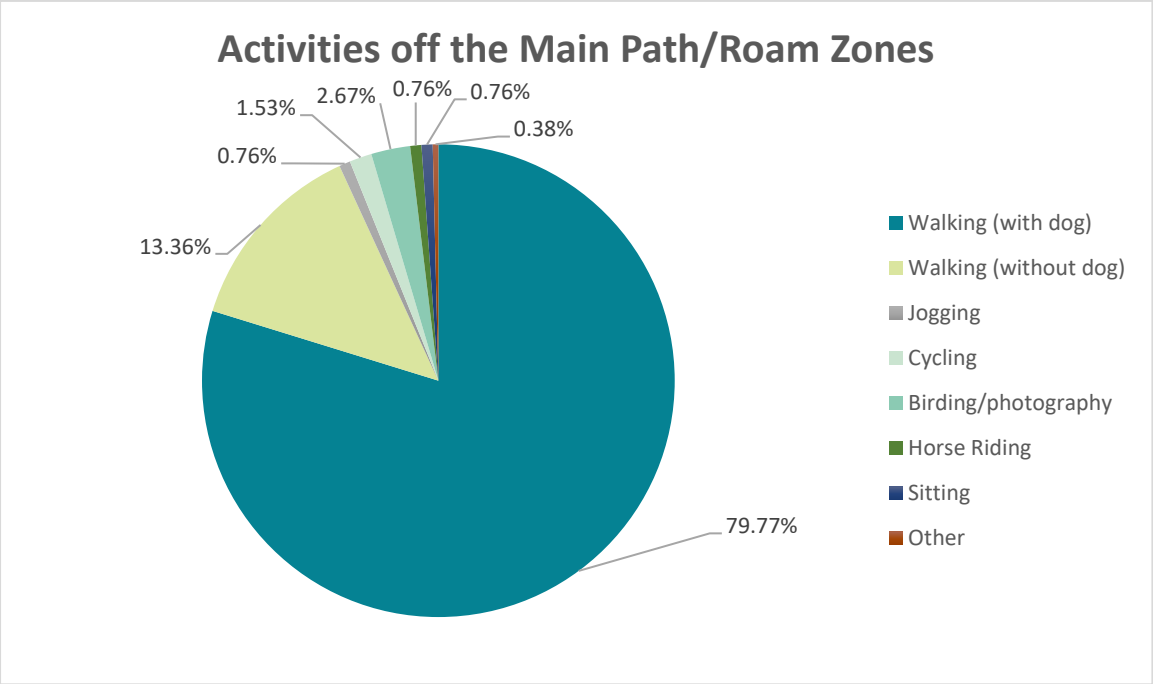


Figure 15: Visitor activities off the main paths/Roam Zones

Figure 15 shows that the vast majority of interactions off the main paths/roam zones were with walkers, the majority of those being dog walkers. This is a trend that follows on from previous years with dog walkers accounting for 61% of interactions off the main path/roam zone in 2021 and 47% in 2020. More work is needed to find ways to engage with dog walkers and also promote the Roam Zones as open areas off the main path where dogs can be walked without causing disturbance to ground nesting birds.

Interactions with dog owners

Table 8: Number of off-path visitor interactions involving visitors with and without a dog

	With dog		Without dog	
	Number of interactions off main paths/roam zones	% of interactions off main path/roam zone	Number of interactions off main paths/roam zones	% of interactions off main path/roam zone
2021	212	67.9%	100	32.1%
2022	211	80.5%	51	19.5%
Change	-1	+12.6%	-49	-12.6%

Of all the interactions that took place off the main paths/roam zones, interactions with dog owners continue to account for a large percentage of them despite the number of interactions remaining very similar (Table 8). Interactions with dog owners remain the most common off the main path and it is vital that future wardens continue to explore ways of engaging and interacting with dog owners as it is likely that dog ownership will remain high and dog owners will continue to be the most common type of visitor to the Common.

Types of Visitors

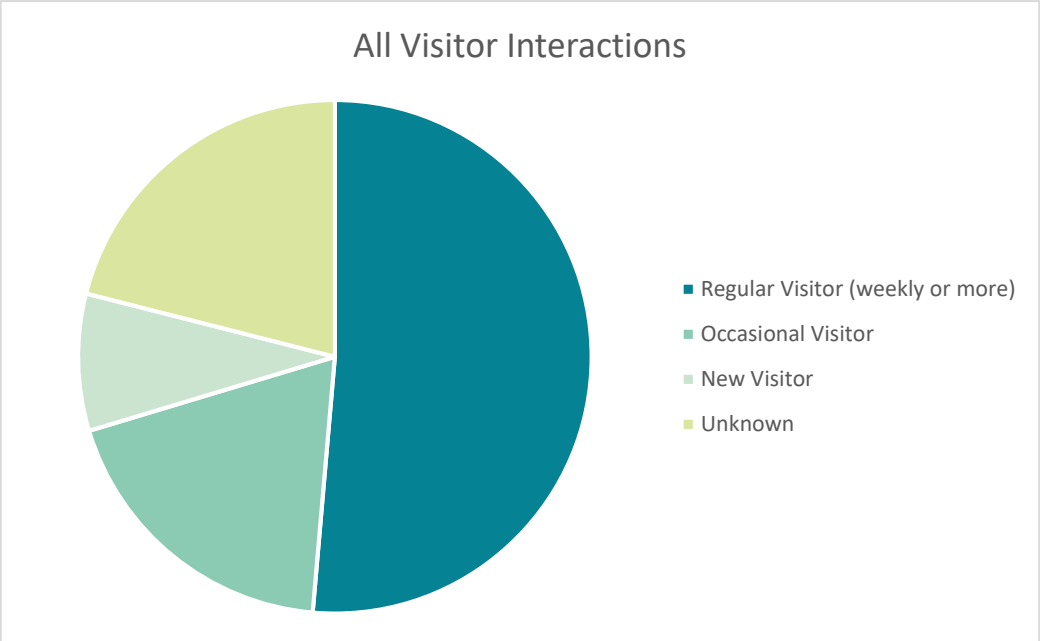


Figure 16: Types of visitors involved in interactions

As Figure 16 shows, regular visitors made up just over half of all the visitor interactions recorded by the seasonal wardens. The proportions of different types of visitors are very similar when looking at interactions with visitors that were off the main path or roam zones (Figure 17). This shows how important it is that seasonal wardens continue to explore ways to interact with regular visitors and effectively convey the message of keeping to the main paths.

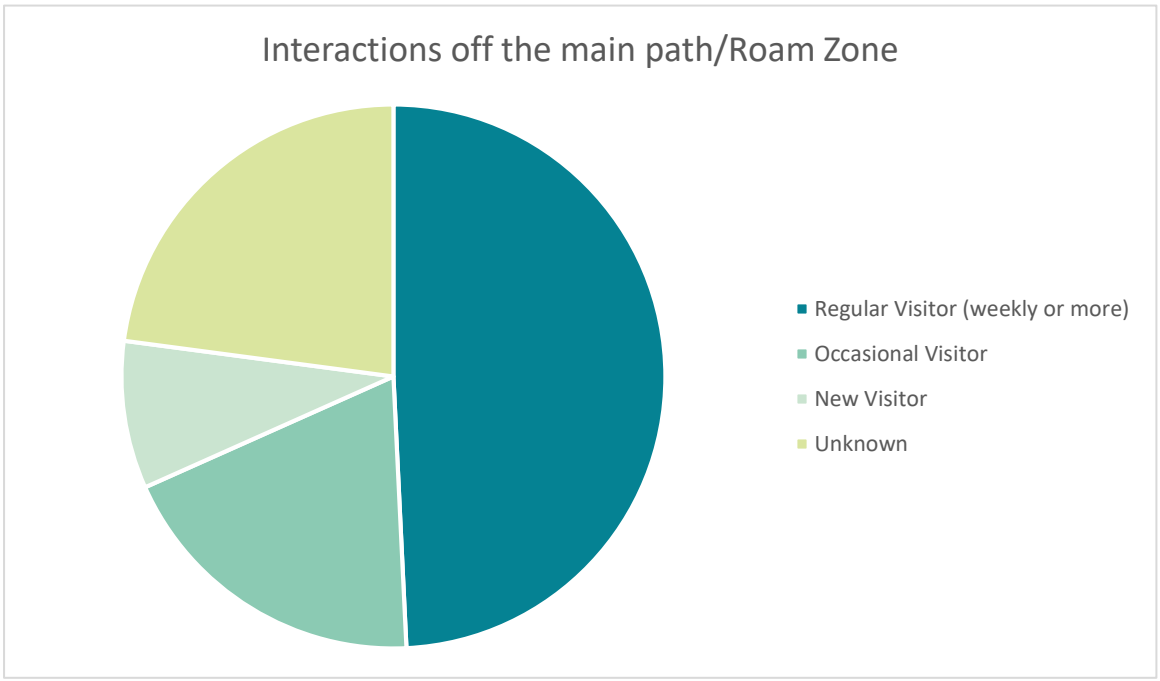


Figure 17: Types of visitor involved in interactions off the main paths/Roam Zones

Visitor Reasons for being off main path/roam zone

As in previous years, the reasons for visitors being away from the main paths was recorded and allocated a code for analysis, see Table 9

Figure 18 shows that many times the reason was for being off the main paths was not clear. This is partly due to seasonal wardens recording every time they saw someone off the main path, even if they did not speak to them. In a quarter of interactions off the main path, the visitor(s) stated that they were not aware of ground nesting birds or the protection measures. This highlights the important role the wardens play engaging and educating members of the public.

Positively, the percentage of people that said that they hadn't seen the signs has fallen compared with 2021. There was also a large decrease in the percentage of visitors saying that they thought only red zones were protected which is to be expected with the removal of red zones for 2022. However, it does show that it can take time for new messages to be understood and accepted by long-term visitors.

Table 9: Reasons given by visitors for being off the main paths/Roam Zones

Reason Code	Reason
0	No reason given/reason unclear
1	Not aware of GNBs/protection measures
2	Thought only red zones protected
3	Open access land/common – believe that they should walk anywhere they like
4	Belief that nothing nesting in the protected areas
5	They hadn't seen the signs
6	Tradition – they have always walked the same route and aren't willing to change
7	Shortcut
8	Trying to keep away from dogs/cyclists/cattle etc.

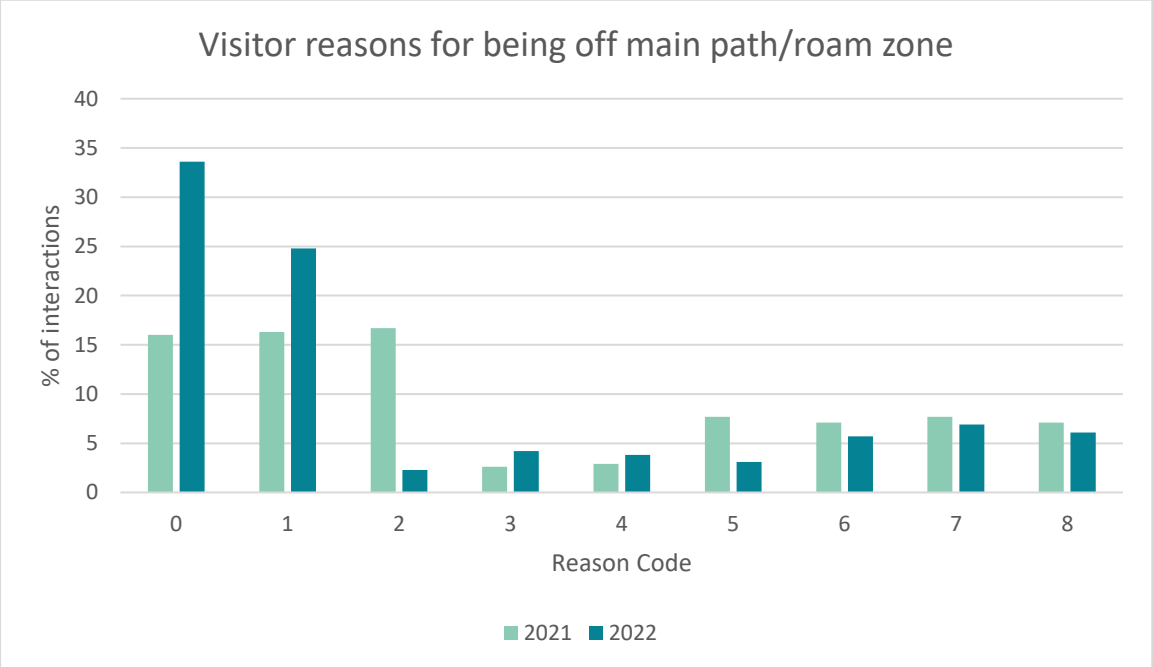


Figure 18: Percentage of interactions off the main path/Roam Zones where each reason was given – 2021 vs 2022

Visitor Compliance

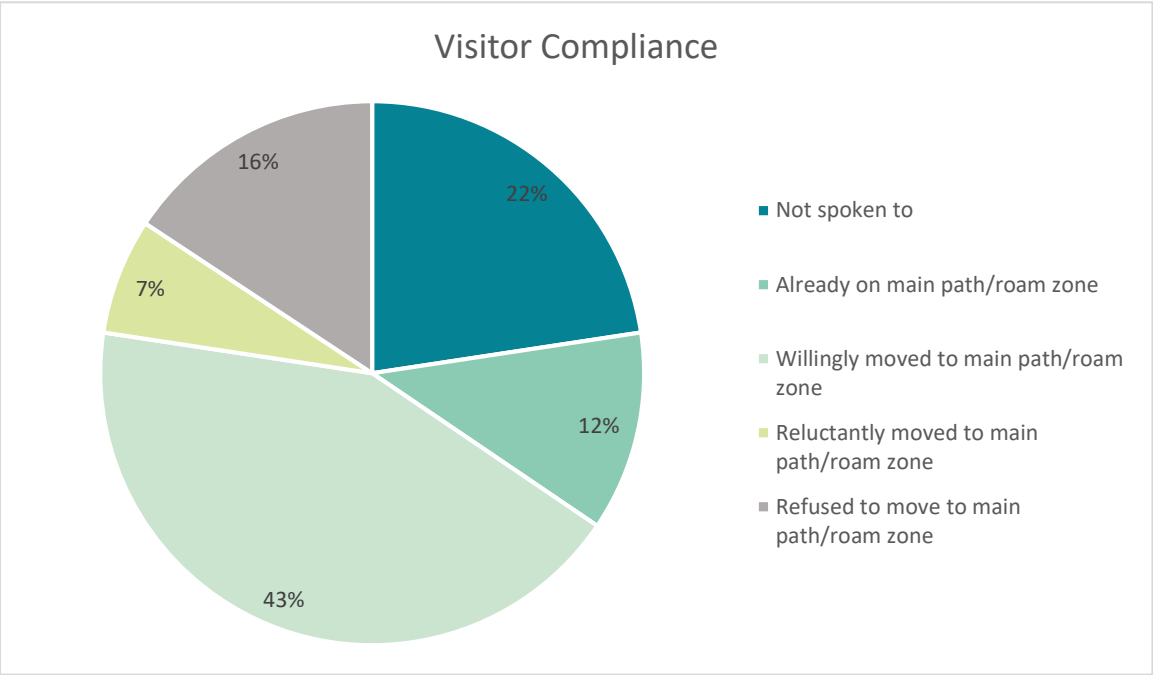


Figure 19: Visitor compliance in interactions off the main paths/Roam Zones

After engaging with visitors who have strayed from the main path, the wardens recorded how the visitor responded after the interaction. Figure 19 shows that while the majority of visitors were willing to move back to the main path there were several cases where visitors refused to do so. 90% of these interactions where the visitor refused to move to a main path involved regular visitors (at least weekly).

12% of interactions took place on a main path/roam zone after the visitor had been seen in protected areas. Where possible, the wardens would wait for the visitor to reach a main path to avoid entering protected areas themselves.

Weekend vs Weekday

Location of interactions

Figure 20 shows how interactions differed from weekday to weekend. While weekend interaction numbers are lower than weekday numbers, the average number of interactions per day is higher. For weekdays, the wardens averaged 2.01 interactions per day, whereas at weekends this rises to 4.78 interactions per day.

The location of interactions does not vary greatly between weekdays and weekends, with the lozenges remaining the most common location with the firebreaks continuing to be a hot spot.

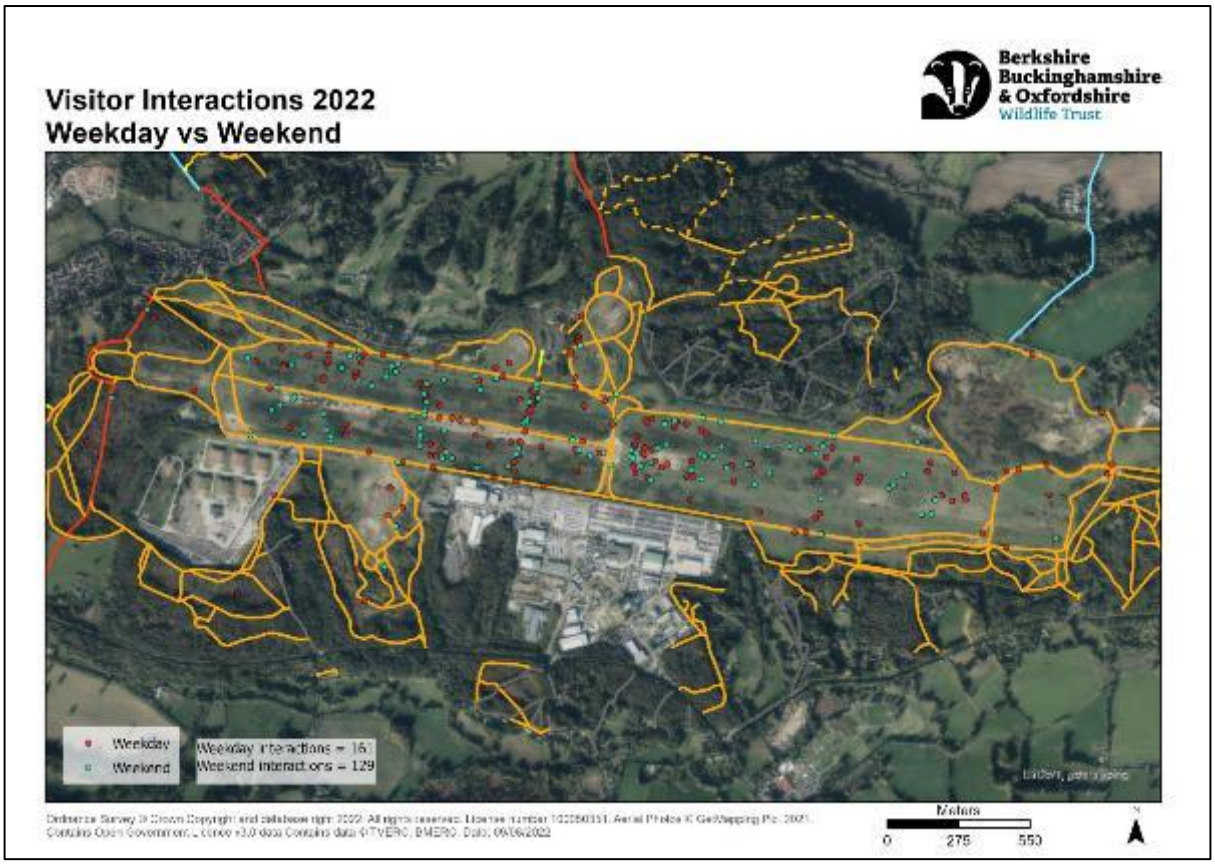


Figure 20: Location of visitor interactions – Weekday vs weekend

Visitor Compliance – Weekday vs Weekend

As well as studying how the location of interactions differed between weekday and weekend visitors, visitor compliance has also been analysed (Figure 21). The graph below shows the percentage of interactions where visitors willingly, reluctantly or refused to move to the main path excluding those interactions where the visitor was not spoken to or was spoken to on a main path/roam zone. Although not significant, it can be seen that on weekdays a slightly higher percentage of visitors refused to move to the main path when compared to weekend visitors. A higher percentage of visitors were willing to move to main paths at the weekends.

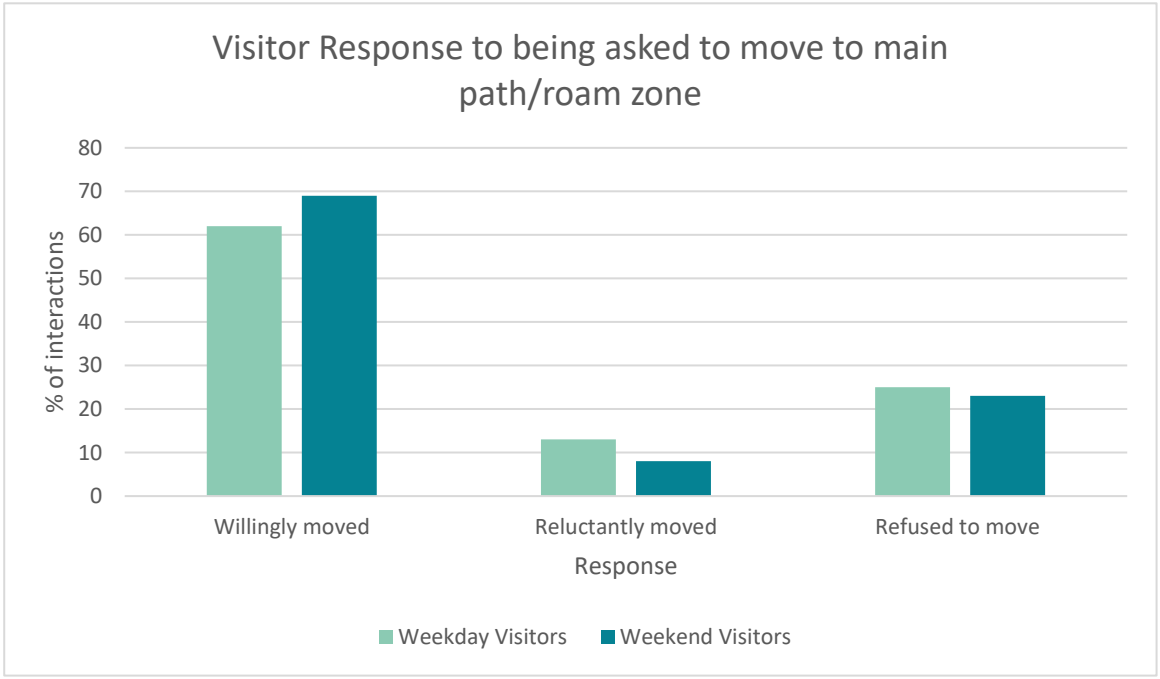


Figure 21: Visitor compliance – weekday vs weekend

Table 10: Visitor type and compliance on Greenham Common on the weekdays vs the weekends

	Weekday					
	Willingly moved		Reluctantly moved		Refused to move	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Regular (weekly or more)	34	58.6%	8	66.7%	22	95.7%
Occasional	15	25.9%	4	33.3%	0	0%
New	7	12.1%	0	0%	1	4.3%
Unknown	2	3.4%	0	0%	0	0%

	Weekend					
	Willingly moved		Reluctantly moved		Refused to move	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Regular (weekly or more)	20	37%	3	50%	15	83.3%
Occasional	21	38.9%	2	33.3%	2	11.1%
New	11	20.4%	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown	2	3.7%	1	16.7%	1	5.6%

Table 10 provides a more in-depth look at the types of visitors and their response to being spoken to by a warden. On both weekdays and weekends, the vast majority of visitors that refused to move to the main path are regular. Regular visitors also make up the largest proportion of those who reluctantly move to the main path on both weekdays and weekends.

This data further confirms the importance of finding different ways to engage with regular visitors to the Common to try and increase understanding of the protection measures and reduce the number of visitors that routinely use protected areas of the Common and refuse to move to main paths when approached by a warden.

Appendix C – Visitor Activity Monitoring (Greenham Common)

In order to get a snapshot of how visitors were using different zones of the site and identify any trends across the season, a series of monitoring sessions were carried out.

Methodology

A vantage point was taken up near the Control Tower, giving views of the main path, a firebreak, part of the lozenges and part of the Roam Zone (formerly called the Green Zone). This point was the same as 2020 and 2021, allowing direct comparison with previous years. The site was monitored for 30 minutes, at approximately 4 pm on Fridays, twice monthly from March to the end of May. An extra session was conducted in August to evaluate the effect of ending of GNB protection measures.

Visitor Location

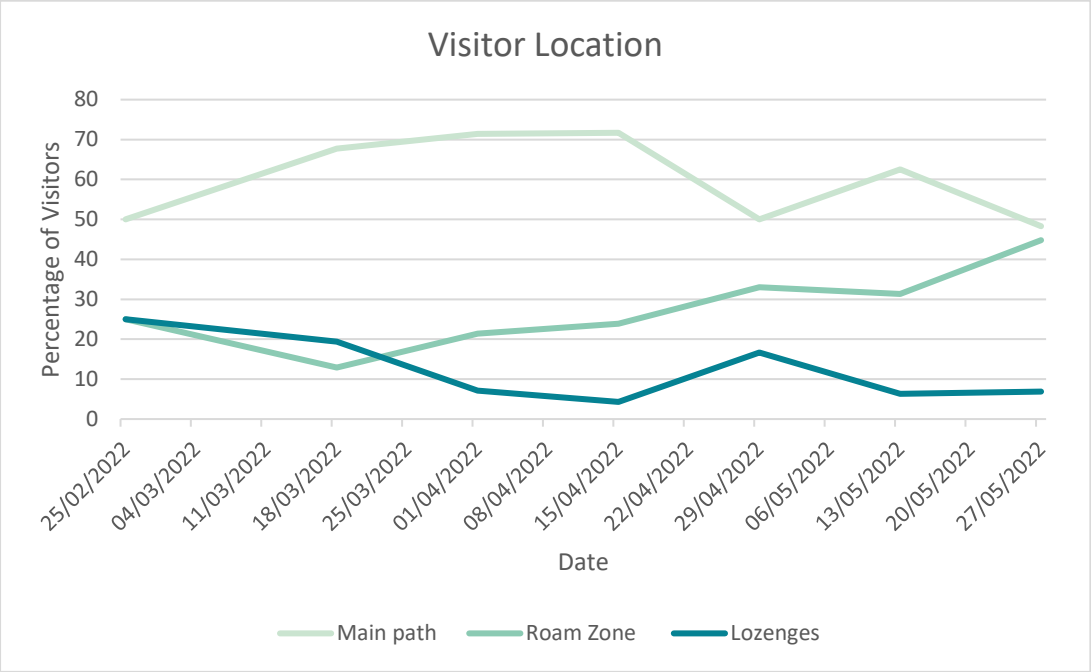


Figure 22: Visitor location during activity monitoring

Figure 22 shows the location of visitors seen versus date. The number of people on the main path is steady overall, and is always where the majority of visitors can be found. This shows that the paths are suitable for most visitors, and so the policy of asking visitors to stay on the main path is realistic.

There is a trend of visitors switching from the protected lozenge area to the roam zone as the season progresses. This is a positive sign showing that the behaviour of visitors changes during the early part of the season. It is a reasonable hypothesis that this is due to the messages conveyed by the wardens and the signage have been understood and are being followed by the majority of visitors.

A surprising finding was that, in the August monitoring session, of the 15 people observed, none had returned to using the lozenges despite ending wardening and removal of GNB signage. Although it is dangerous to draw conclusions from a single session, one idea is that the reduction in the use of the lozenges as the season progresses may be partly due to dog walker seeking out shady routes with water available.

Comparison with Previous Seasons

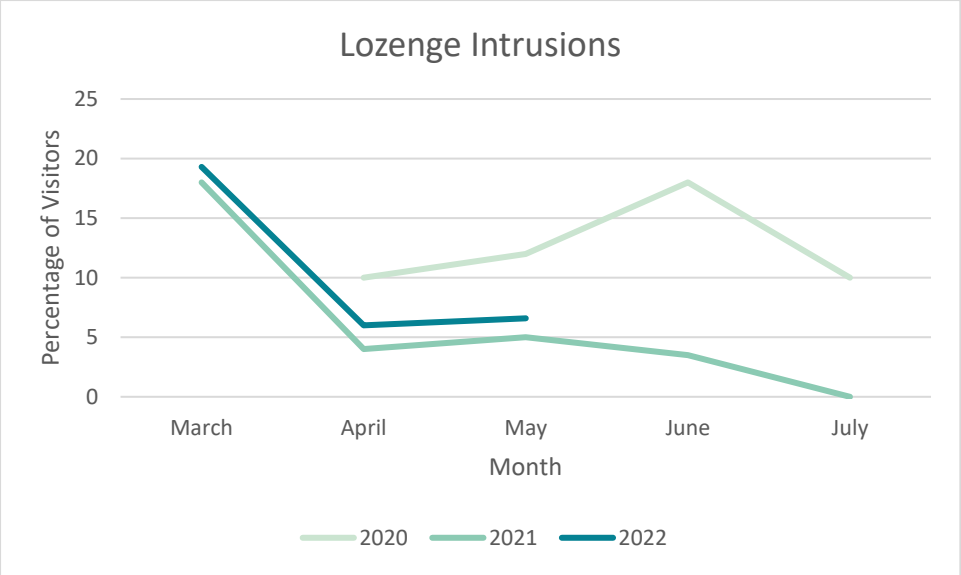


Figure 23: Monthly lozenge Intrusions during activity monitoring 2020-2021

The percentage of people using the lozenges is plotted versus date in shown in Figure 23. The large drop in the number of visitors in the lozenges seen in March last year was repeated again this year. Overall numbers using the lozenges early on in the season were lower than in 2020, and only slightly greater than last year. It is not clear that this increase is statistically significant given the small sample size. It is most likely that the level of intrusions into the lozenges dropped between 2020 (the COVID year) and 2021, and has been maintained at a similar level this year.

Dogs

Figure 24 below plots dogs seen on and off lead, versus date.

The numbers of dogs seen during the survey period is quite unstable with particularly low numbers on 1st and 29th April. This may be weather related. The second date was noted as being unseasonably cold.

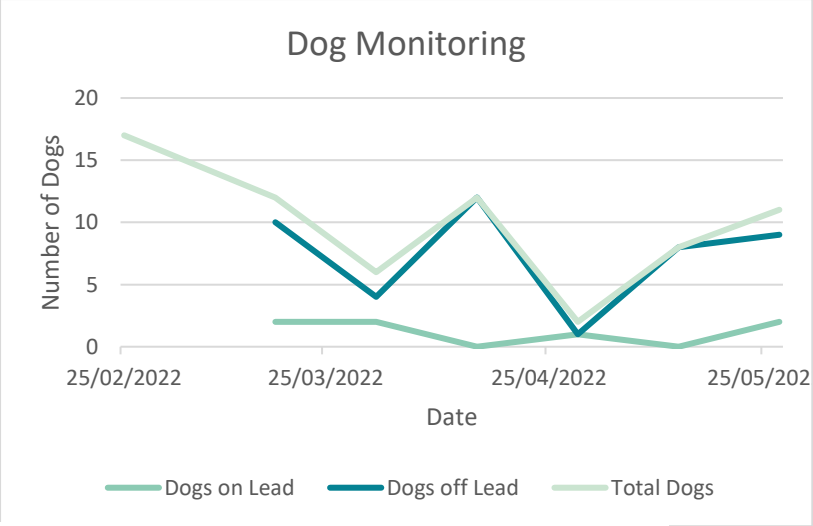


Figure 24: Dog monitoring over the GNB season

In spite of the variability of total dog numbers the overall conclusion is clear. The vast majority of dog walkers seen, have their dogs off lead. There does not seem to be a trend as the season progresses. This finding agrees with anecdotal evidence and visitor surveys that the majority of dog walkers visiting the Commons, place a high value on their dogs being able to run off lead. This again emphasises the importance of having seasonal wardens in place talking to and educating members of the public throughout the key ground nesting bird period.

Appendix D – Visitor Surveys (Greenham Common)

In order to gain further information on visitors to Greenham and Crookham Commons (GCC) and their behaviour on site during the ground nesting bird season, visitor surveys were undertaken across a number of different timeslots across the three main site entrances (Control Tower, Pyle Hill & Crookham Pools). The surveys were carried out towards the end of the GNB season. A total of 102 visitor surveys were completed at GCC.

Where comparisons with data from 2020 are made, it is important to remember the methodology used for the 2020 visitor surveys. The visitor survey was online, advertised to visitors by a gate sign with a QR code and a link to the survey. This resulted in a much smaller dataset than in previous years and introduced a bias into the types of visitors completing the survey. More detail on this methodology and its limitations can be found in the 2020 Seasonal Warden Report. The surveys carried out in 2021 followed the same methodology as this year so any comparison is likely to be more valid

Visitor Activity and Type

The first section of the survey focussed on visitors' reasons for visiting and the frequency of their visits. As can be seen in Table 11 the main reason given for visiting the site was to walk their dog (69.6%) followed by walking without a dog (25.5%). This means that almost 95% of all visitors coming to the site do so to come for a walk. However, the proportion of visitors walking with a dog has increased by almost 25% when compared to last year. This may be due to a general nationwide increase in dog ownership and/or wider knowledge of GCC as a safe place to walk dogs. Either way these results further emphasise the need to engage with dog owners and spread the message around effective dog management on the common.

Table 11: visitor activities on GCC

Activity Type	2022	2021	2020
Dog Walking	69.6%	56.4%	18.0%
Walking	25.5%	31.6%	26.0%
Cycling	4.9%	6.0%	14.0%
Jogging/Running	3.9%	9.4%	11.0%
Wildlife Interest	3.9%	1.7%	14.0%
Control Tower	2.9%	0.0%	6.0%
Family outing	2.0%	0.9%	7.0%
Shortcut/commuting	0.0%	2.6%	1.0%
Other	4.9%	5.1%	3.0%

Several questions were asked to try an establish the different types of visitors to GCC. The first asked visitors how long they have been visiting GCC *(*Table 12). As with previous years the highest proportion of visitors have been visiting GCC for 5+ years, though this has dropped from 73.5% the previous year. These longer-term visitors seem to have been replaced by those who have visited the site for between 1-5 years (28.5%), possibly reflecting new visitors who found the site during the Covid lockdowns in 2020/21.

Table 12: how long have respondents been visiting GCC

Visiting For	2022	2021	2020
First Visit	4.9%	3.4%	
Less than a year	7.8%	7.7%	5.0%
1-2 years	16.7%	8.6%	7.0%
3-5 years	11.8%	6.8%	17.0%
5+ years	58.8%	73.5%	71.0%

Regular visitors have been defined in previous reports as those that visit the site at least weekly. This year 84% of visitors can be classed as regular compared to 77% last year (Table 13). The other interesting result from this question is that the number of sporadic visitors (less than once a month) has increased to 10.2% from 3.4% last year.

Table 13: GCC visit frequency

Visit Frequency	2022	2021	2020
More than once a day	7.1%	10.3%	7.0%
Once a day	25.5%	17.2%	32.0%
More than once a week	35.7%	35.3%	39.0%
Once a week	15.3%	14.7%	12.0%
2-3 times a month	4.1%	8.6%	2.0%
Once a month	2.0%	6.9%	0.0%
Sporadically	10.2%	3.4%	7.0%

The survey also asked why visitors chose GCC over other local green spaces (Table 14). The most popular reason was again “Proximity to home” but this has continued to decline from previous years. Again, this could be due to the relaxation of Covid restrictions meaning distance from home is less of a consideration. The number of visitors choosing “Safe” and “natural beauty” has increased on last year but those citing “peaceful” has declined. Other common reasons given included openness (12%), quality of the paths (12%) and the presence of dog ponds (8%)

Table 14: Why do visitors choose GCC over other local green spaces

Why Greenham?	2022	2021	2020
Proximity to home	37.3%	44.0%	50.0%
Peaceful	4.9%	11.0%	5.0%
Natural beauty	16.7%	13.0%	21.0%
Safe	11.8%	7.0%	

For the first time this year visitors were also asked whether they viewed GCC as a common, a nature reserve, or both. Figure 25 shows that most surveyed visitors (70%) view the site as both, highlighting the important role common land plays in providing multiple benefits to users.

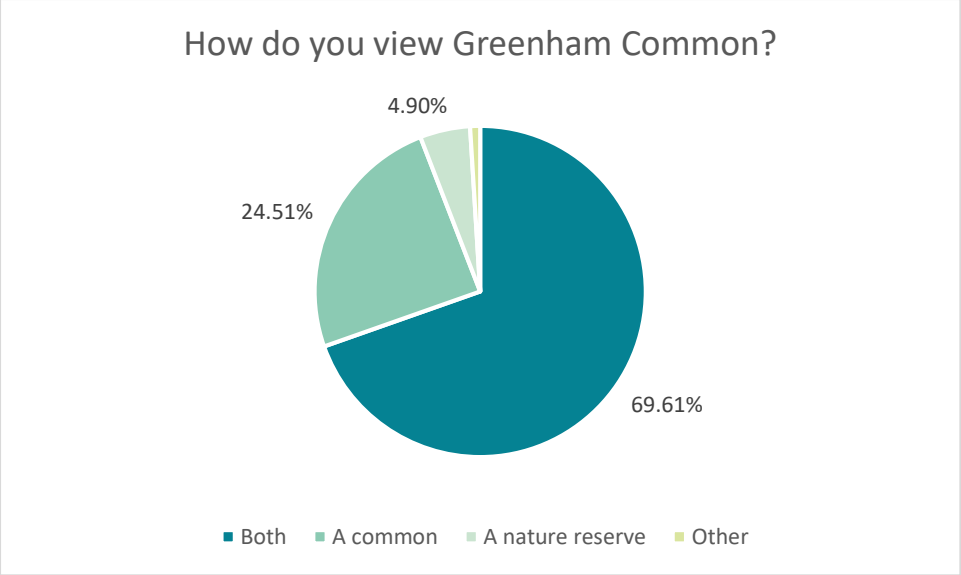


Figure 25: Do visitors see GCC as a common or a nature reserve

Another semi-regular issue that was raised with the wardens this year was the lack of a shorter circular route on the main common due to the closure of the firebreaks to protect GNBs during the breeding season. This has led to some calls for a firebreak to be opened to allow for a c.1km loop to be walked from the Control Tower. To understand whether this was a more widespread issue visitors were asked whether they thought "*there is suitable provision of circular walking routes of different lengths during the ground nesting bird season*". The results, shown in Figure 26, show that only 15% of respondents believe that there is not suitable provision. Consequently, one of the recommendations taken forward is to improve access provision it the roam zones

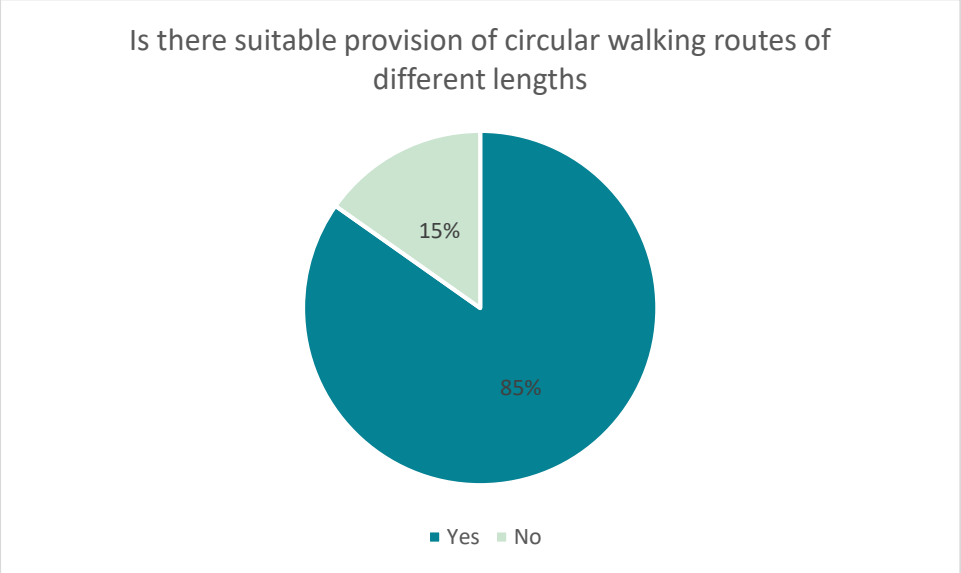


Figure 26: provision of circular walks during the GNB season

Knowledge of GNB Protection Measures

The next section of the survey focussed on visitors' awareness of the measures in place to protect GNBs during the nesting season. The first questions focussed on the "roam zones" (RZ) and the results are shown in Figure 27.

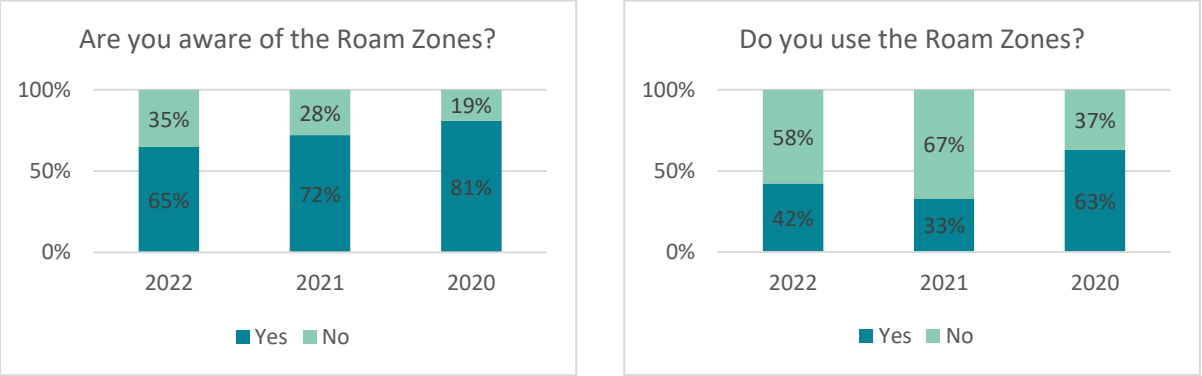


Figure 27: visitors' awareness and usage of roam zones.

Compared to last year awareness of the RZ has decreased from 72% to 65%. However, usage of the roam zones has increased from last year from 33% to 42%. This suggests that though fewer visitors were aware of the RZ when they are aware they are more likely to use them. It is recommended that the RZ signage is reviewed to make it more obvious, that more is done to promote the RZ at the main access points to the site, and further management interventions are made to open up these areas.

When asked if there were any suggestions on how to improve the RZ the most frequent responses were to have them more clearly marked, keep them free of cattle, cut down some of the scrub, and have more dog poo bins.

Visitors were also asked whether they were aware of the GNB protection measures and could they briefly describe their understanding of them. Figure 28 shows that there has been a slight decline in the proportion of visitors who are aware of the measures, dropping from 84% to 81%. When asked to describe the measures the main answers were:

- Keep to the main paths (31%)
- Keep out of certain areas (25%)
- Don't disturb the birds (12%)
- Keep dogs out of certain areas (8%)
- Stay out of red zones (7%)
- Keep dogs on leads (5%)

One encouraging aspect of this is that visitors are starting to move away from the idea of red zones. This year only 7% of all visitors mentioned them as opposed to 18% in 2021 suggesting that the change in message towards sticking to the paths/out of certain areas is becoming more embedded.

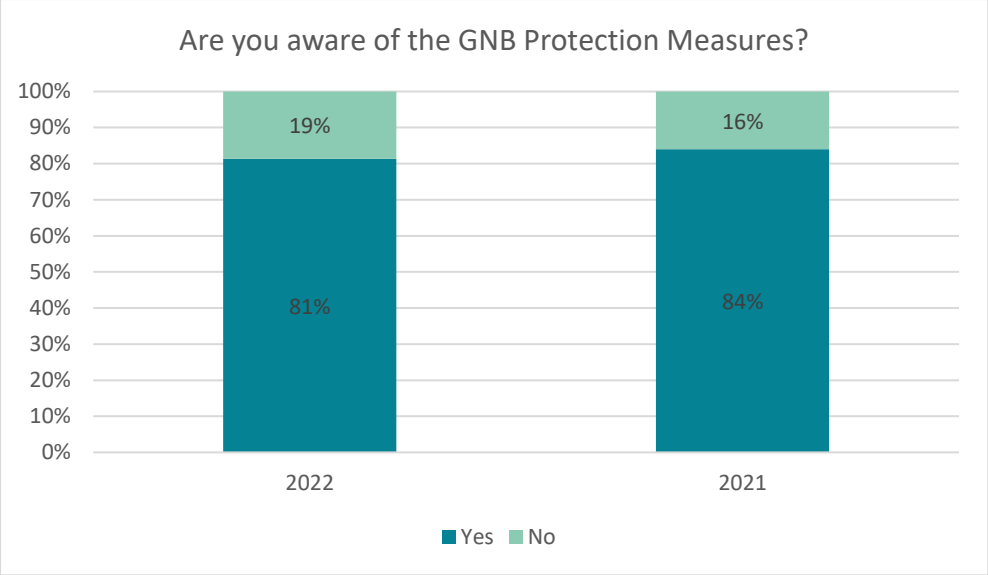


Figure 28: visitor awareness of GNB protection measures

Visitors were then shown a gate sign and logtern firebreak sign and asked what the main message they took from them was and whether they had any other comments. 83% of visitors said that main message taken from the signs was “stick to the main paths”, up from 74% last year. No other messages had a significant proportion of the responses. As an interesting side note, only 1 person responding to the survey mentioned the use of the Thames Valley Police logo, despite it being raise in other correspondences to BBOWT and the Parish council.

BBOWT & GCCC Awareness

Respondents were asked if they knew who manages Greenham Common. The answers given can be seen below in Figure 29. The results are significantly down on last year, with only 25% of respondents being able to identify BBOWT as responsible for management of the site. 58% were unable to give and answer, 11% said West Berkshire Council, and 5% said the Greenham Common Trust.

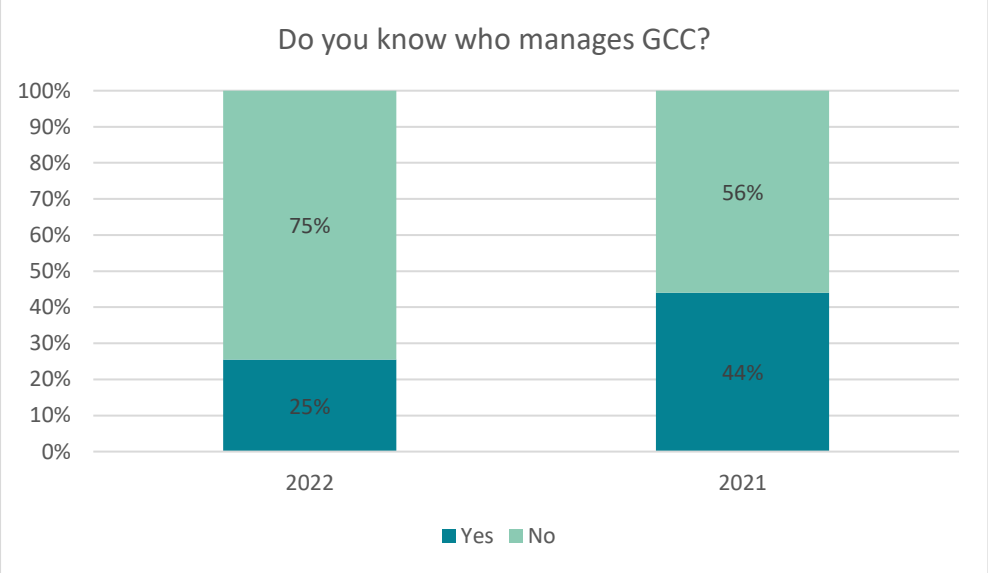


Figure 29: management of GCC

Respondents were asked whether they were currently a member of BBOWT with the results shown in Figure 30. The result is fairly consistent with last year with c.10% of respondents being BBOWT members. Of those that weren't members, 16% suggested that they would be interested in joining BBOWT in the future.

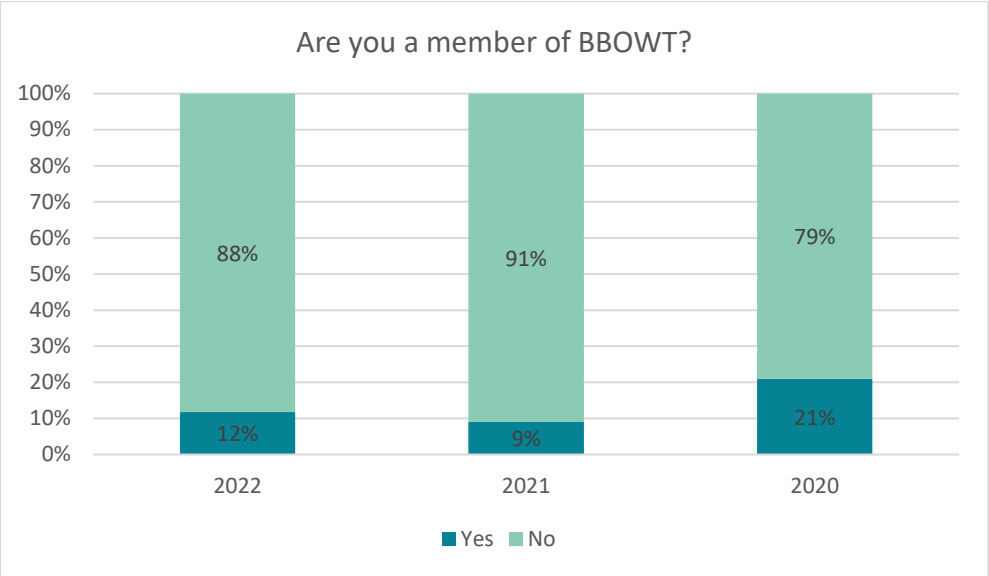


Figure 30: BBOWT membership

For the first time this year visitors were asked whether they had heard of the GCC Commission (Figure 31). 72% of respondents had not heard of the commission and of the 28% who had, none were able to give a good answer about what the commission does.

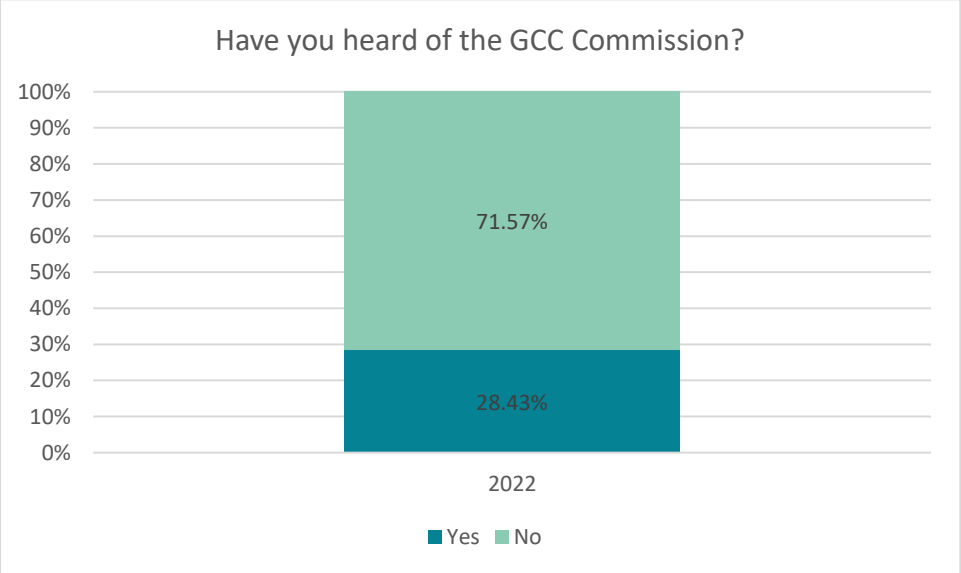
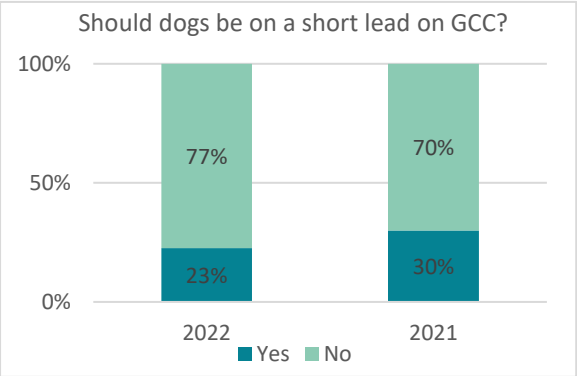


Figure 31: GCC commission awareness

Dogs on Greenham & Crookham Common

Respondents were asked whether they thought that dogs should be on a short lead on GCC, both all year and just during the nesting season. The results of this question can be seen below in Figure 32.



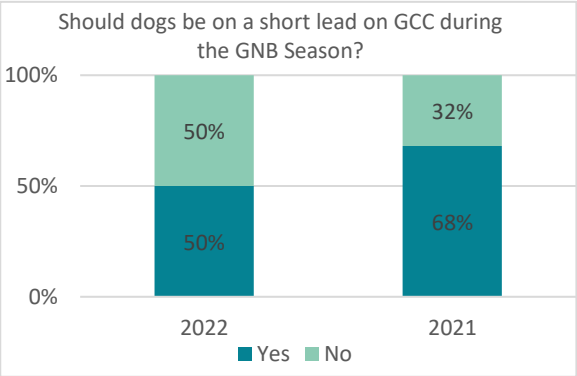


Figure 32: dogs on leads on GCC

The results suggest that the public has moved away from the idea that dogs should be on a short lead on GCC when compared to last year. The proportion of respondents who think dogs should be on a short lead all year has fallen from 30% to 23%. Other recurring comments received included "depends on the dog", "depends on the area", and "some kind of lead".

When the question related to only during the GNB season the results have moved from respondents being generally in favour of dogs on short leads last year (68% yes vs 32% no) to an exact 50:50 split this year. Other recurring comments received included "depends on dog", "dog should be under close control", "depends on the area", and "long lead"

Visitor Origin & Method of transport

Respondents were asked what mode of transport they used to get to GCC, with the results shown in Table 15. In 2022 there has been a very slight drop in the proportion of visitors arriving by car, with corresponding slight increases in those visitors arriving on foot or my public transport.

Table 15: GCC visitors mode of transport

Mode of Transport	2022	2021
Car/van	78.4%	81.2%
On foot	15.7%	12.8%
Bicycle	3.9%	5.1%
Public transport	1.0%	0.0%
Other	1.0%	0.9%

As well as mode of transport respondents were also asked to provide their home postcode. This allowed for some analysis of where visitors were coming from and the distance they were travelling. Figure 33 shows the areas around Newbury that visitors visited the site from, showing hotspots in southern Newbury and Thatcham. Some visitors also came from further afield (Reading, Basingstoke, Didcot)

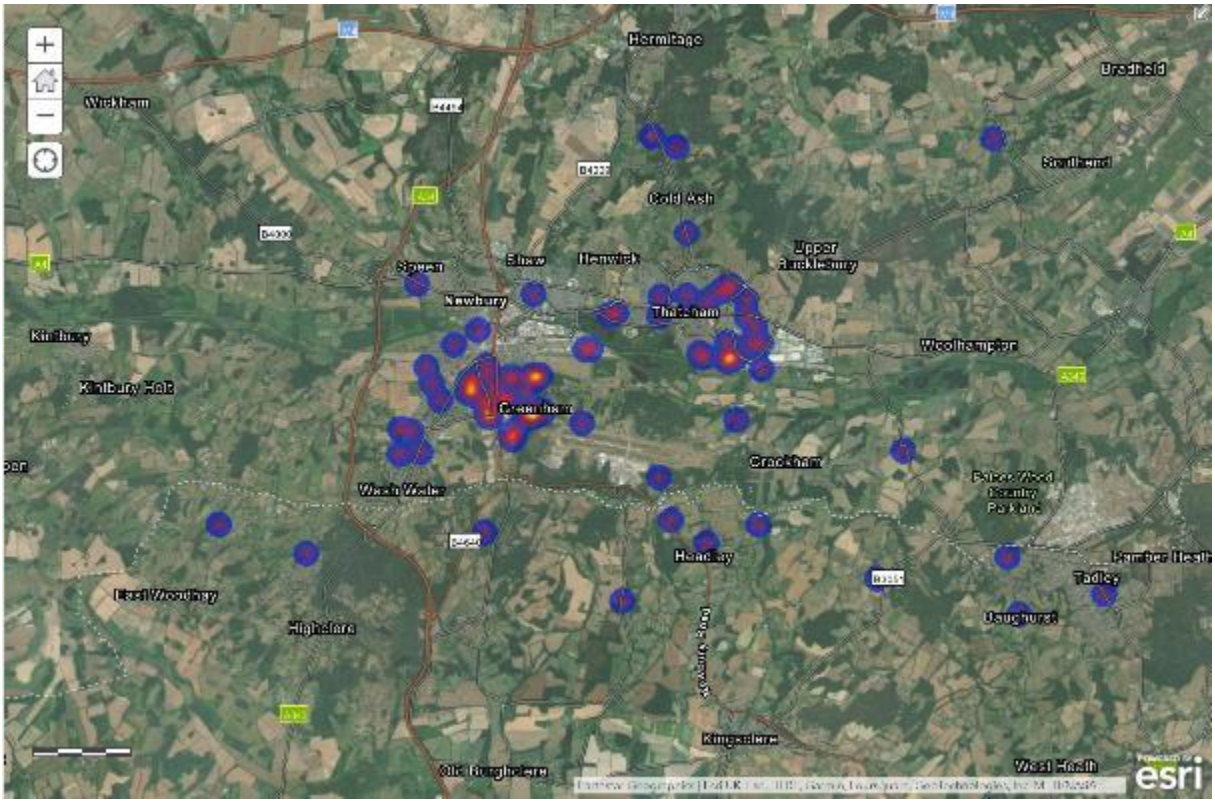


Figure 33: home locations of visitors to GCC from the Newbury area.

Figure 34 shows the length of journeys made by respondents to visit GCC. Most of the journeys were less than 10km with an average of 5.88km and a median of 4.23km

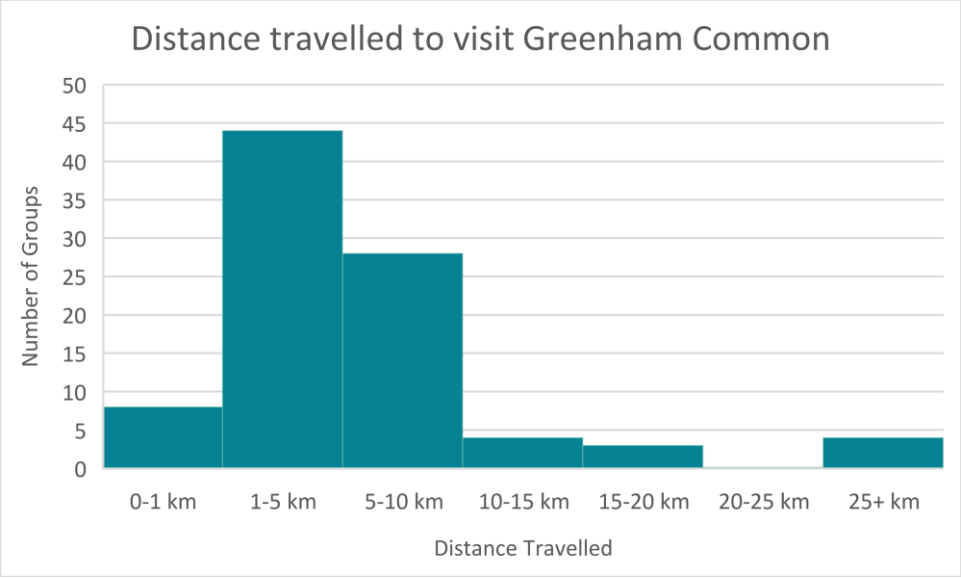


Figure 34: distance travelled to visit GCC

By breaking down the location data by entry/exit point onto site it is possible to see that certain locations favour a certain entrance. Figures 35-37 show this data mapped out. Visitors arriving at the Crookham Pools entrance tend to come from Thatcham and areas to the SE of the site, whereas visitors arriving at Pyle Hill largely come from the S Newbury and Greenham area. There does not appear to be a discernible pattern when looking at the Control Tower data

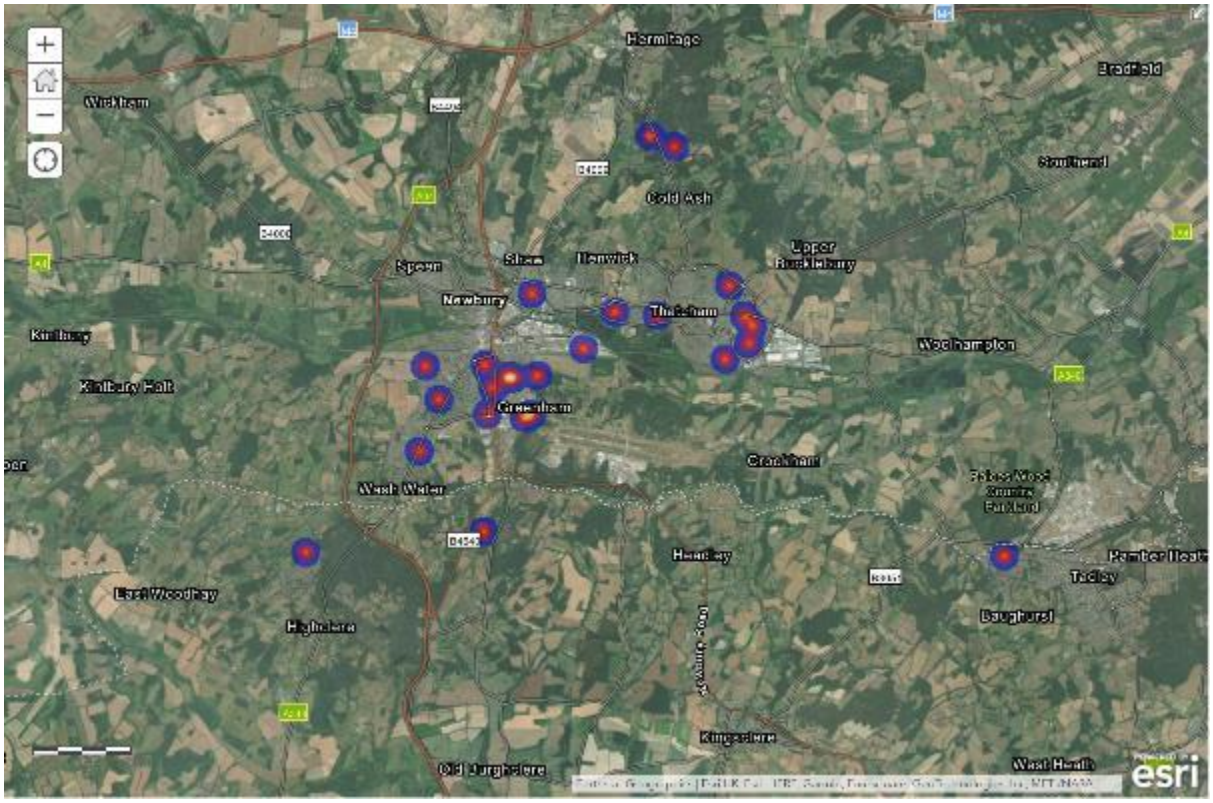


Figure 35: home locations of visitors to the Control Tower entrance from the Newbury area.

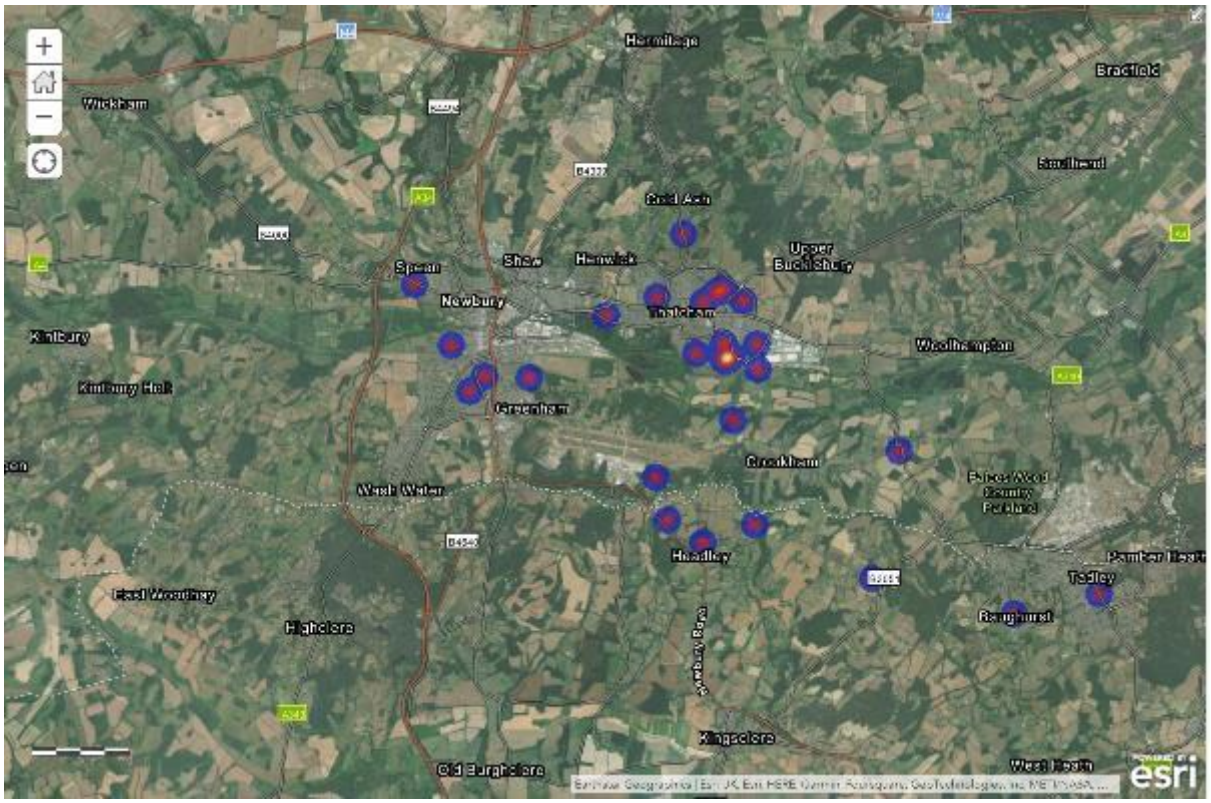


Figure 36: home locations of visitors to the Crookham Pools entrance from the Newbury area.

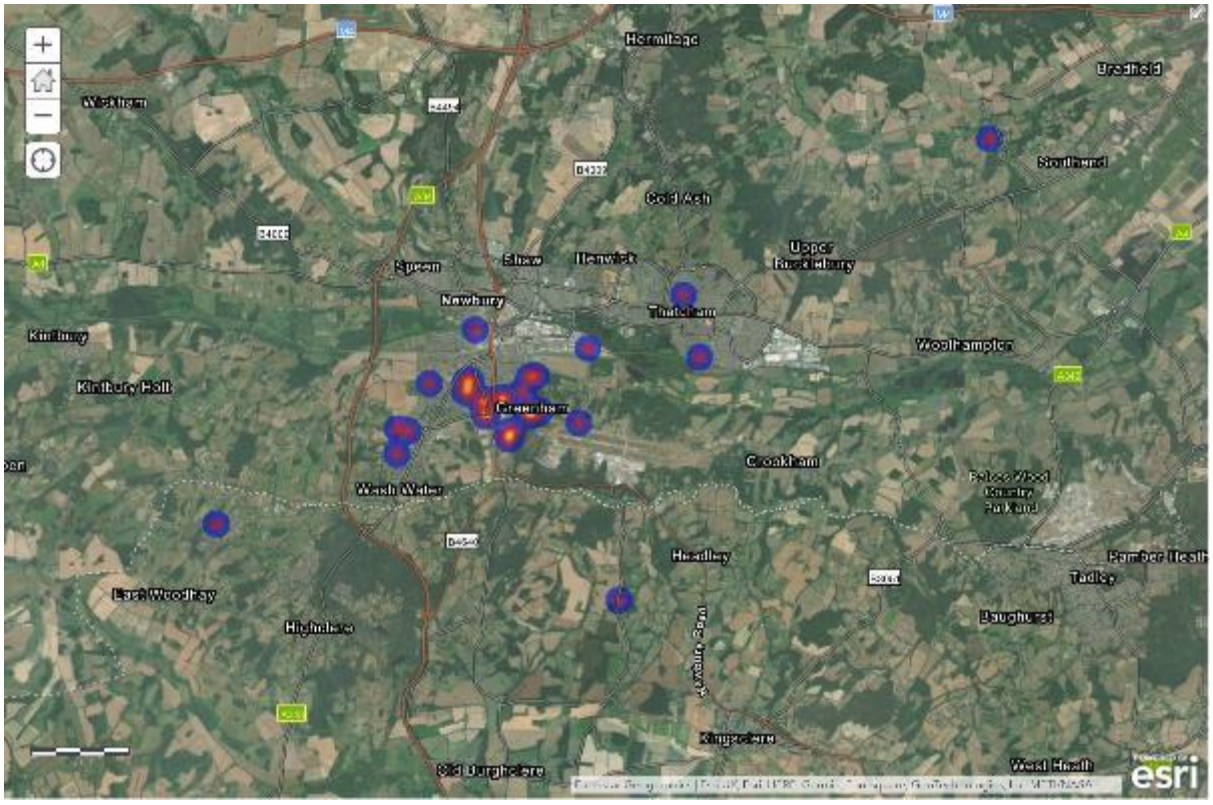


Figure 37: home locations of visitors to the Pyle Hill entrance from the Newbury area.

Online vs in person surveys

In addition to the surveys completed onsite, the same survey was also made available online to those who requested it. The survey could be requested by talking to a member of BBOWT staff on site or through the "Greenham Grapevine" Facebook group. A recommendation will be to make online survey more widely available through local social media channels. A total of 19 responses were received and a summary of the main differences seen between these and the in-person surveys is shown below.

- 100% of online respondents listed dog walking as one of their activities
- More long-term visitors (5+ years) – 72.2% vs 58.82% in person
- More viewed Greenham as a common – 42.1% vs 24.51% in person
- 19 people felt there wasn't a suitable provision of circular walking routes. This was a higher percentage than the inperson interviews conducted – 42.1% online vs 15.22% in person
- Higher awareness of roam zone – 83.3% vs 65% in person
- Higher usage of roam zone – 86.7% vs 42% in person
- When shown GNB signage 63.6% of online respondents quoted "Keep to main paths" as main message (83.3% in person)
- Higher awareness of who manages Greenham (60% online vs 25% in person) – though had to email BBOWT email address for survey link and logo was on survey so probably not relevant
- Higher percentage of people said they didn't think dogs should be on a short lead all year round (94.7% vs 77.45% in person). This is to be expected as 100% of respondents were dog owners
- Similar for during the nesting season – 84.2% online said no vs 50% in person – should be noted there was no 'other' option online

Additional Comments

Respondents were given the chance to make any additional comments about the site. Many respondents stated that they loved the site and that they felt it was well maintained. However, there were also a number of comments on how the site could be improved:

- More poo bins needed and they need to be emptied more
- More benches needed around the site
- Split walkers and cyclists onto different paths
- Scrapes need to be cleared of scrub to allow bird breeding
- Paths are not good enough for wheelchairs – would be good to be able to hire XC wheelchairs on site
- Car park at Pyle Hill is too small

Appendix E – Tally Data (Greenham Common)

In order to gain an understanding of how visitor numbers to Greenham and Crookham commons are changing, tally counts have been undertaken since 2019 to identify how many people are visiting the commons and the activities they are undertaking.

In previous years, tally counts were undertaken during two-hour timeslots. In 2021 & 2022, it was decided that these timeslots would be reduced to one hour and the data would be extrapolated to make it comparable with previous years. Tally counts were undertaken throughout July within the following time periods:

- 07:00 – 09:00
- 10:00 – 12:00
- 13:00 – 15:00
- 17:00 – 19:00*

*this time slot was only undertaken on weekdays due to the time constraints at weekends

Total Visitor Numbers

Figure 38 shows the average number of visitors counted across all of the entrances for the past 3 years of data collection. It shows that across all of the survey locations there has been a continuous decline in visitor numbers between 2020-2022. The biggest difference can be seen at the control tower location where the average number of daily visitors has dropped by c.60%. These continued drop offs from 2021 suggest that the reduced visitor numbers are not purely due to the easing of Covid restrictions between 2020 to 2021.

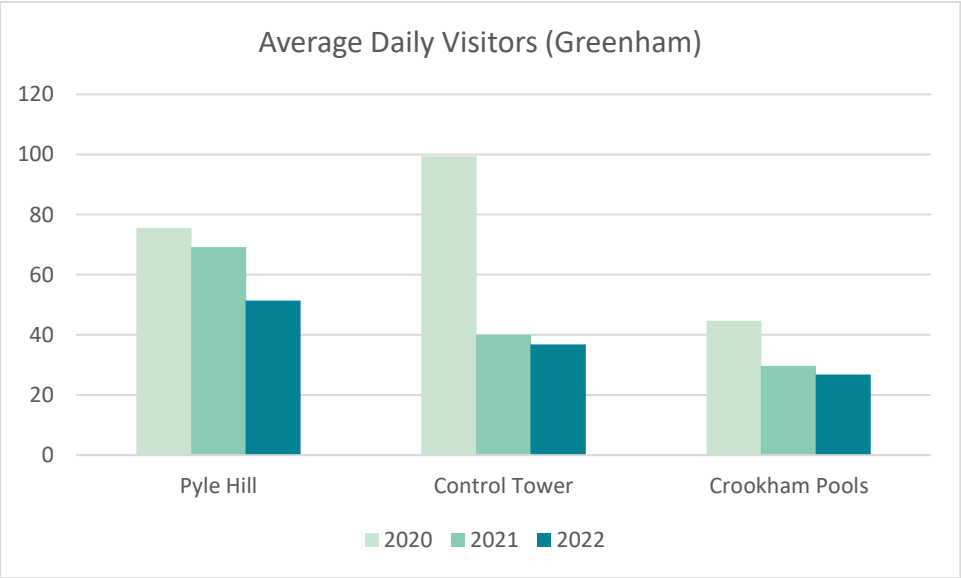


Figure 38: daily visitors to GCC by location.

Looking at the weekday average daily visitors (Figure 39), there is a similar decline in visitor numbers at both the Control Tower (CT) and Crookham Pools (CP) locations. Pyle Hill (PH) remains the most popular entrance location for weekday visitors and numbers there have remained stable between 2021-2022

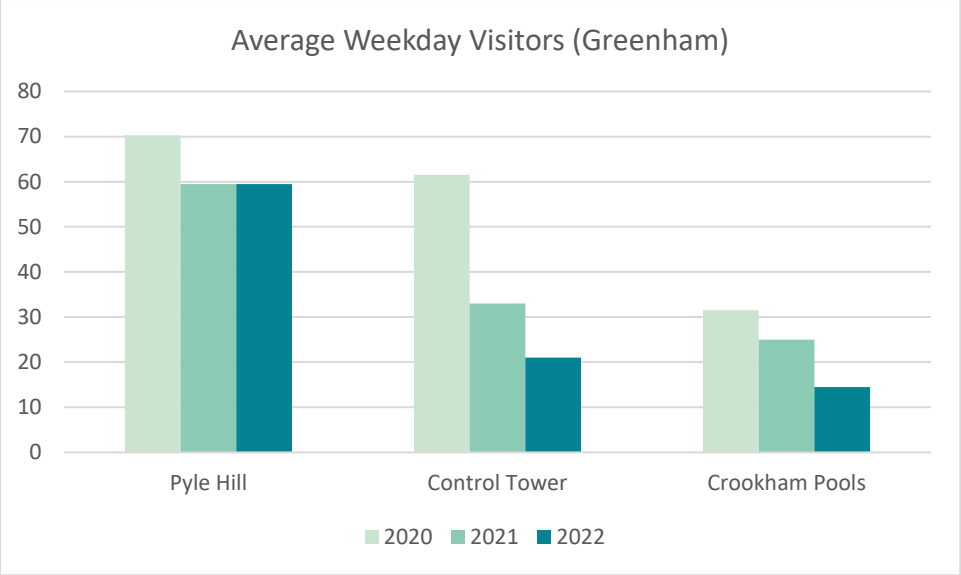


Figure 39: daily weekday visitors to GCC by location

Looking at the temporal variation of weekday visitors (Figure 40*)* some interesting variations can be seen. At PH the most popular times are between 0700-0900 & 1000-1200 and these buck the overall trend of decline by showing increases in the average number of visitors entering the site. At the CT the most popular time to enter the site was between 1700-1900 though a decline in visitor numbers has been recorded across all time slots. A similar pattern of declining visitor numbers is seen for the CP location, with the most popular entry period being 1300-1700. It is possible that the difference in pattern seen between PH and the other locations could be weather related. The weather in July was very hot and sunny and the only entrance that offers significant shade is PH. This may have led more visitors using this entrance rather than the more exposed CT or CP entrances.

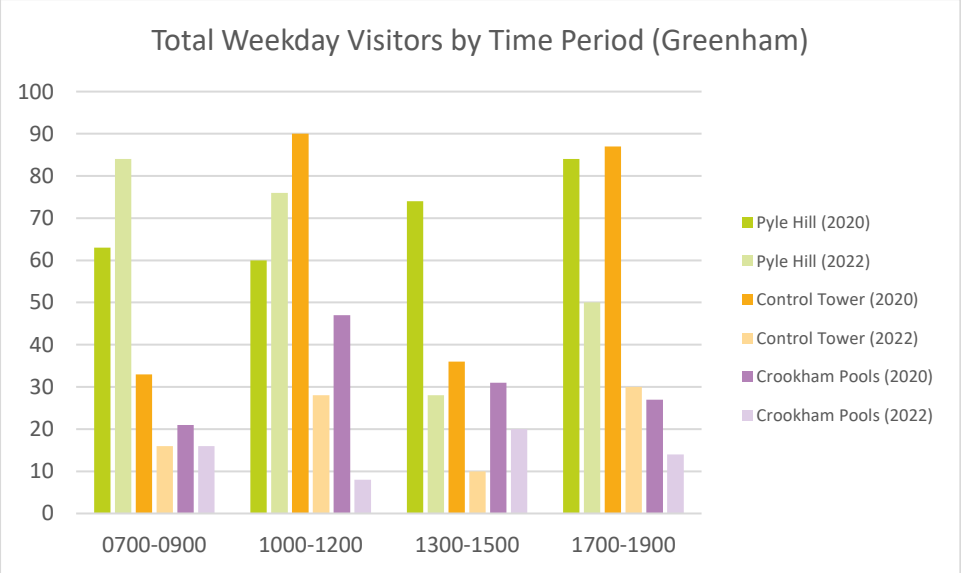


Figure 40: daily weekday visitors to GCC by location and time period

Interestingly the average daily weekend visitors (Figure 41*)* show almost the exact opposite trend to that seen for weekday visitors. Though numbers at all locations are down on 2020 levels, both CT and CP show a slight increase in average weekend visitor numbers. The CT location is the most popular entrance for weekend visitors. By contrast, after stable numbers between 2020-2021, average daily weekend visitor numbers at the PH entrance have halved in 2022

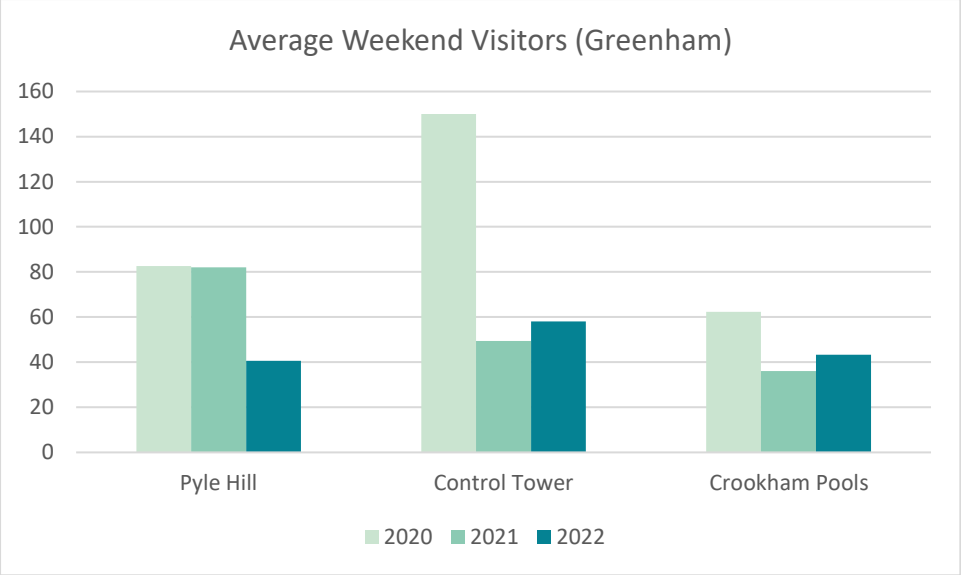


Figure 41: daily weekday visitors to GCC by location

In the temporal data the PH location shows a decline in average weekend visitor numbers (Figure 42) across all of the time periods. At CT and CP there have been significant declines in visitor numbers across the 1000-1200 and 1300-1500 but slight increases for the 0700-0900 time period. Interestingly each location has a different time period when they are most popular: 0700-0900 for CP, 1000-1200 for CT and 1300-1500 for PH.

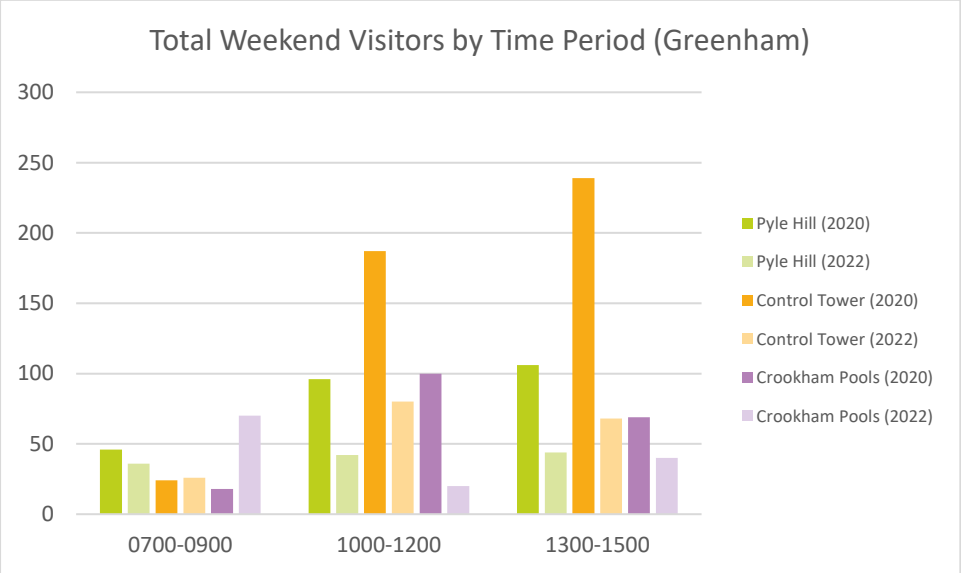


Figure 42: daily weekend visitors to GCC by location and time period

Visitor Activity

As well as examining how numbers of visitors have changed, it is also important to understand how visitor activity is changing. Table 16 shows how different types of weekday visitors have changed between 2020 and 2022.

Table 16: GCC weekday visitor activity 2020-2022

Pyle Hill	2020	2021	2022	Change
Group (with dog)	16	22	29	81%
Group (without dog)	33	23	13	-61%
Pedestrian	53	46	55	3%
Cyclist	18	15	5	-72%
Dogs	19	31	36	89%
Control Tower	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**Change**
Group (with dog)	14	3	8	-46%
Group (without dog)	16	11	4	-78%
Pedestrian	57	33	21	-63%
Cyclist	5	1	0	-100%
Dogs	22	5	10	-57%
Crookham Pools	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**Change**
Group (with dog)	12	13	6	-50%
Group (without dog)	8	6	6	-31%
Pedestrian	30	22	13	-58%
Cyclist	2	3	2	0%
Dogs	18	19	8	-58%

At the CT and CP locations there have been declines in the number of visitors across all categories (groups, pedestrians, cyclists & dogs). The picture at PH is a bit different with increases in the number of groups with dogs, pedestrians and dogs. As with the other locations there has been a decrease in the number of groups without dogs and cyclists.

It is also interesting to note that the proportion of groups that have dogs versus those without has increased at both PH and CT, with c.70% of groups coming with a dog (Figure 43). At CP the proportion has decreased slightly but was already higher in previous years. At all locations there are more groups with dogs than without. This emphasises the need to prioritise engagement with dog owners in order to further improve outcomes for GNBs.

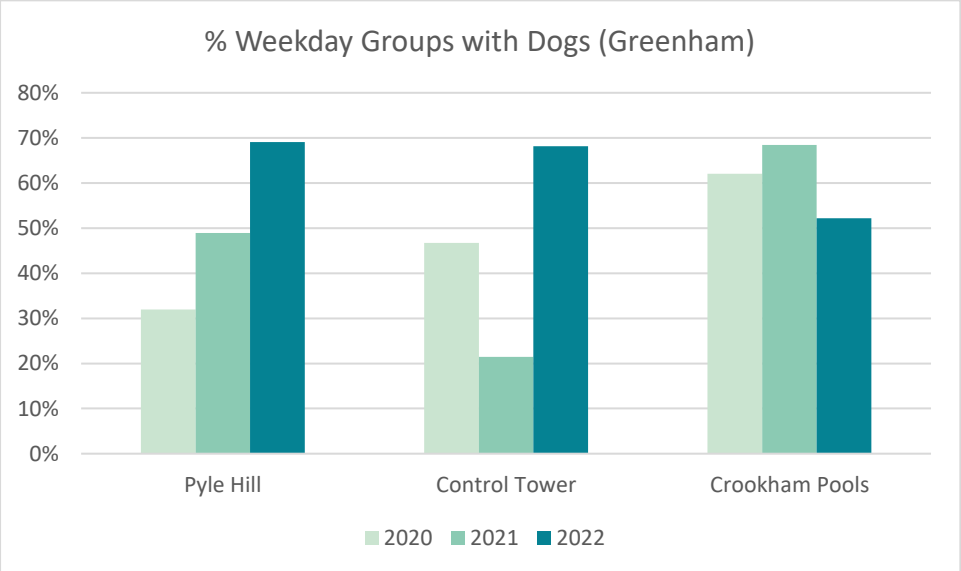


Figure 43: proportion of weekday groups with dogs

The weekend results, as shown in Table 17, to not show the same consistent decreases across all visitor groups.

At PH the number of groups with dogs and the number of dogs has increased (though much less than on weekdays) but without the corresponding increase in the number of pedestrians. The CT location shows a similar pattern with an increase in groups with dogs and number of dogs. The decreases across the other types of visitors are less pronounced than those seen at PH. CP shows a different pattern with increase in all visitor types with the exception of groups without dogs.

Table 17: GCC weekend visitor activity 2020-2022

Pyle Hill	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**Change**
Group (with dog)	16	22	17	4%
Group (without dog)	33	23	9	-72%
Pedestrian	53	46	35	-35%
Cyclist	18	15	6	-67%
Dogs	19	31	21	9%
Control Tower	**2020**	**2021**		**Change**
Group (with dog)	14	3	15	10%
Group (without dog)	16	11	11	-33%
Pedestrian	57	33	55	-4%
Cyclist	5	1	3	-33%
Dogs	22	5	24	9%
Crookham Pools	**2020**	**2021**		**Change**
Group (with dog)	12	13	17	39%
Group (without dog)	8	6	7	-8%
Pedestrian	30	22	39	31%
Cyclist	2	3	4	100%
Dogs	18	19	33	85%

The proportion of groups with dogs visiting at the weekend has increased across all locations from 2020-2022 (Figure 44). At all locations there are more groups with dogs than without. This again emphasises the need to prioritise engagement with dog owners in order to further improve outcomes for GNBs.

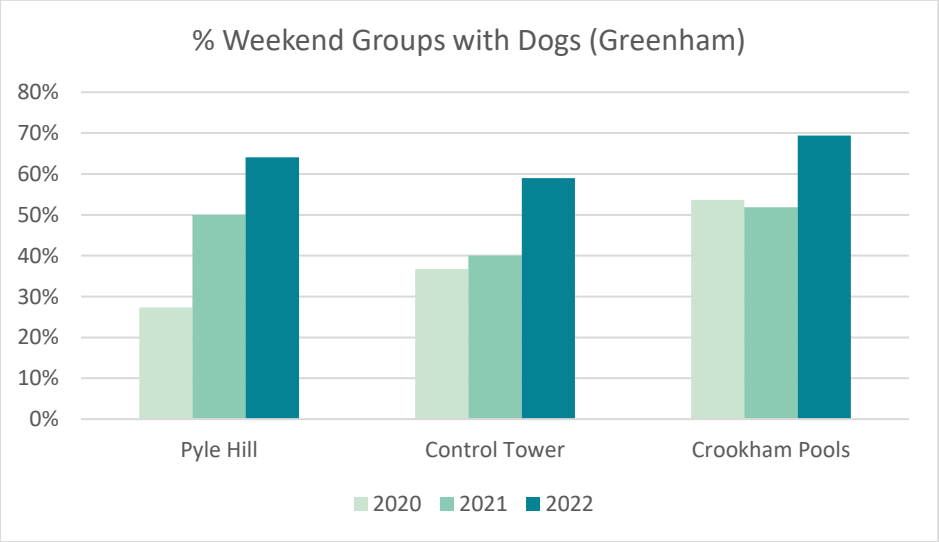


Figure 44: proportion of weekend groups with dogs

Conclusions

Overall total visitor numbers at all locations across the site are down on 2020 numbers. Weekday visitors have continued to decline or remain steady at all locations compared to last year. At the weekend visitor numbers have bounced back slightly at the CT and CP sites compared to last year but numbers are down at PH. Although these reduced numbers are likely to be beneficial to GNB breeding success it is important to note that a higher proportion of visitors are coming with dogs. It is therefore essential that future wardens need to focus on engaging with dog owners and encouraging responsible dog ownership during the nesting period.

Appendix F – Visitor Surveys (Snelsmore Common)

In order to gain further information on visitors to Snelsmore, and their behaviour on site during the ground nesting bird season, visitor surveys were undertaken across a number of different timeslots. The surveys were carried out towards the end of the GNB season. A total of 31 visitor surveys were completed at Snelsmore.

Visitor Activity and Type

The first section of the survey focussed on visitors' reasons for visiting and the frequency of their visits. As can be seen in Table 18 the main reason given for visiting the site was to walk their dog (69.6%) followed by walking without a dog (35%). With these being the main activities, it suggests that everyone who come to Snelsmore does so to take a walk. Compared to 2021 there has also been an increase in the number of visitors who come to the site who come for a picnic/BBQ, wildlife interest and to visit the café.

Table 18: visitor activities on Snelsmore

Activity Type	2022	2021
Dog Walking	68%	61%
Walking	35%	35%
Picnic/BBQ	10%	3%
Wildlife Interest	10%	6%
Visiting café	6%	0%
Other	6%	9%
Family Outing	3%	3%
Specific Event	0%	3%

Several questions were asked to try an establish the different types of visitors to Snelsmore. The first asked visitors how long they have been visiting Snelsmore *(*Table 19). As with previous years the highest proportion of visitors have been visiting Snelsmore for 5+ years, though this has increased from 65% the previous year to 84% this year. The other main change seen in this year's data is that there are fewer first time visitors, dropping from 17% to 3% year on year.

Table 19: how long have respondents been visiting Snelsmore

Visting For	2022	2021
First Visit	3%	17%
Less than a year	0%	6%
1-2 years	13%	6%
3-5 years	0%	6%
5+ years	84%	65%

Regular visitors have been defined in previous reports as those that visit the site at least weekly. This year 61% of visitors can be classed as regular compared to 58% last year (Table 20). This shows that the proportion of regular visitors to the site has remained stable. Another interesting thing to note is that the number of respondents who visit the site 2-3 times a month has increased from last year.

Table 20: Snelsmore visit frequency

Visit Frequency	2022	2021
More than once a day	7%	3%
Once a day	20%	13%
More than once a week	27%	32%
Once a week	7%	10%
2-3 times a month	10%	0%
Once a month	13%	13%
Sporadically	17%	13%

The survey also asked why visitors chose Snelsmore over other local green spaces (Table 21). The most popular reason was again "Proximity to home" but this has declined slightly from the previous year. Many more people sited "safe" as a key reason why they choose to come to Snelsmore increasing from 3% of respondents last year to 23% this year. Other reasons given for choosing to come to Snelsmore included the amount of shade available and the variety of routes.

When asked what had influenced the respondent's choice of walking route, the most common responses were: children (16%), tradition (13%), the weather (13%) and dog (13%).

Table 21: Why do visitors choose Snelsmore over other local green spaces

Why Snelsmore?	2022	2021
Proximity to home	26%	29%
Peaceful	16%	13%
Natural beauty	16%	16%
Safe	23%	3%

Respondents were asked what site facilities they used/intended to use on their visit. The results are shown below in Figure 45. Almost all respondents (97%) used the car park with the next most used facilities being the marked routes and easy access routes (61% and 52% respectively). It is interesting to note that though 19% of visitors used the picnic area none used the BBQ platforms. This may be due to the hot, dry weather this summer and subsequent warnings against using disposable BBQs.

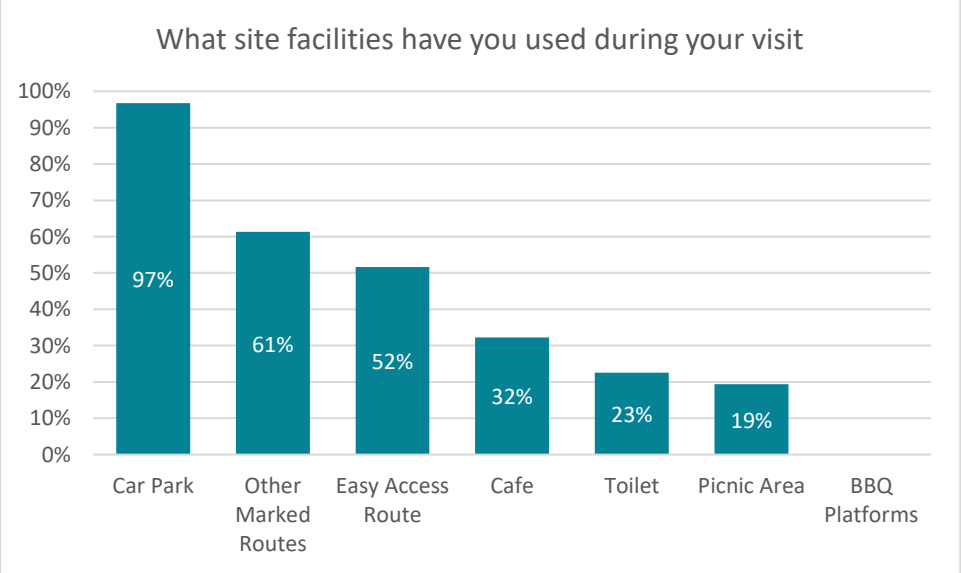


Figure 45: Site facilities used

Awareness of GNB Protection Measures

The next section of the survey focussed on visitors' awareness of the measures in place to protect GNBs during the nesting season. The first questions focussed on the "green dog route" (GDR) and the results are shown in Figure 46.

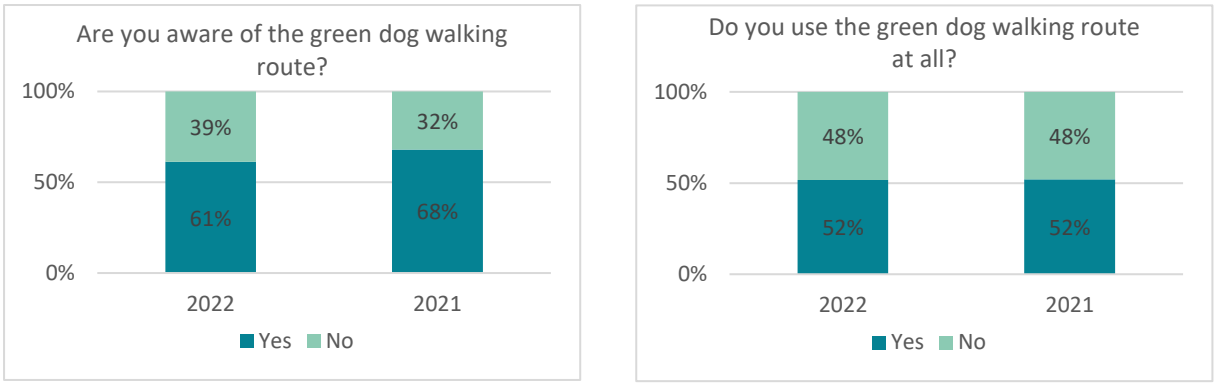


Figure 46: visitors' awareness and usage of the green do route.

Compared to last year awareness of the GDR has decreased from 61% to 68%. However, usage of the roam zones has remained the same as last year at 52%. This suggests that though fewer visitors were aware of the GDR, when they are aware they are more likely to use them. It is recommended that the GDR signage is reviewed to make it more obvious and that more is done to promote the GDR at the main access points to the site.

Visitors were also asked whether they were aware of the GNB protection measures and could they briefly describe their understanding of them. Figure 47 shows that there has been a significant increase in the proportion of visitors who are aware of the measures, increasing from 77% to 87%. When asked to describe the measures the main answers are "keep away from nesting areas" (35%), "keep to main paths" (26%), and "keep dogs on a lead/under control" (23%) (Table 22*)*. This continues to suggest that the main message of keeping to the main paths is not getting across so further work on making this message clear is required.

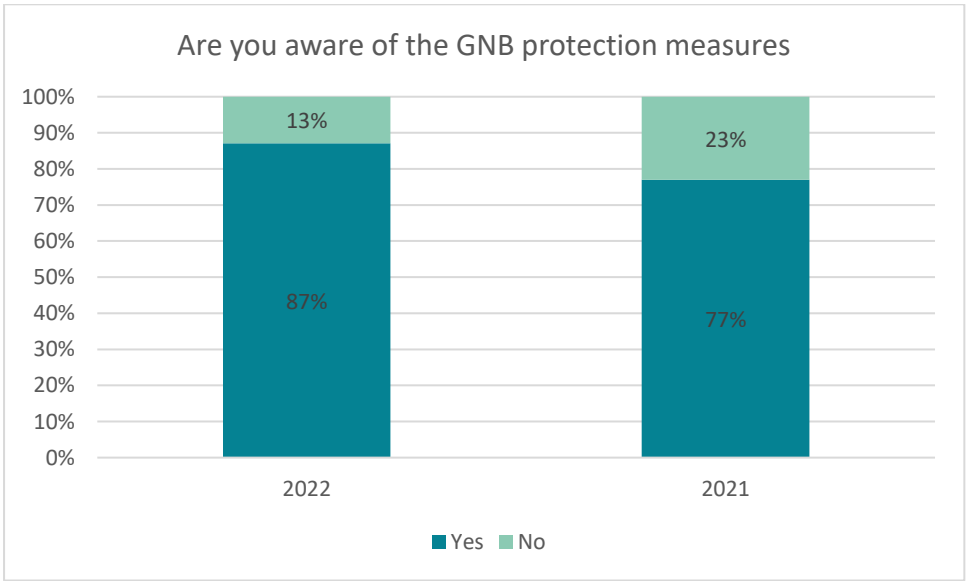


Figure 47: visitor awareness of GNB protection measures

Table 22: visitor understanding of GNB measures

GNB Measures Understanding	2022	2021
Keep away from nesting areas	35%	10%
Keep to main paths	26%	26%
Keep dogs on a lead/under control	23%	26%
Stay away from areas with signage	3%	3%
Keep away from birds	0%	6%

Visitors were then shown some of the GNB signage and asked what the main message they took from them was and whether they had any other comments (Table 23). 55% of visitors said that main message taken from the signs was "stick to the main paths", which is the same as last year. The other messages that a significant proportion of the respondents took from the signs were "keep dogs under control" (23%) and "protect/don't disturb GNBs" (26%). A key recommendation from this year is to review the Snelsmore signage so that it more clearly presents the "stick to the main paths" message.

Table 23: messages taken from GNB signage

Main Message from Signs	2022	2021
Keep to main paths	55%	55%
Keep dogs under control	23%	0%
Stay out of certain areas	3%	13%
Protect/ don't disturb GNBs	26%	3%

BBOWT Awareness

Respondents were asked if they knew who manages Snelsmore Common. The answers given can be seen below in Figure 48. The results are significantly down on last year, with only 35% of respondents being able to identify BBOWT as responsible for management of the site.

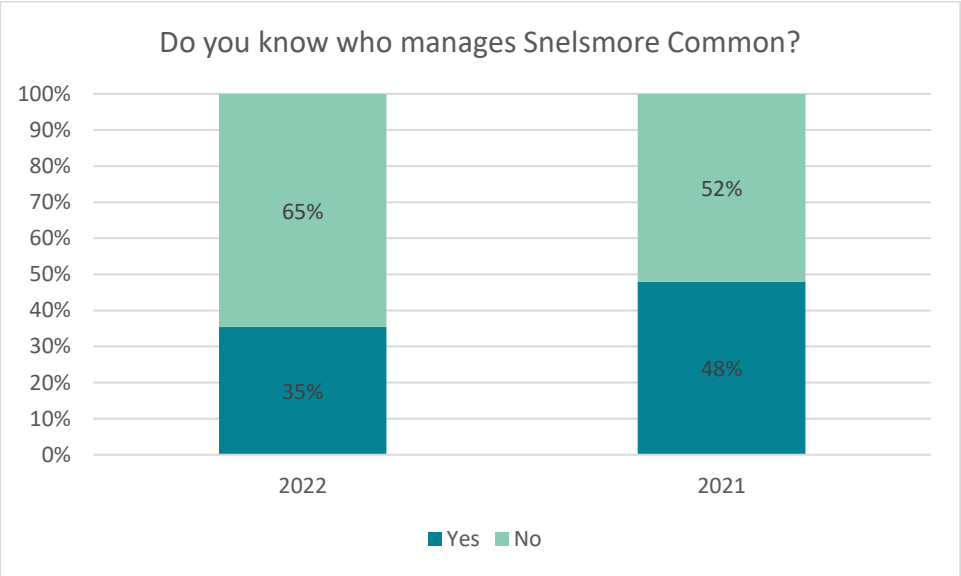


Figure 48: awareness of BBOWT management of Sneslmore

As with last year none of the respondents were currently a member of BBOWT. Of those questioned 15% said that they may be interested in joining BBOWT in the future.

Dogs on Snelsmore

Respondents were asked whether they thought that dogs should be on a short lead on Snelsmore, both all year round and just during the nesting season. The results of this question can be seen below in Figure 49.

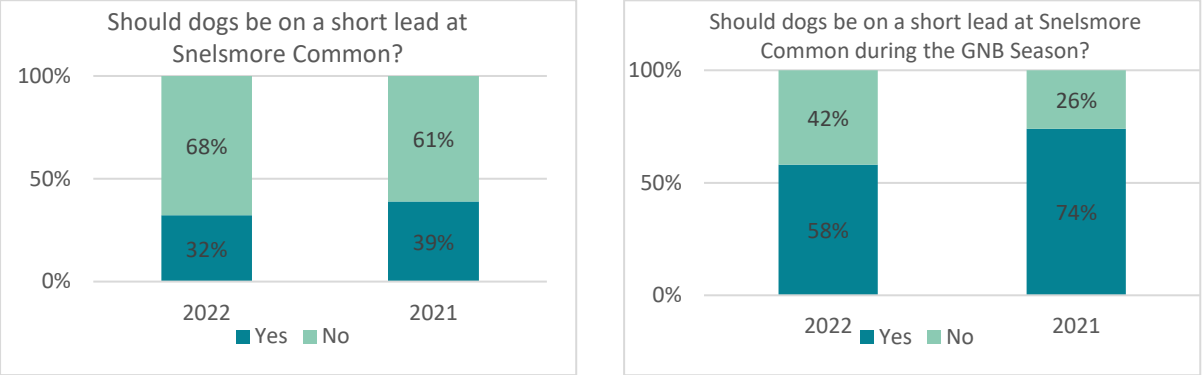


Figure 49: dogs on leads at Snelsmore

The results suggest that the public has moved away from the idea that dogs should be on a short lead on Snelsmore when compared to last year. The proportion of respondents who think dogs should be on a short lead all year has fallen from 39% to 32%. Other recurring comments received included “depends on the dog”, “around children”, and “some kind of lead”.

When the question related to only during the GNB season the have moved in the same direction, with the proportion of respondents who think dogs should be on a short lead all year has fallen from 74% to 58%. (68% yes vs 32% no). Other recurring comments received included “depends on dog”, “if beneficial to wildlife”, “depends on the area”, and “some kind of lead”

Visitor Origin & Method of transport

Respondents were asked what mode of transport they used to get to Snelsmore, with the results shown in Table 24. In 2022 there has been a very slight increase in the proportion of visitors arriving by car, with a corresponding slight decrease in those visitors arriving on foot.

Table 24: Snelsmore visitor mode of transport

Mode of Transport	2022	2021
Car/van	97%	94%
Other	0%	0%
Public transport	0%	0%
On foot	3%	6%
Bicycle	0%	0%

As well as mode of transport respondents were also asked to provide their home postcode. This allowed for some analysis of where visitors were coming from and the distance they were travelling. Figure 50 shows the areas around Newbury that visitors visited the site from, showing a main hotspot in northern Newbury. Not shown on Figure 50, there were also visitors travelling from Oxford, Andover and Fleet.

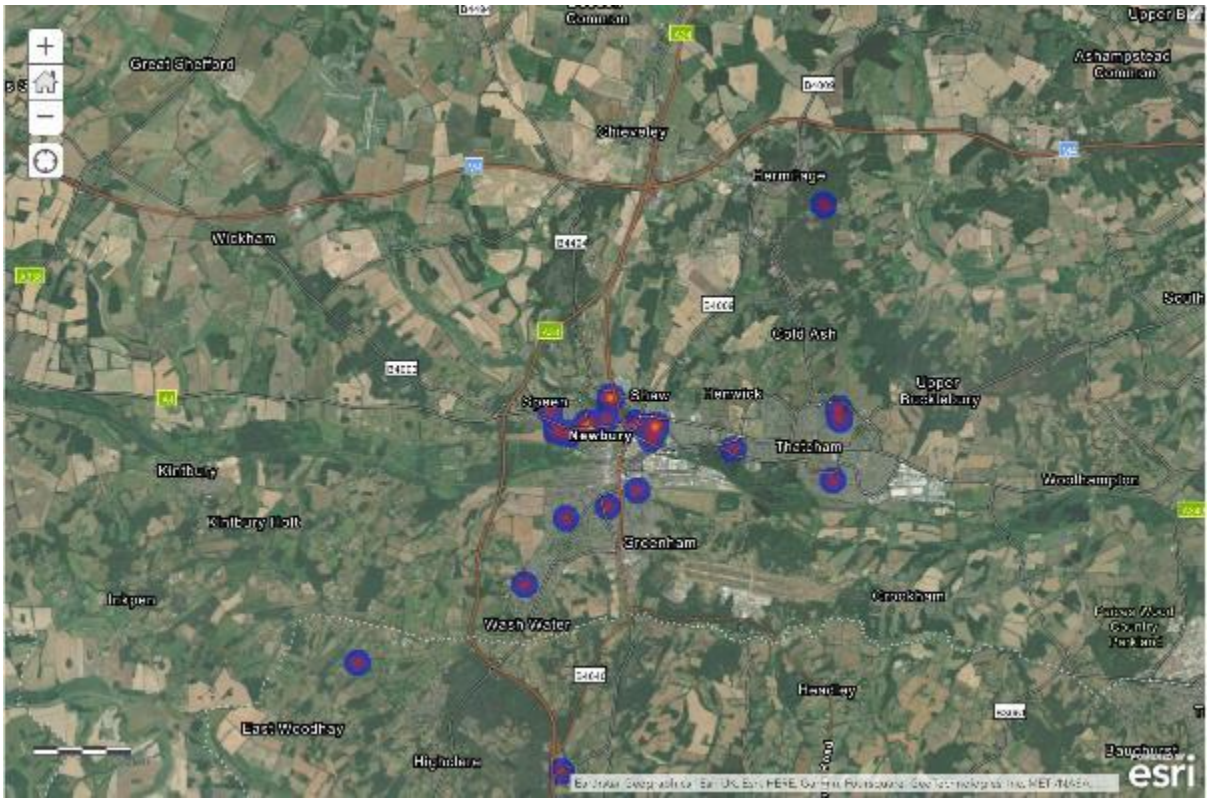


Figure 50: home locations of visitors to Snelsmore from the Newbury area.

Figure 51 shows the length of journeys made by respondents to visit Snelsmore. Most of the journeys were less than 10km with an average of 10.87km and a median of 6.07km

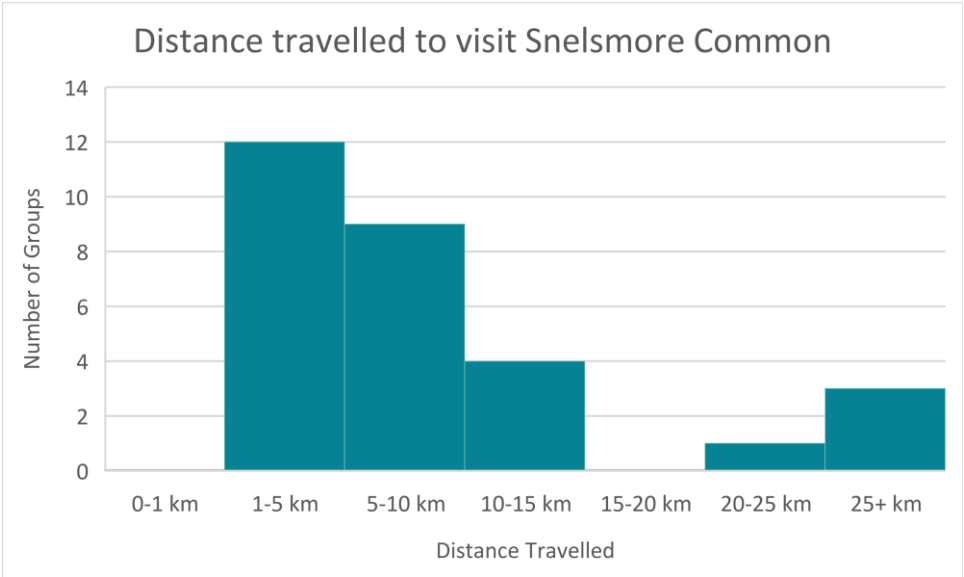


Figure 51: distance travelled to visit Snelsmore

Online vs in person surveys

In addition to the surveys completed onsite, the same survey was also made available online to those who requested it. The survey could be requested by talking to a member of BBOWT staff on site or through the "Greenham Grapevine" Facebook group. A total of 17 responses were received

and a summary of the main differences seen between these and the in-person surveys is shown below.

- Much higher percentage of dog walkers (94.1% vs 67.74% in person). Also, much higher wildlife interest (29.4% VS 9.68% in person)
- More awareness of green dog route (88.2% online vs 61% in person)
- Higher usage of green dog route (86.7% online vs 52% in person)
- Higher awareness of who manages Greenham (88.4% online vs 35% in person) – though had to email BBOWT email address for survey link and logo was on survey so probably not relevant
- Higher percentage of people said they didn't think dogs should be on a short lead all year round (93.8% vs 67.74% in person). This is to be expected as a high percentage of respondents were dog owners!
- Similar for during the nesting season – 64.7% online said no vs 41.94% in person – should be noted there was no 'other' option online

Additional Comments

Respondents were given the chance to make any additional comments about the site. Most people mentioned how much they liked the site and enjoyed visiting. There were also some more negative comments and suggestions for improvements (see below). However, some of these recommendations aren't appropriate for the site, and others are outside the control of BBOWT.

- More dog bins required and need to be emptied more often
- More litter on site than previously
- Wildlife has declined on the site
- Would be good if the toilets were open outside café opening times
- Pay as you go dog washing facility would be good

Appendix G – Tally Data (Snelsmore Common)

Visitor tally counts were undertaken at Snelsmore Common to identify trends and changes in the number of visitors to the site.

In previous years, tally counts were undertaken during two-hour timeslots. In 2021, it was decided that these timeslots would be reduced to one hour and the data would be extrapolated to make it comparable with previous years. Tally counts were undertaken throughout June and July within the following time periods:

- 07:00 – 09:00
- 10:00 – 12:00
- 13:00 – 15:00
- 17:00 – 19:00*

*this time slot was only undertaken on weekdays due to the time constraints at weekends

Total Visitor Numbers

Figure 52 shows the total number of visitors recorded at Snelsmore over the past 3 years. Across all days the number of visitors has decreased YoY from 2020-2022. The most pronounced decline in visitor numbers has been at the weekend where numbers have dropped by c.70% since 2020. Though this decline has continued from 2021-2022, the drop in visitor numbers has been much less.

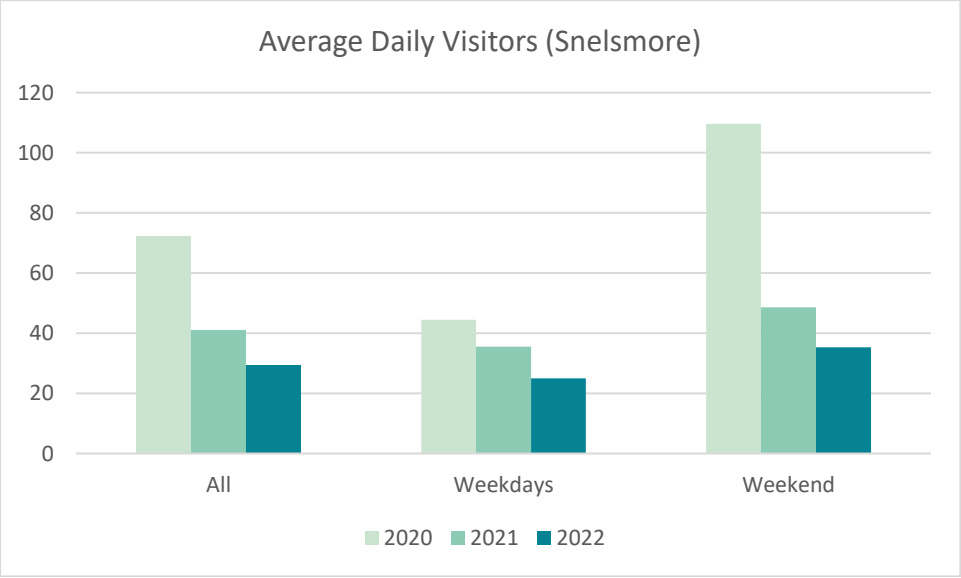


Figure 52: daily visitors to Snelsmore

Looking at the temporal variation of weekday visitors (Figure 53*)* numbers are down or level across all time periods when compared to 2020. There is a more mixed picture when this year's numbers are compared to 2021, with increases in visitor numbers in the 0700-0900 & 1300-1500 time periods and decreases in visitor numbers in the 1000-1200 & 1700-1900 time periods. The decrease in most pronounced in the 1700-1900 period where numbers have dropped by almost 75%.

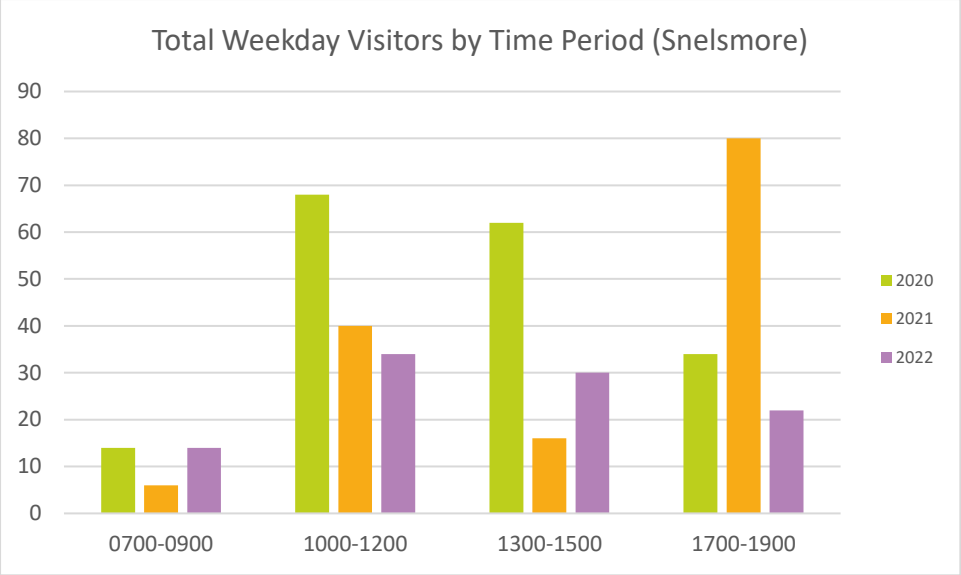


Figure 53: daily weekday visitors to Snelsmore by time period

Looking at weekend visitors (Figure 54*)* a continuous decline from 2020-2022 is seen for the 1000-1200 & 1300-1500 time periods. The % drop offs from 2020-2022 for these periods are 72% and 80% respectively. By contrast there has been a 50% increase in visitor numbers from 2020-2022 for the 0700-0900 time period.

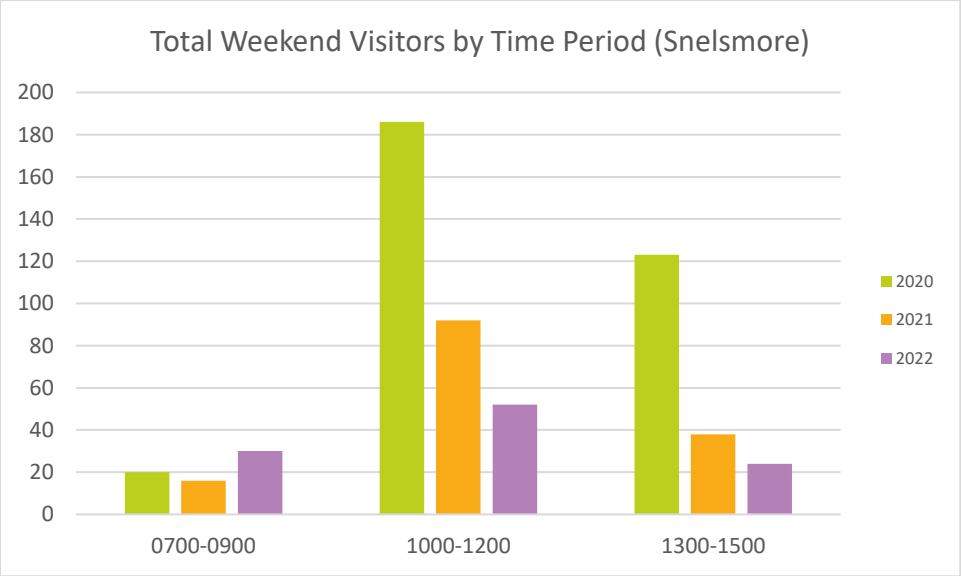


Figure 54: daily weekend visitors to Snelsmore by time period

Visitor Activity

As well as examining how numbers of visitors have changed, it is also important to understand how visitor activity is changing. Table 25 shows how different types of weekday visitors have changed between 2020 and 2022.

Table 25: Table 16: Snelsmore visitor activity 2020-2022

Weekday	2020	2021	2022	Change
Group (with dog)	16	22	11	-34%
Group (without dog)	33	23	4	-88%
Pedestrian	53	46	25	-53%
Cyclist	18	15	0	-100%
Dogs	19	31	14	-26%
Weekend	**2020**	**2021**		**Change**
Group (with dog)	14	3	9	-33%
Group (without dog)	16	11	6	-63%
Pedestrian	57	33	35	-38%
Cyclist	5	1	0	-100%
Dogs	22	5	12	-45%

The results for weekday and weekend visitors as broadly similar with decreases across all of the group and visitor types. The most striking result is that not one cyclist was recorded entering the site across all of the recording periods.

Though visitor numbers are down the proportion of groups with dogs has increased, both on weekdays and at the weekend (Figure 55*)*. This emphasises the need to prioritise engagement with dog owners in order to further improve outcomes for GNBs.

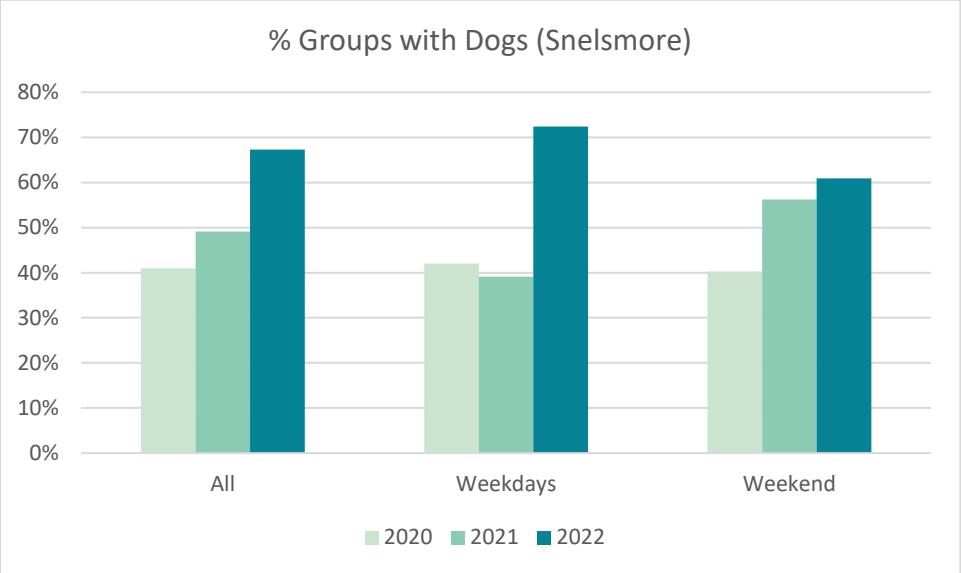


Figure 55: proportion of groups with dogs

Conclusions

Overall total visitor numbers at all locations across the site are down on 2020 & 2021 numbers, though there have been increases in some specific time periods. Although these reduced numbers are likely to be beneficial to GNB breeding success it is important to note that a higher proportion of visitors are coming with dogs. It is therefore essential that future wardens need to focus on engaging with dog owners and encouraging responsible dog ownership during the nesting period.

Appendix H – Ground Nesting Birds on Greenham Common

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Lapwing	4	13	11	5	4	5	5	5	3	6	*3?*	4-5	3-4
Little Ringed Plover	6	7	5	3	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	3-4	3-4
Ringed Plover	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	*0*	0	0
Redshank	1	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	*0*	0	0
Woodlark	10	10	13	13	13	15	15	16	15	12	*11*	12	16
Skylark	32	31	26	22	19	14	14	14	13	9	*9*	6	2
Dartford Warbler	5	8	8	9	6	13	14	13	3	3	*6-7*	11	16
Nightingale	9	6	9	8	4	9	8	9	6	9	*9*	5	10
Stonechat	5	7	14	16	10	17	18	22	16	27	*30?*	30	36
Meadow Pipit	23	18	18	18	20	16	13	22	17	11	*7+*	27	30
Tree Pipit	0	0	0	1	1	3	2	2	0	0	*0*	0	0
Linnet	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	56	52	-	58	50
Reed Bunting	/	/	/	/	/	1	0	1	2	1	*0*	0	1
Yellowhammer	/	/	/	/	/	2	0	0	0	0	*0*	0	0

Greenham and Crookham Common 'targeted species' survey results from 2009-2022. Note that figures for 2022 are provisional and may be subject to change after final analysis of data.

Appendix I – Nightjar Survey Data

Sites	Survey 1 27th May	Survey 2 10th June	Survey 3 24th June
Aldernbridge/Balshill Heath	1M 1F	1M	1U
Bishops Green	1M 1F	1M 1F	2M 1F
Bowdown Approach/Estovers	1M 1U	1M 1F	1M 1U
Brackenhurst Heath	1M 1F	2M 1F	
Crookham Common Gorse & Restoration	1M 1F	1M	0
Goldfinch Bottom & Brushwood Gully	1M 1F	1M	0
Martindale Heath		0	1M 1U
Newtown Common East	1M 1U	1M 1U	1M 1F
Newtown Common West		1M	1M
Sandleford Heath	2M 1U	1M	
Snelsmore 1	0	1M	2M 1F
Snelsmore 2	1M	1M 1F	2M 1F
Snelsmore 3	2M	2M 1F	1M 1F
Western Lozenges	2M	1M	2M
Total number of males	**14**	**15**	**13**
Total number of nightjar	**22**	**21**	**21**

The bird totals are a minimum number from each survey taken in isolation, although where a bird was very obviously the same it was not counted. A more accurate analysis would need to consider all the data as a whole and try to account for the same bird flying between survey points.

Appendix J – Car Park Counts

As most visitors use a car to get to the Commons, it is a useful proxy for the activity level at the sites. The largest data sets exist for the Greenham Control Tower car park and the Snelsmore Car park. These are the most useful, being large car parks; on busy days the count is a better measure of site activity, rather than representing the maximum number of cars that can be parked at that location. The counts take place on an *ad hoc* basis, but Greenham Park Runs days have not been included in the average, so as to not bias the results.

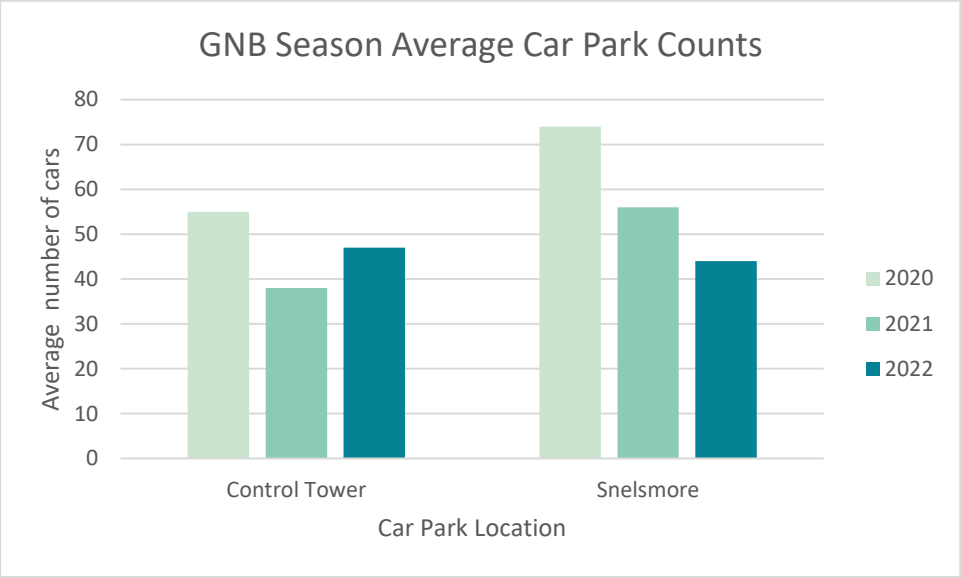


Figure 56: 2020 to 2022 comparison of car park counts

Figure 56 shows counts from the two main car parks. Comparing the two sites shows broadly similar numbers of cars at the two sites. With Snelsmore Common being a much smaller site, one would expect visitor density to be much greater there. The Wardens' experience is that this is not so. At both locations the cafés attract many visitors, who may not venture further. The picnic and barbeque areas hold the majority of visitors during periods of fine weather at weekends and bank holidays. There is no clear trend in car numbers at the Control Tower, while Snelsmore shows a decrease in cars over recent years.

Figure 57 below shows that monthly average counts at the Control Tower peaked in May. An explanation for this could be that Greenham Common, being so exposed is prone to temperature extremes, so was most comfortable for visitors in mild to warm conditions. The Common was certainly very hot during July with visitors (especially dog walkers) rare during the middle part of the day.

Figure 58 shows a similar chart for Snelsmore Common. Here no clear Monthly trend emerges, but counts here were irregular, with no counts during Mar or July, and May represented by a single count.

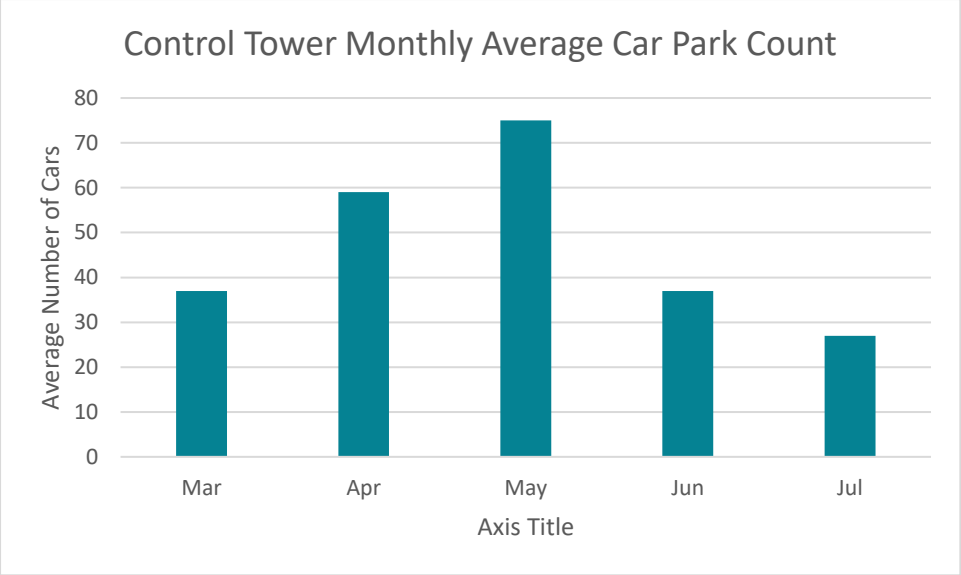


Figure 57: Average monthly car counts at the Control Tower Car Park

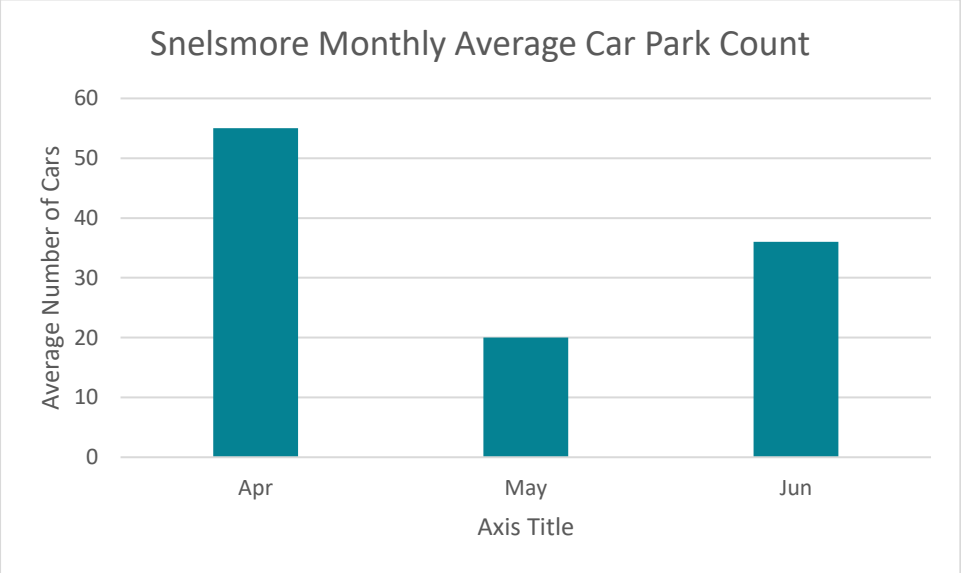


Figure 58: Average monthly car counts at Snelsmore car park

Park Run

The Saturday morning Park Run starting at the runway cross represents the largest spikes both in activity on site and in the number of parked cars. The totals counted are shown in Table 26. Numbers were counted at the Control Tower Car Park. Venture West car park is also used by the runners, but cars here were never counted.

Date	Car Count
12th March	150
2nd April	112
21st May	148

Table 26: Park Run Car Park counts

Appendix K – 2021 seasonal warden recommendations

Greenham Common

Table 3: 2021 recommendations and actions taken in 2022.
Green = achieved, Yellow = partially achieved

2021 Recommendation	Actions in 2022
Continue to develop partnership with TVP and include TVP logo on some signage. Have the WCO present at some events to highlight the legislation applicable to wildlife.	- TVP logo included on majority of logtern signage - Partnership with WCO maintained
Replace the Red/Green Zone system as it continues to cause too much confusion about where people can and can't walk	- Red Zones removed - Further emphasis placed on main message of "Keep to the main paths"
Use the GNB symbol as a consistent message across all signs including on small posts	- GNB symbol present on gate signs, logtern signs and other onsite signage
Rename the Green Zone as the Roam Zone to remove confusion about "Green" meaning nature and conservation	- Green Zone changed to Roam Zone - Understanding has improved and usage is higher than in 2021
Simplify the signage and interpretation at all entrances to the Common informing visitors of GNB protection measures	- Signage simplified further for 2022 season
In addition to being on gates, the main GNB sign should be installed a little way inside entrances and on notice boards	- Signage repeated just inside gates - Continue in future seasons
Use onsite signage such as logterns to help people recognise where they can and can't walk and why	- Logterns placed in strategic positions - Little emphasis on education – this could be explored further
Include Greenham Common lozenges in future nightjar surveys	- Lozenges included in 2022 survey - Nightjar activity recorded every survey evening - Continue to include lozenges in future surveys
Provide an appropriate range of additional interpretive provision to help people understand and care about Greenham Common as a nature reserve	- Occasional posts on Greenham Grapevine Facebook group - Could be explored further e.g. partnership with the Control Tower
Continue monitoring visitor activity sessions after the bird nesting season ends to establish how visitor behaviour changes	- Visitor activity monitoring undertaken after the end of the nesting season
Re-establish monthly programme of guided walks and events for visitors, including specific events aimed at dogs and dog walkers	- Six walks were organised, though unfortunately three were not well attended - Review needed of how to interact with dog owners through events

Snelsmore Common

Table 4: 2021 recommendations and 2022 actions during 2022 (green = fully achieved, yellow = partly achieved, red = not achieved)

2021 Recommendation	Notes
Consider revising the purpose, and thus the signage, of the Green Route. Dogs should not be allowed to run off the path in this important part of Snelsmore Common.	- Small signs added to Green Dog Route informing users of more sensitive areas of the route and asking them to keep dogs to path
Continue to discourage use of all desire line paths with dead hedging and brambles, alongside the covering of visible desire lines with vegetation (living and dead).	- New blockages were created and existing ones maintained - Evidence of success with some desire lines completely overgrown
Use logtern signage to interpret the site to visitors: its value to wildlife and people; the species that live there; how the site is managed.	- Existing logterns still in place - There are still some areas where logterns could be used effectively to block off desire lines and interpret site.
Re-establish monthly guided walks for visitors.	- While there were a couple of events on Snelsmore Common during the 2022 season, monthly guided walks did not take place

Response to referred Place Motions

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	3 March 2023
Report Author:	Jenny Graham
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4327

1 Purpose of the Report

Over the last 18 months a number of motions proposed at Full Council meetings have been referred to and discussed at other groups and Boards dealing with functions of the Place Directorate. The purpose of this report is to provide details of actions taken and proposed responses to each of these seven motions.

2 Recommendations

The table below provides a summary of the recommendations relevant to each motion. The Executive are asked to agree these recommended responses and endorse the future recommended actions.

Member raising Motion	Motion Title	Recommended Response	Recommended further actions
Cllr Jeff Brooks	Booking systems at HWRCs See Appendix A for full details	A response was provided nearer the time and actions taken in conjunction with Portfolio Holder	No further actions recommended
Cllr Tony Vickers	Public funds for public access See Appendix B for full details	One element of the motion is no longer relevant. The remaining call to action in the Motion is supported.	The Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership and Rural Business Forum both have a part to play in taking this forward.

Cllr Carolyne Culver	Declare an ecological emergency See Appendix C for full details	The motion is rejected However, the aim of reversing the decline in biodiversity is supported	Opportunities for positive action will be taken particularly in relation to engaging with the Nature Recovery Network Strategy (Berkshire level) and the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership in West Berkshire
Cllr Carolyne Culver	Response to COP26 in Glasgow See Appendices D and E for full details	The motion is rejected. However, a number of the proposals have been taken forward by the Council.	i) Alok Sharma MP be invited to speak to the Environment Advisory Group now that he is not so busy with COP business. ii) To continue to progress policies through the Local Plan Review that require high energy efficiency standards and to develop an SPD or equivalent to support these policies.
Cllr Adrian Abbs	High Street Canopies See Appendix F for full details	The motion is rejected A number of the proposals are already covered by BAU activities	Officers will continue to consider opportunities for increasing trees in urban areas where it is appropriate and possible to do so and make use of additional funds agreed at Full Council on 2 March 2023
Cllr Adrian Abbs	Domestic Energy Efficiency See Appendix G for full details	Due to the lack of staff resource available to consider this detail to date, it is difficult to either confirm support for the motion or reject it at this stage.	When the Energy and Carbon Team are up to full strength the scoping of this project can start. A further recommendation will then be made to the Portfolio Holder in consultation with the Environment Advisory Group considering the details of a possible project with a particular focus on funding, resources and deliverability.

Cllr Jeff Brooks	Pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street and Market Place, Newbury (extended hours) See Appendix H for full details	The proposals in the motion will be considered as part of the wider Newbury Masterplan delivery programme	Further investigation of the pedestrianisation proposal will be included as a workstream in the Newbury Masterplan delivery programme, which is being developed currently and will include further engagement with stakeholders in the town centre.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Some projects if taken further will need detailed financial consideration, for example, a domestic energy efficiency scheme for the District. The financial elements of such a scheme will be dealt with in the scoping and development of a business case and be clearly presented prior to any decision being made to progress. In terms of the Pedestrianisation item for Newbury Town Centre (appendix H), the recommended traffic modelling work was estimated to cost up to £15,000 in 2020. This is likely to be substantially more now. Should changes to the traffic management arrangements in Newbury town centre be made in the longer term, it is likely that capital funding would be required.
Human Resource:	There are no direct human resource implications as a result of this report. Any future schemes connected to these motions that have HR implications will be dealt with at a future stage and prior to any projects progressing.
Legal:	There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report. It is likely that there will be legal implications relating to future schemes connected with these motions. These will be dealt with at a future stage and prior to any projects progressing.

Risk Management:	Risk management will be dealt with within the business cases of any projects flowing from these motions.			
Property:	There may be some impacts to certain Council physical assets (for example highways and footways if additional trees are placed in high streets). These will need to be considered on a case by case basis and assessed accordingly.			
Policy:	The motions being considered in this report are all linked in various ways to the delivery of the Council's Environment Strategy and Economic Development Strategy.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A The equalities impacts of any detailed projects flowing from any of the motions considered will be addressed at the time of the detailed projects coming forward for decision.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A As above – any of these impacts will be dealt with at the detailed project stage where applicable
Environmental Impact:	X			All the motions proposed are driven by creating a positive environmental impact.
Health Impact:	X			A number of the proposals whilst having a general positive environmental impact will also have specific benefits for physical and mental health.

ICT Impact:		X		n/a
Digital Services Impact:		X		n/a
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The motions cover actions that will have a positive impact on the Council achieving: - Its priority of maintaining a green district - The Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities of 'beautiful landscapes and strong cultural offering' and health and wellbeing of everyone is prioritised'
Core Business:	X			Supporting our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan
Data Impact:		X		n/a
Consultation and Engagement:	All the motions detailed in Appendices A to G have been discussed by the Environment Advisory Group (EAG) with some further discussions taking place on some aspects with individual Members and Officers and in some small group meeting settings. The motion relating to pedestrianisation in Newbury Town Centre (Appendix H) has been discussed by the Economic Development Team and the report has been presented to and approved by Economic Development Board, and the Highways Team.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report is being brought to the Executive to make a series of recommendations linked with motions that have been presented at Full Council over the last 18 months. These motions have been linked with Executive functions and have all been referred to the cross-party Environment Advisory Group or Economic Development Board for discussion.

4.2 The Environment Advisory Group / Economic Development Board have considered these motions engaging in debate and discussion at either one or two of their regular

meetings and have in one case dealt with further details by meeting as a small focused sub-group.

4.3 The topics of the motions cover a variety of issues:

- Practical issues at the District's two household waste recycling centres
- How government funding is used to create opportunities to access the countryside and what we can do locally to support public access
- Our response to the negative impacts on biodiversity and the ecological crisis
- Our response to COP26 and how we can take positive action
- Creating high street canopies to help deal with climate issues
- A possible way in which West Berkshire homes can be helped to be more energy efficient and reduce their carbon impact and running costs
- Extension to the hours of pedestrianisation for Northbrook Street and Market Place in Newbury town centre.

4.4 The details of the proposals set out in the appendices to this report have been recommended to be rejected or supported depending on the acceptability of each motion as a whole. In the cases where the motion is rejected it is always the case that part of the proposal is acceptable but just not the full motion. The appendices and recommendations table in section 2 above detail the positive actions alongside any motion that has been rejected.

4.5 Many of the actions have already taken place and this report is the formal recommending of responses to the motions. Some of the actions and proposals have not yet started and will be addressed by the relevant officer teams when resources are in place to do so.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The report is seeking to formally respond to a number of motions that have been referred by Full Council to the Environment Advisory Group / Economic Development Board for discussion.

5.2 Each motion deals with a different topic and has its own set of proposals. The appendices of this report have therefore been used to set out the following information, where relevant, for each motion:

- The full motion wording as presented to Full Council
- Any background information
- Responses to the proposals included in the motion, summary of feedback from discussions held at the Environment Advisory Group / Economic Development Board meeting(s) and any other options considered
- Recommended overall response to the motion and any recommended actions.

Proposals

5.3 The details for each motion as set out above are included in the appendices as listed in Section 8 of this report.

6 Other options considered

Where there have been options to consider in relation to the motions these are included in the appendices.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Motions are often referred to other meetings from Full Council to allow for a more detailed discussion than there is time for at Full Council meetings. This has been the case for a number of motions that relate to environmental and economic development topics.

7.2 This paper brings together the discussions involving seven motions that have been referred to the Environment Advisory Group / Economic Development Board and have not yet been reported to the Executive for a formal response.

7.3 The recommendation relating to each motion is set out in the table in section 2 of this report with related actions also noted.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Booking systems at HWRCs

8.2 Appendix B – Public Funds for Public Access

8.3 Appendix C – Declaration of Ecological Emergency

8.4 Appendix D – Response to COP26 in Glasgow

8.5 Appendix E – Berkshire Pension Fund – Responsible Investment Policy

8.6 Appendix F – High Street Canopies

8.7 Appendix G – Domestic Energy Efficiency

8.8 Appendix H – Pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street and Market Place, Newbury

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Officer details:

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Appendix A

Booking systems at HWRCs

Motion proposed by: Cllr Jeff Brooks
Date of Full Council Meeting: 8th July 2021
Date(s) considered by EAG: September 2021 and November 2021

Background

This motion relates to activities taking place at West Berkshire's two Household Waste Recycling Centres. It requests that the restrictions on number of bookings per week and the closing times of the HWRCs in summer months are reconsidered.

The motion required quick consideration as the topics raised were very current to the time. By the time the next EAG meeting took place, there had already been a response to this motion.

The full wording of the motion and the response that went to Cllr Brooks from Cllr Ardagh-Walter is included below.

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Adrian Abbs.

"During the period from March 2020 to May 2021 the public understood the need for the Council to take steps to protect them from Covid 19 and amongst those measures people understood the introduction of the Booking system at our two HWRCs in order to manage social distancing and those centres.

Now that our society is opening up, the public should expect the Council to rapidly re-instate the services that they pay their Council Tax to have available to them.

Whilst the Booking system at these facilities has merit, consultation with the public should be undertaken to help determine if such a system should remain in place.

Whilst that is undertaken, there is no reason for the restriction that allows a household to visit the facilities only once a week and for those facilities to close at 17.30 when they would normally stay open much later in the spring and summer months.

Since both centres are not particularly busy and a booking can be made on the day or at least the following day, we call upon the Council to immediately lift the once a week restriction and extend the opening hours without delay.

This is the time of year when households need maximum access to the facilities and we are bound to provide the access they are used to and have paid for."

Response to Motion

Dear Cllr Brooks

Thank you for your motion about the continued use of the booking system at the Council's and concerns about resident access to the HWRCs.

Booking System

Like many local authorities in the country, the Council had to limit the number of visits during the pandemic so that suitable social distancing could be maintained onsite in the interest of health and safety for both visitors and site staff.

The reduced availability of slots meant that we needed to implement an approach which could give as many residents as possible the opportunity to secure bookings within a reasonable period of time. The restriction of one visit per week was introduced for this reason by the Council and many other local authorities. I am pleased to confirm that this restriction has recently been removed as an operational change following an assessment of the evolving government guidance and after obtaining feedback from the waste contractor and key internal stakeholders including the Council's Executive and the Opposition Group. The Council's waste team has also been actively monitoring traffic flows through the site and has recently increased the number of slots available.

Whilst we no longer have that restriction in West Berkshire, it is worth mentioning that many English councils including our neighbours in Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest continue to keep the restriction of one HWRC visit per week for their residents.

The use of the booking system continues to be very popular among a significant majority of site users. This is borne out by the results of recent user surveys and the Council continues to receive positive feedback via email and social media channels. Independent Google customer reviews about our recycling centres also include many compliments about the use of booking system.

In your motion it has been indicated that the sites were not particularly busy at this time. Please note that the demand for recycling centres is changeable and can be influenced by various factors including seasonality, prevailing weather and economic sentiment e.g. people do more renovations or furniture upgrades when they are feeling positive about

their financial outlook. Additionally, demand for the recycling centre increases considerably during Bank Holidays. The booking system remains a vital tool for managing customer demand, even outside of the peak pandemic period. For example, in recent weeks, it has been helpful to the Council in managing site access at the Newtown Road facility when there have been engineering works on the adjoining roads.

Site Opening Hours

In relation to your query about the site opening hours, please note that the Council decided during winter 2019/20 to amend the HWRC opening hours so that residents across the District had improved access to the two facilities and service availability between the two sites was more comparable effective from 01 April 2020. The current opening hours are shown in the table below:

HWRC Site	**Current Winter Hours (October to March)**	**Current Summer Hours (April to September)**
Padworth HWRC	9am to 6pm	9am to 6pm*
Newtown Road	9am to 6pm	9am to 6pm (everyday apart from Thursdays) 9am to 8pm** (Thursdays)

The Council is reasonably satisfied that the current opening hours and access provision to residents is at a good level. This is supported by the feedback we continue to receive from our residents. We will keep the situation under review.

Sincerely,

Cllr Steve Ardagh-Walter

Executive Member for the Environment

Notes:

*Planning conditions applicable to the Padworth site do not allow it to open beyond 6pm.

**It was not feasible to implement the extended summer opening on Thursdays at the Newtown Road facility during the pandemic. The intention is to implement the extended opening from April 2022, provided that prevailing circumstances allow e.g. when the pandemic is not impacting staff availability or requiring further restriction of customer movements.

Prior to the new opening hours being introduced, the substantive site opening hours at Padworth were 12noon to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 6pm on Saturday, Sunday and on Bank Holidays. Opening hours of the Newtown Road HWRC have remained unchanged during the trial period and are 8.30am to 5.30pm daily during the winter (i.e. October to March) and 8.30am to 7.30pm during the summer (i.e. April to September).

Available data shows that when the previous opening hours were in use, less than 3% of site traffic occurred before 9am and equally the period after 7pm was underutilised by customers.

The Council's sites are open every day of the year including Bank Holidays, with the exception of Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

No further action is recommended as a full response was provided much nearer the time as can be seen above. This information needs to be formally reported back to Full Council in order that the actions taken in line with the desires of the motion can be recorded.

Appendix B

Public Funds for Public Access

Motion proposed by: Cllr Tony Vickers
Date of Full Council Meeting: 8th July 2021
Date(s) considered by EAG: September 2021 and November 2021

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Tony Vickers and seconded by Councillor Howard Woollaston.

That Council notes:

"1. How the pandemic has highlighted the importance of outdoor exercise for our mental and physical health and wellbeing and our understanding of the interconnections between farming, biodiversity and food production;

2. That the Environment Agency accepts that the benefits of outdoor exercise could be worth billions to the NHS and care services;

3. That the Environment Bill includes provision for "public funds for public goods";

4. That the Agriculture Act contains powers to provide financial assistance to support public access to the countryside, through replacing the EU funding system known as the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP);

5. The excellent work done by this Council's Rights of Way Team and many volunteers from bodies represented on the Mid & West Berkshire Local Access Forum to maintain and improve public access to our beautiful countryside, and

6. The emphasis in our local planning and transport policies towards more 'active travel' opportunities, as part of combating Climate Change.

Council therefore supports the campaign of the Outdoor Access Alliance of organisations that represent countryside access groups to enable this "BREXIT Bonus" for funding to be channelled through local government to help improve our rights of way network;

And calls on this Council to work with local and national organisations to improve the relationship between urban communities, landowners and farmers as the rural environment and economy is transformed by BREXIT and climate change, so that all our residents better understand the connections between food production, biodiversity, landscape and public health."

Background

With the transition out of the EU, agricultural policy for England has been the source of much debate. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will no longer apply and at the time of the motion being proposed a 'BREXIT Bonus' was being discussed which would

include support for access to the countryside. The many changes in recent UK Government leadership sent this area of policy into turmoil with announcements of scrapping the 'BREXIT Bonus' and environmental groups claiming this was a big hit on the environment.

The latest position is that in January 2023 the Government (DEFRA) published an update note relating to Environmental Land Management (ELM). The update sets out how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services.

Response to the Motion

There are two 'calls to action' within the motion, one in each of the last two paragraphs.

The first is to support the campaign of the Outdoor Access Alliance of organisations that represent countryside access groups. The campaign included seeking the funding to be invested in our rights of way network in order to help improve public access.

The situation has moved on since this point (as described above) and so there is no immediate call to support a current campaign.

The second call to action is to work with local and national organisations to improve the relationship between urban communities, landowners and farmers so that residents better understand the connections between food production, biodiversity, landscape and public health.

This is something that the work of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership can assist with and is already exploring. A pilot project is being developed and this has public access as one of the key elements of the scheme. The Rural Business Forum could also have a part to play.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

The main remaining aim of the motion is supported and opportunities will be taken to improve the relationship between urban communities, landowners and farmers so that there is a better understanding of the connections between food production, biodiversity, landscape and public health.

The Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership and the Rural Business Forum have a role to play in developing opportunities in relation to this motion.

Appendix C

Declaration of Ecological Emergency

Motion proposed by: Cllr Carolyne Culver
Date of Full Council Meeting: 9th September 2021
Date(s) considered by EAG: September 2021 and November 2021

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: The following Motion was submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

"West Berkshire Council notes:

West Berkshire Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and subsequently produced an Environment Strategy and Environment Strategy Delivery Plan, with the objective of delivering carbon neutrality by 2030 in support of limiting global warming to less than 1.5 degrees centigrade.

The Environment Strategy Delivery Plan includes objectives designed to protect and enhance biodiversity.

The climate emergency cannot be tackled by reducing emissions in isolation. Our ecological systems are intrinsic to life on earth and should be protected and enhanced as a valued asset.

The State of Nature 2019 report highlighted the critical decline in biodiversity in the UK, where 15 per cent of species are threatened with extinction.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relationship between humans and nature. When we destroy and degrade habitats, we disrupt the equilibrium of our ecological systems resulting in an increased risk of transference of pandemic type diseases between wildlife and humans.

The State of the World's Plants and Fungi 2020 report from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew estimated that 39 per cent of plants are threatened with extinction.

The IPCC Report Sixth Assessment Report published in August 2021 concluded that climate change is 'widespread, rapid and intensifying' and urgent action is required to reduce carbon emissions and secure the long-term sustainability of planet earth and its inhabitants.

In June the previously titled Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill was reintroduced for the 2021/22 parliamentary session as the Climate and Ecology Bill with support from across the House of Commons.

The government is running a public consultation about Nature Recovery Network Strategies, which ends on 2 November 2021.

West Berkshire Council resolves to:

1) Declare an ecological emergency.

2) Support the Climate and Ecology Bill and ask the Leader to write to our three local MPs urging them to support it.

3) Participate constructively in the government's public consultation about Nature Recovery Network Strategies before it closes on 2 November."

Background

The Climate and Ecology Bill, sponsored by Lord Redesdale, has since been amended and is now the Ecology Bill (having lost the climate element). It aims to see the government commit to reverse – not just halt – nature decline by 2030. The Bill is currently at the Report stage with the House of Lords.

Response to the Motion

There are 3 proposals for action within the motion. The first two relate to declaring an ecological emergency and supporting the Climate and Ecology Bill as it was then. There was concern for biodiversity within EAG and support for the reversal of its decline. It was recognised that we should be doing all we can in relation to this agenda.

At the time of the motion and discussion at EAG, there was a focus on the Environment Bill (now the Environment Act) which was more advanced and it was the Chair's view that this should be the focus and that we dealt with ecological matters and biodiversity within our own Environment Strategy.

West Berkshire's Environment Strategy includes the following:

'…we are committed to protecting and enhancing our natural environment. In order to do so, we will work with partners to:

- *Develop a Nature Recovery Plan which will further improve biodiversity and wildlife in the district.*
- *Encourage our residents to explore the natural environment, to become active partners in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and to take ownership of the management of the natural environment.*
- *Apply emerging Government requirements for environmental protection and improved biodiversity through the planning process'*

The Environment Advisory Group did not conclude that they would recommend the Council declares and ecological emergency and, whilst not disagreeing with the Climate and Ecology Bill, the focus at the time was the Environment Bill.

The third part of the motion was to engage with government's public consultation about Nature Recovery Network Strategies. This was firmly supported by EAG and a full response, led by Councillor Culver, was submitted by the consultation deadline.

Much of the work of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership is concerned with biodiversity enhancement and this is very much the focus of some landowners in West Berkshire.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

The exact calls to action in the motion were not all acted upon, therefore the motion is rejected. However, the aim of reversing the decline in biodiversity is supported and opportunities for positive action are being taken through the work of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership and in line with the Environment Strategy Delivery Plan.

The Council remains engaged with the cross Berkshire Nature Recovery Network Strategy work which is being led by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Appendix D

Response to COP26 in Glasgow

Motion proposed by: Cllr Carolyne Culver
Date of Full Council Meeting: 18th January 2022
Date(s) considered by EAG: April 2022

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: The following Motion was submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

Council notes: That COP26 in Glasgow concluded with the Glasgow Climate Pact, which recognises a crucial role for communities and local authorities. By "recognizing the important role of … local communities and civil society, including youth and children, in addressing and responding to climate change, and highlighting the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action" the Pact makes plain the need for action at every level of government and society.

That shortly before the Glasgow conference the UK government published its Net Zero Strategy, which includes the intention to establish a Net Zero Forum to coordinate the strategy with local government.

That COP26 failed to provide the national targets that could put the world on course for limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5C; failed to provide the carbon price mechanisms needed to shift the world economy away from fossil fuels; failed to provide the necessary finance for less developed nations to develop without fossil fuels or to deal with the loss and damage caused to them by wealthier nations that are historically responsible; failed to outlaw all loopholes in 'offsetting' mechanisms; and failed to commit to phasing out fossil fuels.

Council believes: That the chances for a strong outcome from COP26 were weakened by the UK government's mixed messages on climate action, not least the reduction in tax on internal flights, the continued commitment to new fossil fuel extraction in Cumbria and the North Sea oil fields, and cuts to overseas aid.

If we are to become a carbon neutral district we need new developments to be carbon neutral and we need to divest from all investment in fossil fuels.

Council resolves:

1) To write to Alok Sharma MP to thank him for his work so far and urge him to apply maximum pressure to all parties for the remainder of his presidency.

2) To organise carbon literacy training and briefing sessions for council staff and members to ensure we are consistent in addressing the climate emergency across all our activities.

3) To organise a second climate conference in West Berkshire which brings all stakeholders together.

4) To work with other unitary authorities in Berkshire to divest staff pension funds from fossil fuels, including those who are merely transitioning because we only have nine years left to achieve carbon neutrality. Instead, invest in funds that are contributing to decarbonisation and adaptation to climate change.

5) To require developers to submit a Climate Change Declaration with their planning applications to encourage them to build to higher energy efficiency standards.

6) To write to our three local MPs urging them to lobby the government for the following:

   - Conduct an independent review into UK fossil fuel subsidies and set out a plan and timetable to phase these out.

   - Commit to no more coal, oil or gas extraction in the UK, and no more UK investments in fossil fuel extraction overseas.

   - Commit to no airport expansion across the UK, and for international aviation and shipping decarbonisation to be included in nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in future trade deals.

Background

The Conference of the Parties, Climate Change Conference of the UN, known as COP26 took place in Glasgow in autumn 2021. Alok Sharma, MP was President of COP26. The Conference resulted in the Glasgow Climate Pact, which recognises a crucial role for communities and local authorities.

The six actions at local government level that the motion calls for in this regard are set out in the following section with comments against each and updates on any actions taken.

Response to the Motion

Action 1: To write to Alok Sharma MP to thank him for his work so far and urge him to apply maximum pressure to all parties for the remainder of his presidency.

> There was no objection to engaging with Alok Sharma MP, however, the writing of a letter did not happen at the time. It has recently been suggested by EAG that Alok Sharma is invited to speak to EAG now that his timetable is not dominated by COP business.

Action 2: To organise carbon literacy training and briefing sessions for council staff and members to ensure we are consistent in addressing the climate emergency across all our activities.

> The development of some staff training modules addressing the themes of climate change, carbon reduction, sustainability, food waste etc. is complete and the training is available on the online training programme for staff. The modules have been developed and tested with a small group of colleagues. The aim was that this could be added to the mandatory training for staff but HR have advised that it would not meet the criteria for mandatory training.

The Environment Delivery Team will be working on ways to best engage staff in this training including using the Eco-Champions Network and other internal communications.

Some interactive sessions for Members have taken place where they have met some of the team from across the Environment Department and been able to find out about how the Council's declaration of a climate emergency is being translated into actions and projects. Members are also encouraged to engage with the Local Government Association's training for Members on Climate Change.

Action 3: To organise a second climate conference in West Berkshire which brings all stakeholders together.

The first climate conference was held in October 2019 a few months after the declaration of a climate emergency in West Berkshire and before the Environment Strategy was developed. The question of resource was considered in relation to the idea of having a second climate conference. A huge amount of officer time would be needed to put on a conference of a similar nature to the first one. This would take officers away from delivering the actions and projects in the Environment Strategy Delivery Plan. The world has moved on a great deal since 2019 and it was recognised that there may be alternative ways in which a 'West Berkshire Climate Conference' could be delivered which might not be so resource hungry.

As an alternative to a climate conference the Council focused on a month focused on climate or 'green' activities in September 2022. A packed programme was put together including webinars, free bus travel days, promotion of Eco Schools, support for Great Big Green Week and partnering with 'GreenFest'. Some activities could not go ahead as planned due to the passing of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II but the focus remained for the month and little beyond into October to cover some areas that were able to be postponed.

Green September

Consideration will be given as to whether a 'focus month' is something to repeat in the future.

Action 4: To work with other unitary authorities in Berkshire to divest staff pension funds from fossil fuels, including those who are merely transitioning because we only have nine years left to achieve carbon neutrality. Instead, invest in funds that are contributing to decarbonisation and adaptation to climate change.

It is considered that this topic of the investment of the Berkshire Pension Fund has already been the subject of detailed debate. It is therefore not considered appropriate to re-visit the issues within such a short period of time. For example, the Berkshire Pension Fund and its Responsible Investment Policy has previously been considered

at Environment Board and a note prepared to set out the position (see Appendix E for information).

Action 5: To require developers to submit a Climate Change Declaration with their planning applications to encourage them to build to higher energy efficiency standards.

Currently we do not have a policy basis to require developers to submit a Climate Change Declaration or Climate Change Statement as they may be referred to. They could be encouraged to do so to demonstrate how their development helps to meet the climate emergency declared in West Berkshire in July 2019. We cannot, however, force these statements to be submitted and, if they are provided, there is no way of enforcing them.

Through the Local Plan Review officers have taken the opportunity to strengthen the policy basis reflecting the change in local, national and global circumstances since the last Local Plan was written. Work has taken place to develop a policy that will help to drive high environmental standards for developments in West Berkshire. It is considered that this strengthening of policy should be the focus for the longer term impact and work will continue to support the progress of this policy direction through the Local Plan Examination stage.

Action 6: To write to our three local MPs urging them to lobby the government for the following:

- Conduct an independent review into UK fossil fuel subsidies and set out a plan and timetable to phase these out.
- Commit to no more coal, oil or gas extraction in the UK, and no more UK investments in fossil fuel extraction overseas.
- Commit to no airport expansion across the UK, and for international aviation and shipping decarbonisation to be included in nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in future trade deals.

There is much debate around energy generation, energy security and energy prices at this time. The motion was written prior to the outbreak of war between Russian and Ukraine and the rising fuel costs and uncertainty about future energy prices. However, taking into account the current situation, it is not considered appropriate to progress lobbying as described in the motion although lobbying around energy security with a focus on renewables would be appropriate.

The Council has an agreed position on the expansion of Heathrow airport which was agreed at the Full Council meeting on 12th September 2019.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

Whilst the motion in full is not supported, there are elements that have been taken forward either in line with the motion or through alternative actions.

Some of these elements are ongoing (points 2,3 and 5) and have the potential to have further lasting benefits.

Appendix E

Berkshire Pension Fund – Responsible Investment Policy

The note below was produced to support Members and Officers respond to questions regarding the nature of employee pension investments and how this aligns with fighting climate change.

In addition to the note below, the following summary could be used as a more succinct response which refers the questioner to the more detailed note if further information is required:

> *West Berkshire Council's employee pensions are part of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund (RCBPF). The Council as a participant employer of the RCBPF is keen to ensure that investments made in relation to employee pensions reflect the importance of addressing climate change and the transition to a low-carbon world. This aligns with the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire and the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.*
>
> *The Berkshire Pension Fund Committee agreed a Responsible Investment Policy at its meeting in March 2021 and the Council welcomes the more proactive approach to addressing climate change that this sets out. This policy guides the fund to engage more closely with invested companies seeking evidence that they are planning for the transition to a low-carbon economy and working to meet future emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement. The policy also ensures that there will be no new investments in fossil fuel companies which are ignoring the risks of climate change.*
>
> *The Council acknowledges and supports the principle that the Responsible Investment Policy should be reviewed regularly in order to continue recognising and reflecting best practice and addressing emerging priorities and changing situations.*
>
> *More details in relation to this along with relevant links to further information including the Responsible Investment Policy are included in the attached note.*

This is being brought to the Environment Board for their awareness and to seek endorsement.

A note on the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund and its Responsible Investment Policy

1 Purpose of this note

1.1 This note sets out West Berkshire Council's support for the Responsible Investment Policy adopted by the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund. In particular, it highlights how that policy identifies climate change as a core priority in order to guide new investment decisions and to influence existing investment in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

2 Background

2.1 West Berkshire Council's employee pensions are part of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund (RCBPF). The RCBPF administers the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of over 300 scheme employers. It is part of the Local Pensions Partnership (LPP) which is one of eight investment pools set up to better manage the 89 previously separately invested funds across England and Wales.

2.2 There has been increased public interest and concern over climate change and many Councils and other organisations are putting plans in place to help tackle this important issue. In response to this and other key issues, the RCBPF has updated its Responsible Investment Policy.

3 Responsible Investment Policy (RCBPF)

3.1 The Responsible Investment Policy was agreed by the Berkshire Pension Fund Committee on 22nd March 2021.

3.2 The implementation of the RI policy is through the activities of Local Pensions Partnership Investments (LPPI) which provides investment management services for all of the RCBPF assets and is one of the two core operations of the LPP.

3.3 Identifying core priorities for RI is an important part of focussing the attention of LPPI on the issues of greatest importance to the RCBPF. The issues identified as being of primary concern within the policy are:

- Climate change – engaging with pension funds and other stakeholders to develop and share best practice, recognising and managing the risks and opportunities investments face from climate change;

- Corporate Governance – promoting the case for well managed companies which implement fair and just employment practices;

3.4 Whilst the above are the main priorities, the RI policy report includes a number of other RI issues which are of interest and will be kept under review.

3.5 Taking the core priority of Climate Change which is the focus of this note, the RI policy states that RCBPF will endeavour to carry out the following:

(a) Where existing investments in fossil fuel companies are in place and identified, we expect those companies to be able to demonstrate planning for the global transition to a low-carbon economy and to meet future emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement or other appropriate initiatives. Where they are not, and opportunities for engagement and reform of the company or project are not possible or do not exist, then the RCBPF will make all reasonable efforts to divest provided that this will result in no material financial detriment, either through increased costs or increased investment risk.

(b) Where our fiduciary duty allows, we will not consider new active investments in fossil fuel companies directly engaged in the extraction of coal, oil and natural gas as sources of energy which are ignoring the risks of climate change. The RCBPF expects LPPI to take steps to ensure that the level of exposure to climate change investment risks are evaluated and monitored. This will involve the use of appropriate investigative and analytical tools to increase information and provide appropriate input around investment decision making and will be reflected in regular reporting and assurance provided to the RCBPF.

4 Local Pension Partnership Investments – approach to RI

4.1 Whilst the RCBPF's newly agreed RI policy identifies climate change as a core priority, it is worthwhile noting what the LPPI says about climate change and how it is addressing this important issue.

4.2 The LPPI recognises that that RI is an area of growing interest for its stakeholders and, in response, has started to produce an annual RI report to supplement the LPP's Annual Report and Accounts.

4.3 The first of LPPI's Responsible Investment Reports was for 2019/20 in which one of the priority themes was climate change. One of the target outcomes included in the report is the alignment of voting and engagement activity with the achievement of targets under the Paris Agreement.

4.4 As part of the analysis of their Global Equities Fund the LPPI measures carbon intensity on an annual basis. This is linked with indicative modelling of how this relates to the pathways for different global temperature scenarios. The position of the GEF in 2019 shows an improvement (reduction) when compared to 2018 and the

results show the portfolio has emissions aligned with a pathway for 1.5°C. If this continues it will be in line with the Paris Agreement.

4.5 Further information about how the LPPI addresses climate change can be found within its Responsible Investment Report 2019/20.

5 Conclusion

5.1 West Berkshire Council as a participant employer of the RCBPF is keen to ensure that investments made in relation to employee pensions reflect the importance of addressing climate change and the transition to a low-carbon world. This helps to ensure these activities are aligned with the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire and the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

5.2 The Council welcomes the more proactive approach set out in the Responsible Investment Policy agreed by the Berkshire Pension Fund Committee in March 2021. This policy guides the fund to engage more closely with invested companies seeking evidence that they are planning for the transition to a low-carbon economy and working to meet future emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement. The policy also ensures that there will be no new investments in fossil fuel companies which are ignoring the risks of climate change.

5.3 The Council acknowledges and supports the principle that the Responsible Investment Policy should be reviewed regularly in order to continue recognising and reflecting best practice and addressing emerging priorities and changing situations.

Councillor Details:

Name: Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter

Job Title: Executive Member for Environment

E-mail Address: Steve.Ardagh-Walter@westberks.gov.uk

Date: 9th April 2021

Appendix F

High Street Canopies

Motion proposed by: Cllr Adrian Abbs
Date of Full Council Meeting: 6th October 2022
Date(s) considered by EAG: November 2022

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: The following Motion was submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs:

"Given the constant temperature rises seen year on year (especially in the summer months) it is becoming critical to protect both ourselves and our economy by providing shade for humans, business and wildlife.

Therefore:

This Council notes:

- That Climate change is leading to higher temperatures.
- That Green Canopy cover can help significantly with providing shade.
- That Newbury Town Council have passed a motion asking for WBC assistance to achieve this.
- That some trees that existed previously are missing.
- That some trees are showing signs of stress due to either their location, care regime, or age.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Approach interested parties (such as Parish and Town councils as well as bodies such as Newbury BID) to gauge their willingness to be involved in a rapid roll out of Green Canopies on their high streets.
2. Commit to beginning a program of investigation on various methods of achieving green canopies that could be applied to the various scenarios that will be found in West Berkshire.
3. Commit to replacing any existing missing trees such as the one on Newbury High Street.
4. Undertake a quick survey of all trees to ascertain their current condition.
5. Create a forward plan for any tree identified as needing attention".

Background

The presence of trees in town centres brings many benefits – visual, wellbeing, shade, carbon sequestration – to name a few. However, it is not a straightforward exercise to establish trees in these environments or to maintain them. A range of approaches have been used in the past with varying degrees of success.

Response to the Motion

The motion was considered by the Environment Advisory Group in November 2022 where the Council's Countryside Manager was present to help inform the discussion.

The conclusion from EAG was that there was agreement in principle that trees are a positive feature in town centres and that they help our town centres to be more resilient to climate change and air pollution. There was an acknowledgement that there are a range of issues involved with establishing trees in town centres and the solutions are therefore not obvious or quick.

It was agreed at EAG that the Countryside Manager would review the actions proposed in the motion with colleagues. Information from previous work would be included and a response drafted ready to be reported to the Executive.

A response to each of the five points from the motion is therefore set out below for Members to consider:

1. **Approach interested parties (such as Parish and Town councils as well as bodies such as Newbury BID) to gauge their willingness to be involved in a rapid roll out of Green Canopies on their high streets.**

It is agreed that any consideration of introducing new trees in town centres should include the Council working with Parish and Town Councils and other relevant local organisations who know their areas the best. However, expectations need to be managed and any mention of rapid roll out of trees is not appropriate. Retro-fitting trees in high streets is not something we can roll out in a short timescale. There are a number of issues around this which Officers have learnt over the years through various attempts and investigations into the provision of trees in main urban streets. Some of these issues are set out below:

- The reason Newbury's main town centre street is devoid of trees apart from a very few is because of the presence of underground services, drains and other pipework. The tree root ball needs space to grow and so you need a much bigger space than might be realised at first.

- Planters may be an option but there have been a number of relevant complaints from those who have a disability (mainly physical and sight impairments) about the issues planters can cause. The previous trees in planters idea, which came to fruition, was eventually abandoned. The planters tend to become unsightly and used for purposes other than for supporting tree growth.

- The roots of street trees can cause the cracking of roads and pavements and sometimes water pipes. Urban trees can also cause structural damage to buildings, including at foundation level due to their roots. Such problems can be minimised by careful species choice and maintenance, and through correct planting methods that determine the optimal location for a species and ensure sufficient space for root ball expansion. Aphid and pigeon droppings and leaves may also cause issues although this alone is no reason not to plant trees.

Officers have also previously sought advice from professional arboriculture bodies which have stated that:

- Site conditions must be appropriate for the trees that are to be planted. Trees that are likely to experience stress or disease as a result of climate change should be avoided. Trees should be selected for their ability to adapt to very warm, and cold conditions, and a changing climate where summers can be baking.
- Trees or shrubs should be planted in a way that does not cause an obstruction to highways, footpaths or public right of way. Trees should not affect occupants of neighbouring buildings. In Newbury Town centre some above shop front accommodation is rented.
- The trees' roots can cause damage to foundations or drainage of buildings when planted too close and it may be more appropriate to consider planting a wall shrub or climber in such situations
- Ensure there is sufficient room for trees to develop and grow. The position of overhead wires, proximity to walls, windows and roofs and future maintenance requirements should be considered.

2. Commit to beginning a program of investigation on various methods of achieving green canopies that could be applied to the various scenarios that will be found in West Berkshire.

As indicated in the response to point 1 above, there has been a lot of investigation in the past around different ways of delivering trees in urban areas. Many lessons have been learnt from this and any proposals for urban trees are considered very carefully in the light of the knowledge that has been built up.

Officers are aware that new ideas can be developed and trialled at any time and aim to keep informed of progress in this area. For example, there are now a greater range of planter solutions. Some interesting examples can be fitted as part of a full shrub and tree planting display rather than individual planters. These are much less likely to become a hazard to disabled users and can form part of a seating area with disabled access. They do, however, require a larger amount of space for implementation so are only suitable in certain scenarios.

The most recent new trees to be planted in Newbury town centre are close to the bus station. The original aspiration for this scheme was for a greater number of trees but, due to the complex issues of adding trees to urban environments and the costs involved, a final number of 9 trees were planted. This is an example where an opportunity for new street trees was taken and the best possible outcome delivered in this environment. Such opportunities will continue to be considered and the best methods used for each scenario. It is not considered necessary to begin a new programme of investigation.

3. Commit to replacing any existing missing trees such as the one on Newbury High Street.

It is agreed that any missing trees should be replaced wherever possible. The one on Northbrook Street that is referred to was close to the Camp Hopson store and this has been replaced. Its health is being monitored regularly.

4. Undertake a quick survey of all trees to ascertain their current condition.

Officers deliver a proactive tree survey that runs on a rolling programme. This survey sees all trees (not just urban trees) surveyed over a 18-24 month period.

5. **Create a forward plan for any tree identified as needing attention.**

Any issues identified through the tree survey programme mentioned above are collated, prioritised and actioned.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

Many elements of the actions this motion is seeking are already underway or covered by business as usual activities within the Countryside Team. It is not considered necessary to embark upon a new investigation of methods of creating tree canopy cover when there is already a lot of knowledge held by the team following previous work. Whilst working with local organisations on opportunities for tree planting is agreed as a good approach, reference to rapid roll-out of a scheme of planting is not appropriate given the difficulties outlined in this response.

It is therefore recommended that the motion is not supported.

Officers will continue to consider opportunities for increasing trees in urban areas where it is appropriate and possible to do so. It is also acknowledged that additional funding for urban trees was agreed at Full Council on 2 March 2023. This will contribute to the Countryside Team being able to take up opportunities for delivering these projects.

Appendix G

Domestic Energy Efficiency

Motion proposed by: Cllr Adrian Abbs
Date of Full Council Meeting: 1st December 2022
Date(s) considered by EAG: November 2022

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs:

Overview:-

Council acknowledges that people living in poorly insulated suffer from significantly higher heating bills per sqm and are amongst the highest CO2 contributors from a heating perspective

This motion commits West Berkshire Council to take a bold step in helping as many residents as possible and as rapidly as possible to have a positive impact on energy needs next winter.

Council notes:

- That we declared a climate emergency across the district, and we need to make progress on our district target as a matter of urgency.
- That the better a property is insulated the lower the need for any kind of heating.
- That for any insulation scheme, there will be a shortage of skills needed to implement the scheme.
- That many believe the costs of fossil fuel will not return fully to previous levels for many years, if ever.
- That better insulation is one of the best ways to jump up from a poor EPC rating.
- That we can learn from the government's current Sustainable Warmth initiative which comes to an end in March 2023
- That by having our own scheme we can more directly target relevant residents of West Berkshire.

In order to help:

This Council will introduce a scheme which will begin by focusing on those who cannot afford to undertake basic insulation, or lack the skills, or physical ability to do it. The intent for the scheme would be to allow council to undertake a long-term program which would help towards our enabling of net zero by 2030 for the district.

Criteria that should be met:

- Living in a home or flat that has an EPC of D or below;

- Can demonstrate to the Council that they are not in a position to:
    - Afford the simple steps to better insulation, in which case material will be supplied;
    - Afford the simple steps to better insulation and don't have the skills to implement. In which case, materials will be provided and a suitable course made available for them to gain the skills;
    - Afford the simple steps to better insulation and don't have the physical ability to undertake the work, in which case, the material would be provided, and work carried out for them.

THE MOTION

This council commits to:

- Presenting a scheme to council a.s.a.p in order to be able to take advantage of funds like the Household Support Fund which we expect to get further funding from.
- Officers developing details for a scheme to be considered by the Environment Advisory Group at their next meeting, leading to presenting to the Executive for a decision.
- Officers Identifying
    - homes that meets the affordability and physical ability criteria.
    - homes that meets the supply and training criteria.
    - Homes that meet the supply only criteria.
- Officers to investigate creating a directory of local tradespeople who will participate in the implementation of the scheme.
- Officers to work with local education facilities (such as Newbury Collage) to ensure the suitable availability of short courses for those wanting to skill-up.
- Officers to present costs for such courses that will need to be funded
- Ensuring those that have the greatest need are helped first.
- Working with both the public and private sectors to ensure anyone meeting the criteria can take advantage of the scheme (no matter who owns the property).
- Applying for complete funding from government to fund the project.
- Investigating the creation of a WBC Insulation Bond that would act as a backstop or allow for the extension of the programme dependant on the success of the grant bid
- Approaching Greenham Trust to support WBC in this program with whatever match funding they could make available
- Investigate other funding sources as the scheme develops

Background

The idea of this motion was brought to the attention of the Environment Advisory Group prior to it being formally submitted as a motion to Full Council in December 2022. This provided the opportunity for EAG to consider the detail and have a discussion about how this could be progressed. This was considered to be a positive process gaining support from Members. A small cross-party sub-group of EAG then met to develop the detailed wording of the motion so that it was likely to be considered acceptable and supported.

The wording of the motion that appears in the formal papers of the Full Council meeting (1st December 2022) is not the final wording of the motion that was agreed by the EAG Sub-Group. The latest version that was proposed to be considered by Full Council is set out above and it is this wording that is being commented on in this paper.

Response to the motion

There was general support for the motion when it was considered at EAG. Officers noted that there were similar schemes to help improve energy efficiency for eligible homes with funding from government. These had been incredibly difficult to implement due to the near impossible timeframes that were stipulated for the use of the funding. If the Council had its own project funded by local funding sources such household energy efficiency improvements could be made without the need for timescales getting in the way of successful delivery. Officers also cautioned that such a project would need to be properly resourced. On a similar theme some Members noted that the difficulty in implementing such a project should not be underestimated.

EAG agreed that the motion should maintain cross-party support, and would be redrafted ahead of the next Council meeting.

Expectations and timescales were a key element of the re-drafting as the Officer team most suited to taking this forward had a vacancy that was proving difficult to fill. No work on this could be started until the Energy and Carbon Team was back up to full strength. Some additional resource may be needed to scope out the project and this would include indicating the level of resource required to implement any scheme that was considered deliverable for West Berkshire.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

Due to the amount of detail in the wording of the motion and the lack of resource that has been available to consider this detail to date, it is difficult to either confirm support for the motion or reject it at this stage.

It is therefore recommended that when the Energy and Carbon Team are up to full strength, the scoping of this project will start and an initial feasibility study carried out. A further recommendation will then be made to the Portfolio Holder in consultation with the Environment Advisory Group considering the details of a possible project with a particular focus on funding, resources and deliverability.

Appendix H

Pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street and Market Place, Newbury (extended hours)

Motion proposed by: Cllr Jeff Brooks
Date of Full Council Meeting: 8th July 2021
Date(s) considered by Economic Development Board: August 2021

Full Motion Wording

MOTION: The following Motion was submitted in the name of Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"In order to assist the regeneration of the Newbury evening economy and provide support to hospitality businesses, including cafes, restaurants and pubs, this Council resolves to:

- Introduce extended hours pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street and the Market Place with the utmost haste – with pedestrianisation lasting from 10.00 hours to 24.00 hours every day of the week.
- This will give time between 00.00 hours to 10.00 hours for store deliveries with emergency vehicles having the ability to enter at any time by lowering the street barriers.
- By such rapid measures, hospitality businesses will be able to take advantage of the longer summer evenings and extend their premises across pavements and outside areas.
- Only by taking this decision this evening and implementing it with proper speed, will the Council be able to make a difference to this key economic sector in this summer."

Background

The purpose of this appendix is to brief the Executive on what has been done to consider the proposal of extended hours of pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street and Market Place in Newbury town centre, in response to the motion raised by Councillor Jeff Brooks. This is the second Executive report that has been drafted on this issue, following one written by the Network Manager (Highways) for Executive on 17th December 2020.

The Network Manager's report from 2020 summarised the work that would need to be done, and associated cost, of undertaking a feasibility study and implementing full pedestrianisation of Newbury Town Centre. This was written as a response to a motion raised in September 2020. The report considered traffic measures and estimated cost for traffic modelling work. It concluded that it is not appropriate to re-implement a temporary "24/7" pedestrianisation using the same legislation as previously (Covid19 measure). The report confirmed that the issue of permanent pedestrianisation is complex and there is a need for further consultation with the community and assessment of the practicalities of any proposed changes before proceeding to the statutory advertisement of a new Traffic Regulation Order. The report summarised that some public engagement had been done by the Newbury Weekly News,

Newbury Town Council and Newbury Business Improvement District in the form of surveys; but it was limited in scope with a mixed response.

Response to the Motion

The motion that was brought by Councillor Jeff Brooks to Full Council on 8th July 2021 as detailed above was discussed at Economic Development Board on 12th August 2021, where it was noted as follows:

- That the Newbury BID survey was evenly split on pedestrianisation but it only surveyed town centre businesses, not other stakeholders such as taxi drivers.
- The Newbury Masterplan by Hemingway Design indicated public support for pedestrianisation.
- The Highways team were looking at the traffic implications.
- Concluded that West Berkshire Council is open to the idea of pedestrianisation and is awaiting the outcome of the Newbury Vision work.

The Newbury Masterplan includes proposals to increase pedestrianisation in Northbrook Street and Market Place in Newbury town centre, identified as one of key areas for public realm improvement. The Newbury Masterplan is currently being taken forward as a whole programme, consisting of the projects in the Masterplan which will be prioritised and developed in detail with the support of local stakeholders, leading bids for funding to implement projects.

Recommended overall response and any recommended actions

It is recommended that further investigation of the pedestrianisation proposal will be included as a workstream in the Newbury Masterplan delivery programme, which is being developed currently and will include further engagement with stakeholders in the town centre.

As a workstream in the Newbury Masterplan delivery programme the proposal will be compared against other projects in the town centre for prioritisation, and discussed with a stakeholder steering group. Ultimately any further action will be determined by Economic Development Board which is the governance board for the programme (or alternative appropriate internal governance body).

In summary, the measures proposed in Councillor Jeff Brook's Motion are not proposed to be implemented, at least in the short term. Instead they will be considered in more detail as part of the Newbury Masterplan delivery programme – including further engagement with stakeholders.

Motion to Council - Defibrillators

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Graham Bridgman
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4329

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 At Council on the 8th July 2021, the following motion was submitted:

This Council notes:

- *That existing telephone boxes are being offered to the council for free or as little as £1.*
- *That telephone boxes make ideal environments to place public access defibrillators due to their existing power and the shelter they offer.*
- *That defibrillators are known to save lives.*
- *That those minutes and seconds are critical to a positive outcome where defibrillators are used.*

This Council, therefore resolves to:

(1) take a default position where it would adopt any telephone boxes being offered throughout West Berkshire for use as an Open Access Defibrillator location.

(2) install an Open Access Defibrillator in each adopted box should another defibrillator not be present within 100 metres.

(3) make residents local to that defibrillator aware of its presence

(4) provide a "how to use a defibrillator" guide to all residents within 400 metres of the device.

(5) ensure the location of the device is added to the emergency services register of defibrillators.

(6) undertake the minimal servicing required to keep the devices active or devolve this to the local parish or town council.

Costs are maximum £1500 per defibrillator including purchase and installation.

1.2 The Chairman requested that the item be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration with a report to Executive, as the matter fell within their remit, with the outcome of that reported to Council.

2 Recommendations

For the Executive to agree that:

- Community proposals for the installation of new defibrillator sites will continue to be supported through the Members' bids programme, and that these will be assessed in terms of:
    - Proximity to other sites, with proposals rejected if they are within 100m of an existing open access defibrillator;
    - Confirmation that: new open access defibrillators will be registered on the national database, and that provision is made for on-going maintenance checks, and replacement of the unit when life-expired; and
    - Provision is made by the applicant for community training on how to use the device.
- The Council should **not** take a default position of adopting all phone boxes for use as open access defibrillator locations for the reasons outlined in the report.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications associated with this report, since the recommendations can be delivered within existing budgets and resources.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications associated with this report, since the recommendations can be delivered within existing resources.
Legal:	There are no legal implications associated with this report.
Risk Management:	There are no risks or issues arising from this report.

Property:	There are no property issues arising from this report.			
Policy:	The recommendations support the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:	X			Providing support for additional public defibrillators in local communities may help to improve health outcomes for people experiencing cardiac arrest.
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		

Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The recommendations will support the Council Strategy priority of helping to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.
Core Business:		X		
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	The following have been consulted on this report: • Councillor Graham Bridgman (Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing) • Steve Welch (Service Director – Communities & Wellbeing) • Dr Zakyeya Atcha (Interim Public Health Consultant) • April Peberdy (Programme Manager, Public Health)			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report sets out the response to the motion tabled by Councillor Abbs at the 8 July 2021 Council meeting, which called on West Berkshire Council to: adopt redundant telephone boxes and install defibrillators, make residents aware of their locations, provide guidance on how to use them to nearby residents, ensure that they are added to the national database used by emergency services, and undertake ongoing maintenance.

4.2 The matter was referred to Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration, and it was requested that the response be reported back to Executive, with the outcome subsequently reported to Council.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 Councillor Adrian Abbs tabled a motion at the 8 July 2021 Council meeting, which called on West Berkshire Council to: adopt redundant telephone boxes and install defibrillators, make residents aware of their locations, provide guidance on how to use them to nearby residents, ensure that they are added to the national database used by emergency services, and undertake ongoing maintenance.

5.2 The then Chairman informed the Council that under Procedural Rule 4.9.8 the motion, would not be debated, and instead be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for

consideration with a report to Executive, as the matter fell within their remit. The outcome of that would be reported to Council.

Background

5.3 The Health and Wellbeing Board initially considered a report in response to the motion on 30 September 2021.

5.4 BT had confirmed that at that time 34 telephone boxes had been adopted and repurposed in West Berkshire, with just two live phone boxes remaining in High Street, Hungerford and Newbury Street, Lambourn. Further research was proposed to identify phone boxes that may be suitable to house a defibrillator, whether adopted or not.

5.5 The report summarised guidance on provision of defibrillators within the community, and covered aspects such as: suitable locations, power supply, security, maintenance checks, and registration of devices.

5.6 The Board considered evidence about the effectiveness of defibrillators. When used correctly with good CPR, they can improve survival chances by up to 75%. However, they were most cost effective in busy locations where it was more likely that there would be an incidence of coronary arrest, and that people would be around to help with resuscitation.

5.7 It was noted that there was conflicting data on the locations of defibrillators, but The Circuit was accepted as the definitive national database, with locations shown on the Save a Life App.

5.8 The report identified sources of funding available for defibrillators, including British Heart Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund

5.9 Following consideration of this initial report, the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed the following actions:

- Ask all town/parish councils to confirm the locations of telephone kiosks within their areas and whether they were in use or defunct; and, if defunct, whether they had been adopted, by whom and for what purpose.

- Ask all town/parish councils to also identify publicly accessible defibrillators within their local area and to check they were registered on The Circuit.

- A cost-benefit analysis be undertaken to assess whether additional defibrillators should be provided and where they would be most effectively deployed.

- Following that analysis, to approach town/parish councils and local communities to identify suitable sites (including phone boxes), and to ask those respondents if they would be willing to take responsibility for the installation and ongoing maintenance of any new defibrillators

- An investigation be completed into all available funding streams for new defibrillators.

- Initial publicity be carried out to ensure residents are aware of existing defibrillator locations and how to locate them in the event of encountering someone experiencing cardiac arrest.

- Consideration be given to funding a programme of First Aid training in schools and colleges and the wider community, to include the use of defibrillators.

5.10 A second report was taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 19 May 2022, which presented the findings of the additional research.

5.11 Responses were received from 37 out of 63 town/parish councils. Most already had at least one defibrillator in their area. Of these, only one was not registered on The Circuit. Only three Parish Councils reported that they did not have any defibrillators – Catmore, Tidmarsh & Sulham, and Wokefield. However, these had no significant centres of population, and none of them had indicated that they wished to install a defibrillator in their local area.

5.12 Of those who responded, 19 Parish Councils had at least one phone box in their area, while 14 had none (four did not provide any data). Only three phone boxes were reported as still working. Of the redundant phone boxes, five had already been used to accommodate defibrillators. Only one was reported as not in use for any purpose.

5.13 Several Parish Councils already had a defibrillator at a nearby location (e.g. village hall), so there was no need to utilise a phone box for this purpose. Challenges with providing power to phone boxes were highlighted – this is needed for the heater that maintains the required temperature of at least 4^{o}c throughout the winter period.

5.14 Parish Councils that were actively looking to provide additional defibrillators included: Inkpen, Pangbourne and Shaw-cum-Donnington. However, only Inkpen Parish Council indicated that they were looking to utilise a redundant phone box for this purpose.

5.15 In addition to consulting the Parish Councils, officers identified geographical gaps in the provision of defibrillators using the map in the Save a Life app. Communities identified as not having a defibrillator included:

- Upper Lambourn

- West Woodhay

- Hamstead Marshall

- Marsh Benham

- Enborne

- Lower Basildon.

5.16 The report presented further information on the effectiveness of community defibrillators. This suggested that widespread provision at sites with lower incidence of

cardiac arrest would be unlikely to be cost-effective, and may represent poorer value for money than alternative healthcare interventions.

5.17 The report concluded with a list of potential funding source for defibrillators.

5.18 Health and Wellbeing Board agreed the following actions:

- To remind West Berkshire Council's elected Members that they are able to use their Members' bids to part-fund community defibrillators.
- To signpost town and parish councils to existing sources of funding for public access defibrillators.
- To remind town and parish councils of the need to undertake regular maintenance checks of defibrillators and suggest that they nominate a 'guardian' for each unit.
- To encourage South Central Ambulance Service to identify any units that are approaching the end of their useful service life.
- To consider funding a programme of First Aid training in schools and colleges and the wider community, to include the use of defibrillators. (If the Council was to support first aid training, then funding would need to be identified.)
- To encourage residents to download the Save a Life app as part of a publicity campaign to support British Heart Week (7-15 June 2022).

5.19 Subsequent to this meeting, it was confirmed that First Aid training was already carried out in schools as part of the RSHE curriculum, and that this included how to administer CPR, as well as the purpose of defibrillators and when they would be needed. The remainder of the above actions have all been implemented.

5.20 There have been four Member Bids for defibrillators in the last two funding rounds in June 2021 and June 2022. Approved bids were as follows:

<u>June 2021</u>

- Councillor Clive Hooker – Defibrillator for Farnborough Parish Meeting
- Councillor Ross Mackinnon – Defibrillator for Bradfield Parish Council

<u>June 2022</u>

- Councillor Graham Pask – Defibrillator for Bucklebury Memorial Hall
- Councillor Lynne Doherty – Defibrillator for Speen Parish Council

5.21 Proposals are assessed on the basis of the following:

- Whether the town/parish council has previously indicated that they wished to deliver additional defibrillators in their area

- The proximity of other defibrillators (bids for new units within 100m of an existing one are not supported)
- Provision for on-going checks and maintenance, replacement after use, and registration on the national database
- Provision of training on how to use the defibrillator

Proposals

5.22 As described above, a variety of measures have already been implemented, and these respond to the points raised within the motion.

5.23 However, it is **not** proposed that the Council should take a default position of adopting all phone boxes for use as a defibrillator location for the reasons outlined in the report.

5.24 It is proposed that:

- Support for community proposals for the installation of new defibrillator sites continue to be provided through the Members' bids programme, and that these are assessed in terms of:
    - Proximity to other sites, with proposals rejected if they are within 100m of an existing open access defibrillator;
    - Confirmation that: new open access defibrillators will be registered on the national database, and that provision is made for on-going maintenance checks, and replacement of the unit when life-expired; and
    - Provision is made by the applicant for community training on how to use the device.

5.25 No further measures are proposed at this stage.

6 Other options considered

6.1 The following options have been considered and rejected:

(1) For West Berkshire Council to fund the purchase and installation of defibrillators in all redundant phone boxes in West Berkshire – this is not considered appropriate, since the locations may be in close proximity to existing sites or may not be in optimal locations. Also, there are very few redundant phone boxes available and there would be issues with ongoing maintenance checks and funding for power supplies that would need to be resolved for each site. Furthermore, unless local 'guardians' could be found to undertake regular maintenance checks, the Council would have to resource this activity.

(2) For West Berkshire Council to offer grant funding for additional AEDs in under-served communities – this is not considered necessary, since match-funding is already offered through the Members' bids and external funding sources are also available.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Although the measures that have been implemented to date are slightly different to those proposed in the original motion to Council, it is considered that they respond to the concerns identified in the motion in an appropriate manner that takes account of the needs of local communities, as well as the practical challenges associated with providing and maintaining public defibrillators in suitable locations.

8 Appendices

8.1 None

Background Papers:

Response to the Council Motion relating to the use of phone boxes for defibrillators, Health and Wellbeing Board, 19 May 2022

Response to the Council Motion relating to the use of phone boxes for defibrillators, Health and Wellbeing Board, 30 September 2022

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

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Job Title: Principal Policy Officer
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Achievements and Progress Report - West Berkshire Council Strategy 2019-2023

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Report Author:	Catalin Bogos
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4342

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report highlights Council's achievements in delivering the Council Strategy 2019 - 2023. The report articulates the progress that has been made against the Council's core business and priorities for improvement.

2 Recommendation

2.1 To note the achievements in delivering the Council Strategy's core business and priorities for improvement covering the period 2019 – 2023, set out in Appendix B.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implication as a result of this report.
Human Resource:	There are no financial implication as a result of this report.
Legal:	None.
Risk Management:	Risks relating to the commitments included in the Council Strategy and the associated delivery plan targets are managed through the Council's risk management framework.
Property:	None.

Policy:	The Council Strategy forms part of the Council's approved Policy Framework. The progress made since the Strategy had been approved in 2019; an assessment of change in national and local context; and the other strategies and plans approved inform the policies and plans to be delivered under the Council Strategy 2023-27.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	✓			No adverse impact is expected. The Strategy included a specific priority and commitments to support everyone to reach their potential.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	✓			The Council Strategy aimed to achieve a positive benefit to certain protected groups such as the elderly, disabled and children, particularly those from more challenging socio-economic backgrounds. The activities to deliver the strategy were provided within the existing policy framework and by the individual service areas. The services considered the measures and the impact of implementing the specific actions and conducted specific Equality Impact Assessments when required.
Environmental Impact:	✓			The Strategy is expected to have had a positive impact on the environment as it prioritises maintaining West Berkshire as a green district.

Health Impact:	✓			The Strategy included a number of commitments which aimed to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents.
ICT Impact:	✓			The Strategy aimed to support access to services through ICT and digital solutions.
Digital Services Impact:	✓			The Strategy aimed to support access to services through ICT and digital solutions.
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			The report highlights the achievements against the priorities established in 2019.
Core Business:	✓			The report highlights the achievements against the core business of the Council.
Data Impact:	✓			The Strategy included a commitment to make better use of data.
Consultation and Engagement:	The Council considered, at their annual meeting on the 21st May 2019, the feedback received following public consultation on the aims and priorities for improvement that were included/maintained into the updated Council Strategy 2019 – 2023. The feedback received from the Covid-19 Residents' Survey (June 2020) has informed the refresh of the Strategy. As the delivery of the Council Strategy has progressed, a number of more specific strategies were produced and approved, following consultation and engagement with our residents. This informed the refresh of the Council Strategy.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 In May 2019, the Council approved a new four year Council Strategy, which set specific priorities for improvement for a four year period. These priorities have been defined following an analysis of the social, economic and environmental statistics and engagement with the residents through public consultations.

4.2 Halfway through the lifecycle of the Council Strategy, a refresh was conducted to ensure that the priorities and commitments remained relevant given changes in the national and local context. In May 2021, the Council approved the refreshed strategy.

4.3 The two most significant changes in context had been the Council declaring a Climate emergency in July 2019 and the Coronavirus Pandemic. The former was a natural evolution from the continuous needs assessment processes and following work to detail our response to climate challenges into the more detailed Environment Strategy and associated delivery plans. The latter has impacted the entire world including over 200 residents in West Berkshire who tragically lost their lives, whilst others were presented with new health and wellbeing challenges. The Council worked with residents, community groups and partners to respond and minimise the effects of the Covid-19 crisis and to recover to pre-pandemic levels (see Council Strategy Appendix 2. Covid-19: Supporting Our Communities). The refreshed Recovery and Renewal Strategy, which addressed in more detail the response to Covid-19, has informed the refresh of the Council Strategy in May 2021.

4.4 In terms of the broader economic, social and environmental context, West Berkshire remains in a relatively stronger position compared to other areas in the country and because of this, the District has been more resilient in response to the pandemic.

4.5 Council's employees and members, working together with residents, our communities and partner organisations, have ensured strong performance in delivering the core business areas (whilst responding to Covid-19 had to be prioritised and resourced):

- Protecting our children
- Supporting education
- Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults
- Maintaining our roads
- Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean
- Providing benefits
- Collecting Council Tax and Business rates
- Planning and housing
- Culture, leisure and libraries
- Economic Development

4.6 In addition to supporting our residents impacted by Covid-19 and to focusing on findings ways and deliver the essential (core) services valued and needed by everyone in the District, work continued and good progress has been made in delivering the Strategy's priorities for improvement (and the associated commitments).

- Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes
- Support everyone to reach their full potential
- Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire
- Develop local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy
- Maintain a green district
- Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

4.7 This report highlights the good results achieved against every single commitment. Only a small number of actions have been impacted by the pandemic and its longer term effect, but in most cases this impact means some delays in completing some pieces of work.

4.8 Appendix B provides the details about the achievements and progress made to deliver the core business and the priorities for improvement of the 2019 – 2023 Council Strategy.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Since the approval of the Council Strategy in 2019, the Council had to adapt to respond to a number of significant challenges with impact at local level, including the Covid pandemic, the climate emergency and the economic and social consequences of the conflicts in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria. The Council has prioritised the response to such crisis but continued to deliver the core services and the commitments in the Council Strategy 2019-2023.

5.2 Core Business Achievements and Progress:

5.3 The Council provides over 700 mandatory functions. The ones that are most important to West Berkshire residents have been grouped under Core Business areas in the Council Strategy 2019-2023.

5.4 Under normal circumstances, the delivery of the mandatory function is 'business as usual' for the Council and these areas strong performance is achieved, including when benchmarking with other local authorities in the country. However, the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and from displacement of people due to conflicts in other parts of the world, meant that the delivery of such services had to be prioritised. The Council services, on which residents relied on, remained operational whilst additional support was delivered to residents during the Covid-19 national lockdowns and post-Covid restrictions as part of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy.

5.5 Despite these challenging circumstances, ambitious targets have been maintained for core business areas and good performance has been maintained over the period of the Strategy:

5.5.1 CORE BUSINESS: Protecting our children – our Children and Family Services have maintained effective services for children who need help and protection, children in care and care leavers and strong leadership retaining the 'Good' Ofsted inspection rating. Procedures have been adapted to continue timely visits, assessments and support to social care cases, including using the technology. Post pandemic the services are managing an increased level of demand. During the last 9 months there are challenges to visit increasing numbers of children with a child protection plan.

5.5.2 CORE BUSINESS: Supporting education – a higher proportion of the schools in the district are rated good or outstanding at Ofsted inspections. Investment in schools continued which contributes to ensuring that children get a school place to one of their top preferences when starting both primary and secondary schooling. A high proportion of young people are in education or training.

5.5.3 CORE BUSINESS: Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults – on the background of increasing demand on adult social care services, people get timely assessments and benefit of our services which are rated at least Good by the regulator with the exception of a care home which has made improvements in order to reach a similar standard when next inspected. The proportions of residents with

physical and learning disabilities in suitable accommodation and the ones in employment is in line with Regional and National results.

5.5.4 CORE BUSINESS: Maintaining our roads – orders for repairing our roads are completed in a timely manner. Investments in roads continued ensuring these are in a better state of repairs compared to the average for other areas in the country, even if just under the ambitious locally set target.

5.5.5 CORE BUSINESS: Countryside and open spaces – residents continue to have access to well managed parks and open spaces. Work has progressed as planned for the wildlife verges project. The Rights of Way Improvement plan review had a number of responses to consultation and will be completed a few months later than planned.

5.5.6 CORE BUSINESS: Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean – service continuity was ensure throughout lockdown periods. There is less waste landfilled and more recycling. The cleanliness of our streets declined slightly post lockdowns (as resources have been diverted to waste management) after maintaining a good standard for the first half of the strategy period.

5.5.7 CORE BUSINESS: Providing benefits – strong performance maintained for timely assessment of housing benefits, on top of a significant and effective effort to distribute financial support during and post-Covid.

5.5.8 CORE BUSINESS: Collecting Council Tax and Business rates – the service has continued high performance. During the peak of Covid-19 crisis, measures have been taken to help residents and businesses.

5.4.9 CORE BUSINESS: Planning and housing – more timely decision on planning application have been made over the first three years of the period of the strategy with notable improvements, but in the last few months there are some staff recruitment challenges. Strong performance has been achieved in relation to homelessness prevention.

5.5.10 CORE BUSINESS: Culture, leisure and libraries – there is good recovery of the visits to our libraries exceeding the agreed targets.

5.5.11 CORE BUSINESS: Economic Development – this is an area which has expanded during the last four years, supporting new and existing businesses during Covid crisis but also to start and grow in the district.

5.5.12 CORE BUSINESS: Covid-19 response – the council prioritised the Covid response to ensure that together with individuals and communities in the district contributed to save lives and livelihoods. It showed a West Berkshire more resilient compared to other places in the country, achieving better testing, tracing and vaccination rates and more importantly, less people becoming seriously ill and less deaths.

5.6 Priorities for Improvement Achievements and Progress:

5.6.1 Priority for Improvement: Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes

(i) ***Prevention*** - We have strengthened the preventive approach to support vulnerable children, young people and adults.

(ii) **Outcomes for vulnerable people and improved satisfaction** - Children in care have achieved good outcomes in terms of stable placements, preventing repeat referrals and repeat child protection plans. Good outcomes through Supporting (Troubled) Families programme. Where necessary young people engage well with the drug diversion scheme and re-offending remains low. Adult Social Care service users provided positive feedback about the outcomes they continued to achieve.

(iii) **Safeguarding against new/emerging risks** - Keeping safe vulnerable children and adults is another outcome delivered by closer working with our partner organisations and ensuring safeguarding enquiries achieve service users' expectations. Our safeguarding teams have adapted their approach to ensure service continuity despite the challenges presented by Covid-19.

(iv) Employment of vulnerable people – Achieved good levels of our care leavers (19-24) in employment and education. Our work to enrol disadvantaged young people onto apprenticeship training within the Council and participation in work experience programmes has been hindered by the pandemic but post-peak of pandemic numbers are improving

5.6.2 Priority for Improvement: Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes

(i) Support everyone in their learning journey - Good education attainment results have been achieved at the end of secondary school (including for disadvantaged pupils). Top quartile results have been achieved for 2022 at secondary stage. A continuation of investment in education (incl the opening of new schools - Highwood Copse School and the Theale Primary School) ensured that pupils got a place in their preferred school. Our rate of young people in education, employment and training is best (lowest) quartile in the country.

(ii) Improve Health and Wellbeing: West Berkshire is among the top councils in the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Health Index, in terms of the overall health of the population. All decisions made by the council consider the implications on our residents' health. Some Public Health and community resilience activities have been rescheduled due to having to prioritise, together with our health partners, the response to Covid crisis.

(iii) Improve mental health: Improved arrangements have been agreed with partner organisations for preventing and addressing mental health issues. All decisions made by the council consider the implications on our residents' health. Some Public Health and community resilience activities have been rescheduled.

(iv) Help people to help themselves – The work with individuals and groups of volunteers in response to Covid-19, built on existing strong working relationships with our communities, took the partnership working approach to a completely new level. The Council, together with Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and Greenham Trust, worked with 90 community and volunteer groups, involving 3,000 volunteers, supporting vulnerable residents to access food and medicines and organise activities

to support mental health and wellbeing in the wider community. At the same time some of the strategic improvement actions continued (e.g. community wellbeing, communication and engagement with residents and communities, devolution deals with Town and Parish Councils.

5.6.3 Priority for Improvement: Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire

(i) **Improve help and guidance for start-ups and business growth** - We have ensured that business start-ups and small and medium companies wanting to expand, received support from Berkshire Business Support Hub. We promoted the district's economic priorities by expanding business links at events and through projects. The Council has promptly distributed a range of grants to over 1,100 businesses to ease the financial pressure during the pandemic. This includes grants to support nurseries, childminders and other early-years providers, to ensure they were still in business once demand for places, suppressed by Covid-19, reverted to the usual levels. In addition, advice and support has been provided on how to operate safely as the economy opened up post lockdowns.

(ii) Local Plan, strengthen policies to support economic development – arrangements have been made to ensure that the needs of business are given full consideration in the non-residential planning process.

(iii) Incentives and opportunities to enable businesses to grow – produced an Economic Development Strategy which details the approach to support business growth in the district. Events have taken place to support businesses to attract the talent and skills that they require. Over 70 apprenticeship placements have been achieved through the Kick Start scheme. Some initiatives to support the rural businesses and a careers fair were suspended due to Covid-19 but are now back on track to be delivered.

(iv) Support town centres to recover from the Covid-19 – plans for our urban centres have been initiated to address the aftermaths of Covid restrictions and to deal with people's other ways of working (remotely) and interaction with their local environment.

(v) Implement a Social Value Policy – the new procurement social value policy focuses on generating greater positive economic, environmental and social outcomes for West Berkshire from the public contracts the Council commissions.

5.6.4 Priority for Improvement: Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy

(i) Integrated Infrastructure Plan – infrastructure development progressed well, both, in terms of the production of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan but also in specific areas, such as intelligent systems for traffic management, approval of planning applications and completions of over 1,700 housing units, including 341 affordable units. Planning was approved for over 900 (affordable units but the actually completions is slightly below target.

(ii) Develop Digital infrastructure – enhanced access to digital communications (Superfast Broadband) to over 97% of premises in West Berkshire, and initiated activities to support the emerging 'Internet of Things' services

(iii) Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the district – we have developed culture and leisure strategies by engaging with key partners and with residents in the district, and set out in more detail our plans for offering access to a broader range of leisure facilities (some refurbished) and services, and to increase accessibility to cultural activities for residents that otherwise would not be able to participate.

5.6.5 Priority for Improvement: Maintain a green district

(i) Sustainable transport solutions - Progress has been made by strengthening the strategic framework, installing infrastructure to monitor air quality and manage traffic, and moving to ultra-low emission vehicles.

(ii) Infrastructure to encourage active travel - improvements have been made in extending the cycle ways in the District and ensure schools have covered and secure cycle storage.

(iii) Production, storage and utilisation of green energy – generating energy from renewable sources (e.g. solar panels installed across the council's estate) and progressing plans for a 2 megawatts solar farm.

(iv) Minimise the impact on the environment in delivering services – successes in this area include the uptake of telecare in Adult Social Care and localising the delivery of care services to minimise travel. In addition, better waste management arrangements and assessment of environmental impact before decisions are made contribute to this commitment.

5.6.6 Priority for Improvement: Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

(i) Expand partnership working – Transformed the ways in which residents access health and social care services by formalising plans of working in partnership at regional level (Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy) or at local level (through the 14 Primary Care Networks). Developed new approaches and implemented new solutions for working with our communities and for connecting residents to statutory or community services which can help them.

(ii) Increase sustainability by expanding on the initiatives to generate income – the Council detailed its approach to generate income in a Strategic Position Statement on Commercialisation, and is assessing the future use of assets. Income is generated from a range of initiatives such as Community Municipal Investment Bonds. A Corporate Landlord Strategy is being progressed but its approval is delayed by three months.

(iii) Staff engagement, Leadership development, recruitment and retention and employee wellbeing – solutions to support the employees' wellbeing have been

brought forward and implemented to address challenges presented by Covid-19. The development of a leadership programme for managers is being progressed.

(iv) Better understand our services' beneficiaries to ensure improved services – Strategic action has been taken to ensure a coordinated approach on how the Council communicates, consults and engages with local communities. A review of Council's services identified new ways of working which are being progressed through the Transformation Programme.

6 Other options considered

None.

7 Conclusion

On the background of successfully prioritising and responding to a number of crisis, which emerged after the Council 2019 – 2023 has been produced, the Council has maintained a strong performance for core services and ensured the delivery of the commitments linked to the six priorities of the strategy.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

8.2 Appendix B – Detailed Achievements and Progress Report - Council Strategy 2019 – 2023

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☒

Officer details:

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Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	Note the achievements and progress in deriving the Council Strategy 2019 - 2023
Summary of relevant legislation:	n/a
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Name of Budget Holder:	**Catalin Bogos**
Name of Service/Directorate:	**Strategy and Governance Department**
Name of assessor:	Catalin Bogos
Date of assessment:	02 March 2023
Version and release date (if applicable):	

Is this a …. ?		**Is this policy, strategy, function or service … ?**	
Policy	**Yes ☐ No ☒**	**New or proposed**	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Strategy	**Yes ☐ No ☒**	**Already exists and is being reviewed**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Function	**Yes ☐ No ☒**	**Is changing**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Service	**Yes ☐ No ☒**		

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	The aim of the report is to highlight the achievements and the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy 2019-2023.

Objectives:	To inform the Executive about the results achieved at the end of the 2019 -2023 strategy period.
Outcomes:	The report details the outcomes achieved against the strategy's priorities for improvements: • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy • Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships It also details the outcomes against the core business areas.
Benefits:	The primary beneficiaries are the residents and businesses in West Berkshire by being informed of the outcomes achieved over the last four years against the priorities and plans set in the Council Strategy. Council officers and partner organisations will be able to celebrate successes and inform further plans and strategies.

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	The expected effect is that areas that results are noted in relation to the areas which required the most improvement.	Council Strategy 2015-2019 Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports Covid-19 Residents Survey and other consultations on strategies developed since 2019. The representative Residents Survey 2021.
Disability		
Gender Reassignment		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
Pregnancy and Maternity		
Race		
Religion or Belief		
Sex		
Sexual Orientation		

Further Comments:
The result show positive benefits to certain protected groups such as the elderly, disabled, children particularly those from more challenging socio economic backgrounds. The activities to deliver the strategy have been provided within the existing policy framework by the individual service areas.

(3) Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
The Strategy is specifically focused on addressing inequality not contributing to it.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
No adverse impact is expected.	

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqIA Stage 2 required	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Owner of EqIA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqIA Stage Two:	

Name: Catalin Bogos **Date: 02/03/2023**

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

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Appendix B

Detailed Achievements and Progress Report
Council Strategy 2019 – 2023

Core Business Achievements and Progress:

The Council provides over 700 mandatory functions. The ones that are most important to West Berkshire residents have been grouped under Core Business areas in the Council Strategy 2019-2023.

Under normal circumstances, the delivery of the mandatory function is 'business as usual' for the Council and these areas strong performance is achieved, including when benchmarking with other local authorities in the country. However, the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and from displacement of people due to conflicts in other parts of the world, meant that the delivery of such services had to be prioritised. The Council services, on which residents relied on, remained operational whilst additional support was delivered to residents during the Covid-19 national lockdowns and post-Covid restrictions as part of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy.

Despite these challenging circumstances, ambitious targets have been maintained for core business areas and good performance has been maintained over the period of the Strategy:

► CORE BUSINESS: Protecting our children

Achievements:

- ✓ The Council has continued to deliver a Children and Family service rated as 'Good' at the last Ofsted inspection (Mar 2022).
- ✓ During the last 4 years, the Council responded to over 7,000 referrals of children at risk of neglect and abuse. Arrangements for stronger joint working between the Council's teams and with partner organisations ensured cases were identified and supported.
- ✓ Statutory assessments and visits were conducted in a timely manner, including by adapting during Covid crisis and using technology when it was appropriate and safe to do so
- ➲ There was some pressure on timeliness of visits to child protection cases due to increasing demand post lockdown

► CORE BUSINESS: Supporting education

Achievements:

- ✓ A higher proportion (94%) of the district's schools (incl. academies and iCollege) were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted (just below our ambitious target of 95%.
- ✓ During 2019 to 2022, a total of 6,807 primary (reception) and 5,598 secondary (Year 7) school place offers have been made.
- ✓ Investment in our schools has ensured that over 98% of applications for primary and 99% for secondary school places received one of their top three preferences.
- ✓ The proportion of 16-17 year olds in education and training has increased from 92% in 2019 to 93.2% and West Berkshire was in second quartile of local authorities (Data Matrix Dec22), in England.

► CORE BUSINESS: Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults

Achievements:

- ✓ In the last four years Adult Social Care (ASC) service has responded to more than 13,700 new requests for support.
- ✓ At any point in time in the last four years ASC has supported, on average 1,740 vulnerable adults and older people with long-term services, and managed over 2,100 adult safeguarding enquiries
- ✓ Completed timely financial assessments for over 95% of cases in every quarter (in some quarters for 100% of cases).
- ✓ Public Health Outcome Framework (2021/22) data show that accommodation and employment of people with physical or learning disabilities are in line with Regional and National results
- ➲ 4 out of 5 adult social care services are rated 'Good' or higher by the Care Quality Commission regarding safety. Improvements have been made regarding the fifth service too.

► CORE BUSINESS: Maintaining our roads

Achievements:

- ✓ Over 95% of the works orders for permanent potholes and edge or road repairs are completed in a timely manner. A new recording system was implemented by the service.
- ➲ West Berkshire was amongst the top 25% authorities nationally in terms of the high quality of our road network. Additional investment in the A road network in 2020/21 and 2021/22 included £4.5m from the DfT's Challenge Fund. This ensured that only 3% of our network was assessed as in need of repairs, which is better compared to the national average 4%, however, below our ambitious target of 2%.

► CORE BUSINESS: Countryside and open spaces

- ✓ Retained Green Flag status (scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces) for Goldwell and Linear Parks.
- ✓ Progressed the survey of the highway verge network with partners and volunteers for the wildlife verges project
- ➲ The work to adopt the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has progressed but there have been some delays resulted a high volume of responses to public consultation.

► CORE BUSINESS: Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean

- ✓ During lockdown, resources have been prioritised to ensure the kerbside collection service continued to operate. We provided a good level of recycling, composting and reusing as a proportion of the waste collected. We have reduced the percentage of waste landfilled to a level that is well below the maximum threshold set.
- ➲ An overall rating of 'Good' has been maintained in terms of an acceptable level of litter, detritus and graffiti for two years of the council strategy period. The latest provisional rating is Satisfactory due to contractor's resources being prioritised on waste management during and post pandemic, including increased demand and additional services (e.g. food waste collection service).

► CORE BUSINESS: Providing benefits

- ✓ Good performance continues to be achieved with timely decisions on new or changes to Housing Benefits Claims. These good results have been achieved on a background on increasing pressure on our services from deploying existing staff to support with additional work in order to help the residents and local businesses during and post Covid crisis (for details see report on the Recovery and Renewal Strategy delivery).

► CORE BUSINESS: Collecting Council Tax and Business rates

- ✓ The usually strong performance in collecting Council Tax and the business rates has been impacted in 2020/21 by the conscious decision of the Council to allow more flexibility in order to support the residents struggling financially as a result of Covid-19 challenges. Arrangements have been put in place to mitigate the financial impact and performance has reverted to the usual good levels.
- ✓ In addition to delivering the core function of collecting business rates, our team has put in place arrangements to promptly distribute Government grants to support local businesses and manage a Council Tax Hardship fund.

► CORE BUSINESS: Planning and housing

- ✓ The determination of planning applications, in a timely manner, has improved considerably over the first three years of the strategy, exceeding national averages. In the last 9 months the service is addressing some staff recruitment challenges in the service.
- ✓ Adopted the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- ✓ Significant improvements have been achieved for the timeliness of assessing Common Housing Register applications. Improvements to set targets have been achieved in homelessness prevention and relief duties resulting in secure accommodation.

► CORE BUSINESS: Culture, leisure and libraries

- ✓ The usually high number of visits to libraries (physical and virtual), including the Mobile and 'At home' Service has reduced during 2020/21 due to lockdown restrictions. Wherever possible, the mobile delivery 'Order & Collect' service and 'At Home' services have operated as normal. An online service has been made available to ensure residents can still have access to books. There is good recovery following the lifting of the Covid restrictions, exceeding the agreed targets.

► CORE BUSINESS: Economic Development

- ✓ Good engagement with the top local employers focused on ensuring that they remain in the District.
- ✓ In addition to distributing Government grants to support eligible businesses and self-employed residents, support and advice has been provided to businesses and town centre groups to enable them to reopen safely when lockdown measures had eased.
- ✓ Delivering quarterly business engagement events to provide businesses with advice and guidance, or promote awareness of Council activities
- ➲ Progress to establish and implement an account management approach toward business and investment relationship management and support is dependent on delayed funding for a Business Investment Officer for the UK Social Prosperity Fund, which will be progressed during 2023/24.

► CORE BUSINESS: Covid-19 response

- ✓ West Berkshire showed better resilience to the Covid-19 crisis. The Council has focused resources and made decisions to save lives and livelihoods, working with residents, communities, voluntary sector organisation and the business sector.

Priorities for Improvement Achievements and Progress:

Whilst delivering the core business services and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has maintained the focus on the areas identified for improvement in the Strategy (approved in 2019 and refreshed in 2021). Despite the significant challenges and taking the opportunities arising from the pandemic, ambitious targets have been maintained and achieved in relation to the six priorities for improvement. Some of the innovative and effective solutions have been recognised and awarded nationally (e.g. the Community Municipal Investment Bond enabling residents to invest in renewable solutions won the Public Finance Award for Sustainability and Social Value, innovative projects addressing issues such as fall prevention or availability of a chatbot voice assistant for residents won the Digital Innovation and Technology Award,

Priority 1. Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
• Support children, young people and vulnerable adults at an earlier stage, ensuring they are safe, through **prevention** and early intervention services. • Improve **outcomes** for our looked after children, and other vulnerable children and adults. • Ensure better **outcomes** for social care users and improved satisfaction. • Safeguard against **new and emerging risks**. • Support more vulnerable young adults into **employment**.	• (Continue) To support vulnerable residents at an earlier stage, by carrying forward successful prevention and early intervention arrangements. • (Amended) (Recovery) A renewed focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people (education attainment, school absence and exclusions, health checks) and vulnerable adults (through timely reviews and rebalancing of the hospital pathways relating to reablement vs long term care) • (Continue) (Recovery) Support more vulnerable young adults into employment

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023

***Prevention Commitment**:*

- ✓ Children were supported within their families so that fewer of them require care proceedings or a child protection plan, or being taken into care. To achieve this, we have adopted an Early Help Strategy and are supporting families through the Early Response Hub or initiatives such as Family Safeguarding Model and the Troubled Families Programme. Families are supported by professionals from different services working together to address a range of issues, including domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse, offending or unemployment. There is some challenging increase in demand as a result of Covid but the preventative approach worked.
- ✓ Nine in every 10 vulnerable adults and older people from the community, are receiving Adult Social Care services at preventative level (Tier 1).
- ✓ All rough sleepers are offered accommodation and households are supported to prevent individuals or families from becoming homeless or repeat homeless.

- ➲ Resources are diverted to respond to Adult Social Care increasing demand which impacts on timeliness of reviews of long term support cases. We have achieved zero or very low numbers of rough sleepers over the first three years of the strategy. Whilst our services are able to work with West Berkshire residents to prevent/address rough sleeping, a small number of recent cases, more challenging to support early, relate to people coming here from other local authority areas.

Outcomes and improved satisfaction:

- ✓ Adopted a joint commissioning approach with our partners (Berkshire West) across the health and social care system to maximise the value and quality of social care services that are available to residents. Users reported that adult social care services made them feel safe and secure, safeguarding (S42) cases achieved the outcomes desired by the person subject to the enquiry.
- ➲ Some outcomes for children in care (school attendance and exclusions, health and dental checks) were impacted by Covid restrictions.

Safeguarding against new/emerging risks Commitment*:*

- ✓ Strengthened the safeguarding arrangements by implementing a joint Local Safeguarding Children's Board to provide independent scrutiny across Berkshire West.
- ✓ Service users reported that safeguarding (S42) enquiries achieved desired outcomes and support is provided by independent advocates where needed.

Employment:

- ✓ A greater proportion of care leavers, compared with other Local Authorities, are in employment, education and training.
- ✓ Produced a strategic framework to improve the employment opportunities of vulnerable people.
- ➲ There were some difficulties enrolling disadvantaged 16-25 year olds in training funded by the apprenticeship levy but during the last year of the strategy numbers are increasing.

Priority 2. Support everyone to reach their full potential

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
• Support everyone in their **learning journey** to achieve their best • Improve the **health and wellbeing** of our residents through appropriate interventions and policies • **Help people to help themselves** and others	• (Amended) (Recovery) Assist schools to implement emerging national policies and local solutions to support pupils' educational attainment, with a particular focus on disadvantaged cohort. • (Amended) (Recovery) Develop approaches to address the backlog of activities that improve the health and wellbeing (health checks, antenatal visits, participation in sports and leisure activities). • (New) (Recovery) Improve mental health and wellbeing (by working with HWBB partners as part of the prevention concordat action plan) • (Amend) Help residents and communities to help themselves and others.

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Learning Journey:

- ✓ The District's secondary school pupils, have top quartile results in exams, compared to other councils.
- ✓ Low absence levels place the district amongst top 25% local authorities in the country.
- ✓ Construction of new schools continued and, despite the pandemic, Highwood Copse School and the Theale Primary School projects have been completed, and a number of schools extended, providing a good learning environment and sufficient places so pupils in West Berkshire can secure places at their preferred schools. A programme of decarbonisation of our schools continues as planned.
- ✓ Schools and pupils have been supported through a number of initiatives (e.g. laptop for pupils, Covid risk assessment, etc.) so that education for children and young people continued, via remote learning when necessary and accommodating vulnerable pupils and key workers' children in school.
- ✓ A learning space for children with physical disabilities opened at Speenhamland School
- ➲ The district has some of the smallest cohorts of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), we are amongst the lowest 10 in the country. This makes it much more challenging to ensure the gap between FSM and non-FSM cohorts are smaller compared to other areas.
- ➲ The good benchmarking position achieved for the Early Years Foundation Stage attainment pre-pandemic, including by the cohort of pupils eligible for free school meals has not been maintained, however the latest results are less than half of a percentage point compared to the England average.

Health and Wellbeing:

- ✓ Prioritised residents' health and wellbeing by setting up the Community Hub in partnership with Greenham Trust and Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, by supporting schools to re-open safely, providing community testing facilities and Covid Marshals, distributing the Covid Winter Grant for those most affected by the pandemic, providing advice and guidance including on addressing domestic violence, setting up a mental health help line.
- ✓ Health impact assessments have been implemented, ensuring that the decision making processes are taking into consideration the impacts on health.
- ✓ Work was progressed to adopt an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Strategy aiming to build resilience and help to prevent the impact of ACE from being passed onto the next generation. This should contribute to a reduction of demand on public service, improving mental and physical health and socio-economic benefits.

- ✓ Junior and senior attendances at sport and leisure centres have recovered well post Covid lockdowns.
- ➲ A number of Public Health actions such as health checks and the national pupils' weight measurement programme have not been progressed due to restrictions and focusing on other activities to respond to Covid-19. Ante-natal visits by midwives have been replaced by the distribution of a video guide to all expecting parents and visits completions remain very low compared to pre-Covid.

Improve mental health:

- ✓ All Health & Wellbeing Board partners signed up to the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. The action plan is set to deliver prevention and improvements in mental health by better understanding the local needs, and coordinating work with partners based on clearly defined outcomes and leadership.
- ✓ Funding awarded to local organisations from the Surviving to Thriving Fund (provides support to develop services that improve mental health and wellbeing of West Berkshire residents)
- ➲ A number of Public Health mental health and wellbeing actions have been delayed by Covid but are being delivered now (e.g. Support schools to incorporate therapeutic thinking principles into their policies to support mental health and wellbeing).

Help people to help themselves:

- ✓ Adopted a Community Wellbeing Model: as part of this, befrienders supported residents to self-care and lead independent lives.
- ✓ A Communications and Engagement Strategy was approved and is delivered to ensure we meet the needs of those we serve.
- ✓ Support and guidance has been provided to communities working together to produce neighbourhood development plans (a community-led planning approach to help people shape the future of the areas in which they live).
- ✓ New devolution deals with Parish and Town Councils, community forums and other groups, agreed in order to increase the sustainability of local services.
- ✓ A number of procurement initiatives have been implemented to support the district's voluntary sector (Awarded Voluntary Sector Prospectus funding, tracking voluntary sector suppliers and local Small, Medium Enterprises on the procurement portal.
- ✓ The Council implemented a number of initiatives to support and welcome in the District people displaced due to conflict in Afghanistan, Ukraine etc.
- ➲ Usually volunteers are involved in supporting cultural services but Covid-19 restricted their involvement. However, the 2019 residents' survey and the participation of volunteers in the activities coordinated by the Council's Community Hub, show that more residents have volunteered instead, to support the response to Covid-19.

Priority 3. Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
• **Improve the help and guidance for start-ups** and existing small businesses to grow, including facilitation of access to business incubators or similar resources and initiatives • Ensure our **planning policies enable start-up and growth** of business in the district • Provide incentives and opportunities to **enable businesses to grow**	• (Continue) Provide help and guidance for start-ups and existing small businesses to grow, including facilitation of access to business incubators or similar resources and initiatives. • (Amend) As part of refreshing the Local Plan, strengthen policies to support economic development. • (Amend) (Recovery) Provide incentives and support for viable businesses in the district, to help areas of hardship • (New) (Recovery) Support town centres to recover from the Covid-19 impact and adapt to any changes as a result of more working from home. • Implement a new policy on Social Value to generate greater positive economic, environmental and social outcomes

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Improve help and guidance for start-ups and business growth:

- ✓ Organised or participated in over 150 economic development events and projects (e.g. Small Business Saturdays and advice for skills and employment meetings) to expand business links, promote our economic priorities and the support available to businesses.
- ✓ Referred over 200 new business start-ups or small and medium sized companies, to receive support from the Business Growth Hub (LEP Escalator Programme). More than150 businesses received support relating to food safety and hygiene, Health and Safety, and licensing, from the Public Protection Partnership (PPP). Developed specific advice on the PPP website and promoted it though social media which recorded approximately 200,000 contacts/page views.
- ✓ Developed an Inward Investment Prospectus to promote the West Berkshire brand and work with Local Enterprise Partnership to encourage Foreign Direct Investment.
- ✓ Established an apprenticeship levy fund that is available to small and medium business in West Berkshire

Local Plan, strengthen policies to support economic development:

- ✓ West Berkshire Council has appointed a multi-disciplinary team which undertook a major new study into the future uses of Newbury Town Centre.
- ✓ Arrangements have been put in place to embed employment and skills plans into major applications as part of S106 agreement negotiations. In addition, the Economic Development Service is consulted on every non-residential planning application to ensure the needs of businesses are given full consideration in the non-residential planning process.
- ✓ Completed a study to support the development of the Local plan, to identify the employment land and housing need in the district.

Incentives and opportunities to enable businesses to grow:

- ✓ Adopted a West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy and refreshed it to reflect the impact of Covid-19.
- ✓ Established a forum with rural businesses and the horse racing industry in West Berkshire
- ✓ Activities to organise and run a careers fair in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines delayed due to Covid-19 are now reported on track. Engaged with the business community, including through a Rural Business Forum.

Support town centres to recover from the Covid-19:

- ✓ Adopted Newbury Town Centre Masterplan – adapting the town centre to the future needs of residents and local economy whilst making the most of its assets (the canal, historic building, lanes and yards, local independent shops and cafes); developed the proposal for the Wharf redesign.
- ✓ Work is progressing on track to develop town centre studies for Thatcham and Hungerford.
- ✓ Organised events and campaigns to support recovery of our town centres (e.g. “Christmas in Newbury”, “Shop Local Shop Green”,

Implement a Social Value Policy:

- ✓ Adopted the new procurement social value policy.
- ✓ Created a framework to embed social value as part of the procurement process.

Priority 4. Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
• Develop an **Integrated Infrastructure Plan** to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure • Further **develop digital infrastructure** and information assets in the district • Enhance the **arts, culture and leisure offering** of the district	• Develop an Integrated Infrastructure Plan to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure. • (Amended) (Recovery) increase the terrestrial and mobile digital connectivity in the district. • (Recovery) Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the district.

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Integrated Infrastructure Plan:

- ✓ Preventing traffic congestion by completing the A4 Thatcham Intelligent Transport Journey Time Measurement System.
- ✓ Work to enable the completion of additional residential units continued; the production of the infrastructure delivery plan has been completed and supports West Berkshire's growth through to 2039. As at Mar 2022, over 1,738 additional homes have been completed (see Annual Monitoring report 2022), in addition, more than 580 received planning permission, including 300 affordable homes. Developed an agreed plan with Sovereign Housing Association as part of the Joint Housing Venture and supported the submission of planning applications for two sites identified in the Joint Housing Venture (Chestnut Walk and Phoenix Court)
- ➲ 341 affordable homes have been completed by Mar 2022 (below expected target of 375) but over 900 affordable units have received planning permission and are yet to be built.
- ➲ Changes in national policy requirements impacted on the submission of the Local Plan for examination, however progress has been made and the process has reached the consultation stage (on Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan Review 2022-2039
- ✓ Updated the Urban Traffic Management Control system to an intelligent system to maintain traffic flow and reduce CO2 emissions.
- ✓ Housing strategy and the delivery plan have been approved in March 21 and include the assessment of need of a key worker accommodation programme
- ✓ Over 640 additional properties are now protected from flooding. (well above the target of 500)
- ✓ Investment continued in our road network through the delivery of the highway improvement programme. Roads in Beedon, Burghfield and Thatcham have been resurfaced using an innovative approach with a lower-carbon footprint, which combined with planting of 152 trees achieved carbon neutrality of the scheme.

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Develop Digital infrastructure:

- ✓ Superfast Broadband has been made available to over 97% of the properties in the district. Work is progressing to connect premises in the district to Full Fibre.
- ✓ Progress has been made to install more wireless connectivity infrastructure (Long Range Wide Area Networks) to support the emerging 'Internet of Things' devices and services.

Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the district:

- ✓ Produced a new West Berkshire Leisure Strategy and a new 10-year Cultural Heritage Strategy
- ✓ Completed a feasibility study for options on the Faraday Road site, in line with the playing pitch strategy action plan

- ✓ Our libraries have achieve the highest level in the South East region of children and young people's participation in the Summer Reading Challenge in 2021 and 2022.
- ➲ Progress with the review of the Library service is continuing and is planned to be completed during 2023.

Priority 5. Maintain a green district

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
• Develop more **sustainable transport solutions** which protect the environment • Promote and improve cycle ways in the district • Develop opportunities and expertise to take advantage of the production, storage and utilisation of green energy • Minimise the impact on the environment in delivering services such as the use assistive technologies in social care	• Continue the development of more sustainable transport solutions which protect the environment. • (Amended) (Recovery) Develop and Implement infrastructure to encourage active travel. • (Amended) Expand the production, storage and utilisation of renewable energy. • (Amended) Minimise the impact on the environment when delivering our services.

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Sustainable transport solutions:

- ✓ Improved traffic flow and air quality are supported by the newly adopted Environment Strategy and delivery plan. A trial of air quality sensors has taken place in Thatcham, to inform the installation of digital, signposting infrastructure to suggest alternative faster and less polluting routes.
- ✓ Further expanding the network of Electric Vehicle charging points across the District, and installing them in all council public car parks.
- ➲ Progress has been made to draft the Local Transport Plan but its final adoption is dependent on government guidance.

Infrastructure to encourage active travel

- ✓ To improve the cycle ways and walking routes, the Council completed the Thatcham section of the new National Cycle Route - NCN 422 Sustrans route, delivered two kilometres of additional cycle routes, and produced a cycling and walking infrastructure Plan for Newbury and Thatcham.
- ✓ Residents have been invited to collaborate with the Council on designing more active travel schemes to enhance safety, the environment and air quality. However, monitoring active travel remains a challenge.

Production, storage and utilisation of green energy

- ✓ Energy is generated from renewable sources following the installation of solar panel across all Council's estate pilot sites. A robust programme based on feasibility and prioritisation of additional sites, is progressing and risks around procurement and availability of materials are being managed.
- ✓ Feasibility work has been completed for installing 2 megawatts of solar photovoltaic (PV) to generate energy from a new solar farm. Planning permission was granted for this by the Eastern Area Planning Committee.

Minimise the impact on the environment in delivering services:

- ✓ The Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership has been established to bring together key organisations and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of natural solutions to achieve carbon neutrality in West Berkshire.
- ✓ There is a good take up of assistive technology and telecare by social care service users, contributing to a reduced need for long-term services and enabling people to continue to live safely in their communities where possible.
- ✓ Further improvements for the proportion of household waste that has been recycled, composted, reused and recovered, are supported by a new, separate food waste collection.
- ✓ Arrangements have been put in place to ensure that all decisions made by the Council are informed by an assessment of their impact on the environment.
- ➲ Plans to invest in measures to naturally capture and reduce carbon dioxide (large scale afforestation and natural regeneration in rural areas, urban tree planting etc.) have been amended in order to focus on the work of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership for facilitating increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration projects.

Priority 6. Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
• **Expand our work with partner organisations** and communities to improve services for local residents • Increase the **sustainability** of our business models by expanding on the initiatives to **generate income** for supporting vital Council's services • Implement a Workforce strategy which supports **leadership development, recruitment and retention** and **employee wellbeing** • Use data to better understand our services' beneficiaries to improve the way we interact with them and the services we provide	• (Amended) (Recovery) Expand our work with partner organisations and communities to improve services for local residents and tackle inequalities. • (Continue) Implement a Workforce strategy which supports staff engagement (Peer Challenge Rec 10) and leadership development, recruitment and retention, and employee wellbeing • (Amended) (Recovery) Enhance the communication and engagement with our residents to develop a better understanding of their needs. • (New) Expand the accessibility of our services through digital means. • (Continue) Expand on the initiatives to generate income for supporting vital Council's services

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Expand partnership working:

- ✓ Identified ways of improving the outcomes for those requiring health and social care support, whilst improving value for money. Agreed the Integrated Care partnership (ICP) work programme. Adopted the *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy* with our Berkshire West partners.
- ✓ Agreed a Primary Care Networks plan with local Clinical Commissioning Groups, in order to ensure residents receive better services as a result of multi-disciplinary teams of professionals working together (GP practices, community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services) and joint commissioning of services.
- ✓ Developed a co-production framework, reviewed how we are engaging with Town and Parish Councils and implemented a solution for community signposting.

Increase sustainability by expanding on the initiatives to generate income:

- ✓ Areas where the Council can develop a commercial approach have been identified and prioritised as part of a Strategic Position Statement on commercialisation. Investments made by the Council generate annual income of approximately £1million.
- ✓ A Community Municipal Investment (CMI) bond, the first initiative in the UK that allows residents to invest in local renewable energy projects, has been implemented.
- ➲ Work with CIPFA has started to establish future use of the Council's assets, maintenance and disposal requirements across our Estate, and to implement a Corporate Landlord Strategy. The latter of these actions is expected to be progressed during 2023/24.

Staff engagement, Leadership development, recruitment and retention and employee wellbeing:

- ✓ Actions to position the Council as an 'employer of choice' ensured an employee turnover rate below the maximum threshold. Even more relevant during the Covid-19 challenges, a confidential Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme has been put in place to support employees, a Staff Covid-19 survey has been conducted, regular Let's Chat online meetings between the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and staff, and a research on gender diversity in senior roles.
- ➲ During 2022/23, staff turnover has increased and resources have been put in place to support talent retention and acquisition.

Better understand our services' beneficiaries to ensure improved services:

- ✓ A strategy overhauling the Council's approach to communication and engagement, has been agreed (Peer Challenge Rec 1&4). It is built on learnings from the excellent interaction between the Council, its partner organisations, residents and community groups, whilst responding to the Coronavirus. A Covid -19 residents' survey took place in June 2020 to capture their views and inform the recovery strategy and other plans. A representative Residents Survey was conducted in Dec 2021 to capture resident's feedback and to inform the new Council Strategy and other key plans.
- ✓ Implemented direct communication approaches with residents through a number of digital channels
- ✓ As part of the New Ways of Working Programme, a review of the Council's services has been completed, focusing on identifying transformation and improvement options, including digitisation. These are progressed as part of the Council's Transformation Programme (Peer Challenge Rec 5).
- ✓ Increased the opportunities for residents to interact directly with the Councillors and officers, including through live YouTube and Facebook events and by broadcasting Council and other Committee meetings.

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West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 Consultation Feedback - Summary Report

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	15 March 2023
Report Author:	Catalin Bogos – Performance, Research and Consultation Manager
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4312a

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 For Members to note the feedback received from the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy that will inform the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027. The updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 shall be considered for approval at the Council meeting in May 2023.

1.2 A new strategy is needed to set the Council's direction for the next four years by defining new priority areas based on changes to the external and internal information about residents' needs, including the feedback received from our residents' surveys and consultations.

2 Recommendations

2.1 To note the feedback received to the draft Council Strategy that will inform the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027.

2.2 To note the updated final draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 shall be considered for approval at the Council meeting in May 2023.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The MTFS will be fully aligned with the new Council Strategy.
Human Resource:	None.

Legal:	None.			
Risk Management:	None.			
Property:	None.			
Policy:	The Council Strategy is part of the Council's approved Policy Framework.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	☑			Executive is to note the feedback from consultation in finalising the Council Strategy aims to expand the understanding of the impact of the proposed outcomes and priorities have on local residents and reduce inequalities.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	☑			The new Council Strategy is setting the strategic direction for the next four years with expected improvements on a number of prioritised areas. Changes in policy impacting on groups of population with protected characteristics will involve specific Equality Impact Assessments.
Environmental Impact:	☑			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to protecting the environment.
Health Impact:	☑			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing.

ICT Impact:	☑			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to ways of delivering services, including using ICT.
Digital Services Impact:	☑			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed outcomes in relation to ways of delivering services, including digitisation of services.
Council Strategy Priorities:	☑			The report highlights respondents' views about proposed/draft priorities which will impact on finalising these priorities.
Core Business:	☑			By its definition, the Council Strategy sets the agenda for the Council's core business.
Data Impact:		☑		The report expands the evidence base used to produce the Council Strategy by reporting respondents' views on the draft Council strategy 2023 – 2027.
Consultation and Engagement:	This paper reports to findings following public consultation on the draft Council strategy 2023 – 2027.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 The Council has consulted on the draft Council Strategy 2023 – 2027, as a new strategy is needed to cover the next electoral cycle setting up the priority areas and the outcomes the Council will be focusing on whilst continuing to deliver all the mandatory services.

4.2 This paper is summarising the findings of the consultation on the draft Council Strategy 2023 – 2027. These findings will inform the process of finalising the Council Strategy document before asking the Council to approve it at their meeting in May 2023.

4.3 The response rate to the consultation has exceeded the levels achieved for previous similar consultations on the draft council strategies. Responses have been received from residents, partner organisations and service providers, councillors and council employees.

4.4 The majority of the respondents stated that they 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' with the proposed priorities and associated outcomes. 'Protecting and enhancing our environment' is the priority with the highest percentage of positive responses (75%).

'Stronger communities' had the lowest (63%) as a relatively higher proportion of respondents (23%) 'Neither agreed nor disagreed' with this priority.

4.5 Some of the residents who responded to the consultation provided additional qualitative feedback to express support for particular aspects of the priorities and outcomes included in the draft strategy or to highlight areas that they would prioritise.

4.6 The qualitative responses have been grouped in a few broader themes. The feedback received from respondents will be considered by officers and councillors in the process of finalising the Council Strategy 2023 - 2027.

4.7 A final version of the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 will be submitted for approval by the full Council after the May 2023 elections, together with a report outlining any changes made to the draft strategy.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The Council Strategy 2023 - 2027 will set out what the Council aims to achieve over the next four years. This includes its priority areas and the outcomes it seeks to achieve through the delivery of the strategy.

5.2 A new strategy is needed as the previous Council Strategy expires on the 31st of March 2023.

5.3 Comments were invited on the draft Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 (see Appendix C) between 13th January and 26th February 2023. Comments were able to be submitted by the public or organisations via an online survey or through paper copies. The consultation was published on the Council's website and social media channels, and media releases were sent to the local media. Key target groups, organisations and stakeholders were also contacted directly by email and encouraged to comment. Posters have been distributed and displayed at key Council's locations promoting the consultation and hard copies were available at corporate buildings.

Background

5.4 A total of 178 responses were received in response to the consultation exercise, which is higher than the numbers received in response to previous similar consultations on draft council strategies. These responses can be summarised as follows (multiple options selection was allowed):

(a) 161 (90.4%) from residents of West Berkshire;

(b) 8 (4.5%) from West Berkshire Business owners,

(c) 3 (1.7%) from employees of a West Berkshire Business

(d) Other responses were from West Berkshire Council employees (9.6%), Town and Parish Councillors (5.6%), District Councillors (1.1%), partner organisations (2.2%), West Berkshire Council service providers (0.6%), other (Education and School governors).

5.5 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty which, in the exercise of its functions, includes the requirement to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, to advance equal opportunity and foster good relations. As a result it was decided to offer an opportunity for respondents to provide information on their equalities characteristics:

(a) The age groups 45-54, 55-64 and 65-74 had the highest proportion of respondents (ranging from 14.9% to 33.1%).

(b) A total of 91.1% of the people that responded were from a White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British ethnic background.

(c) Of the total respondents: more females responded to the consultation and 0.8% selected 'Other' for their gender;

(d) 27.5% of total respondents consider themselves to have a disability.

(e) 9.6% were the primary carer for an elderly or disabled person.

(f) Between 23% and 37% of respondents did not respond to some of the equalities questions.

6 Themes resulting from the qualitative analysis of the responses to the consultation

6.1 A number of distinct themes have resulted from the qualitative analysis of the 178 responses received as part of the consultation activity.

6.2 The themes are listed starting with the one that included the highest number of comments/responses.

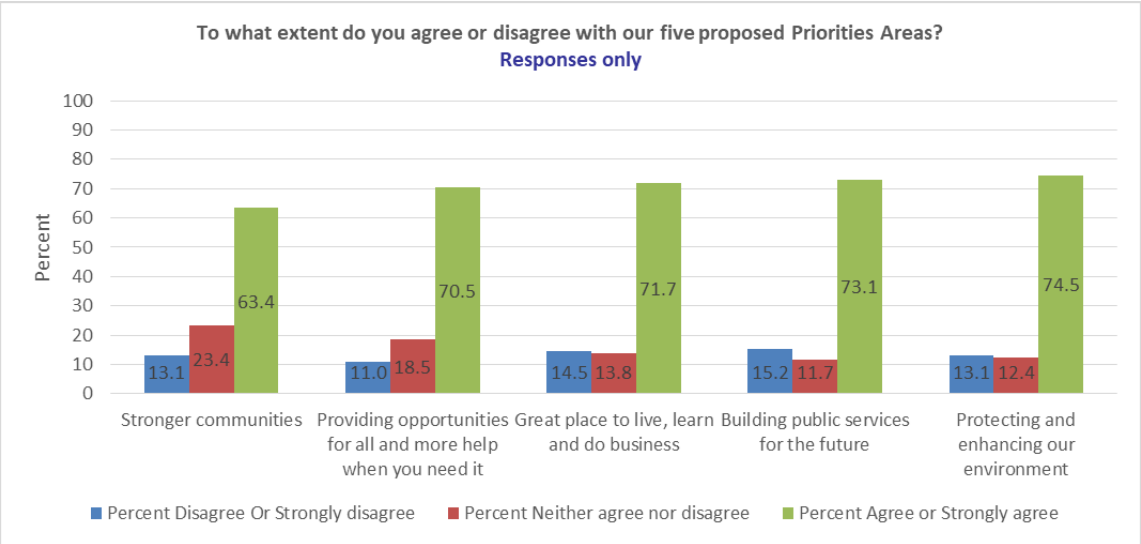
Theme 1: Clarity about the reassurance provided that the Council will continue to deliver the statutory functions

6.3 The vast majority of respondents (139 of 173 respondents) agreed that it is clearly stated in the strategy that the Council will continue to deliver its statutory functions, in addition to the proposed priority areas of the Council Strategy.

6.4 21 of the 34 respondents that disagreed with this statement went on to explain their answers through similar responses to the other questions of the survey and which are listed below.

Theme 2: Positive feedback on the proposed priorities and commitments

6.5 68 of the 147 respondents who rated the priorities, 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with **all six** priority areas. Individual priorities scored between 108 (75%) positive responses for 'Protecting and enhancing our environment' to 92 (63%) for 'Stronger communities' priority. For the latter there is a relatively higher proportion of people that provided a neutral answer (23%), compared to 12% to 19% for the other priorities.



6.6 Comments included: 'These areas of importance are central to us all', 'We agree with and support your priority areas, but would like to know more. [additional suggestions are provided for partnership working]', Agree with the priorities but would like to see the details about how these will be delivered, 'Looks like they have been given good thought and analysis.', 'All these are vital parts of what WBDC should do, and they should not be played off against one another.', 'I agree with them.', 'I think that the priority areas are wholly appropriate and reflecting high quality services provided by the Council and the ambition to improve them further.'

Theme 3: Priorities and commitments are too generic

6.7 21 of 178 respondents expressed views that the way in which the priorities and outcomes were written could potentially make it difficult to measure progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities. They suggested that 'SMART' (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, realistic and Time bound) objectives should be included. Some indicated that the text should be clearer. A few respondents suggested that financial information for the delivery of the priorities and outcomes should be included.

Theme 4: Roads' resurfacing and fixing potholes

6.8 18 of the 178 respondents commented that repairing or resurfacing the roads in the district should be prioritised. Some of the answers were more specific, for example mentioning repairs of rural roads, re-painting faint markings, or the broader aspects of path and pavement repairs, addressing drainage issues and overhanging vegetation.

Theme 5: Planning policies and planning process to protect the environment and heritage

6.9 14 of the 178 respondents added comments suggesting that planning should be prioritised. Their comments included demands to ensure that housing developments are allowed only in the right places, are accompanied by the appropriate developments of infrastructure and services (schools, health centres, roads, shops/supermarkets etc.) and that the unique character and 'village' heritage is preserved and conservation areas are protected. Some also commented about improvements needed regarding the timeliness of the planning process. It is also suggested that the Council Strategy should

reference key initiatives and infrastructure developments included in the Council's Capital Programme.

Theme 6: Climate emergency actions

6.10 14 of the 178 answers showed support for prioritising actions to address the climate emergency. A range of suggestions have been made, including setting up the response to the climate crisis as the overarching priority, greener transport/more charging points for Electric Vehicles, installing recycling bins in all public areas, decarbonisation of public services, nature-based solutions to address climate resilience, flood protection, air quality (increasing tree canopy, more climate- and nature- friendly use or land, procurement processes to support a green economy, the Council to support change of behaviours relating to pollution and litter, increase biodiversity, water quality of rivers, river habitats, environmental housing policies, dis-investment from petrochemical industry. Five respondents consider it important that the Council should show leadership, be an exemplar in this area and produce better plans to tackle climate emergency related issues.

6.11 In addition, four respondents expressed some disagreement with prioritising climate emergency actions, considering that the terminology of 'climate emergency' should be better defined, the evidence should be clearer and actions costed. They made links with the cost of such actions compared to the benefits which could be achieved, expressing reservations about deciding on massive spending on this area.

Theme 7: Improve recycling

6.12 12 of the 178 responses added suggestions to enhance recycling. These suggestions focused on a number of specific areas, including easier access to the waste and recycling centres (by reducing rules, eliminate booking and charges), to add recycling bins to all public areas, that a wider range of materials should be recycled through kerb collection service, to reduce the number of bins/boxes by adopting mixed recycling to make it easier for residents to recycle more, the availability of food waste collection should be expanded to reach all residents.

Theme 8: Support businesses, the high street, town centres and rural communities (local shops etc.)

6.13 12 of the 178 respondents highlighted that it is important to support businesses, our high streets, our rural and small businesses. Responses included suggestions that individual shops should be supported, employers enabled to remain in the district, support should be provided to local farmers. Expected outcomes in this area relate to thriving town centres and services available locally to residents in urban and rural areas.

Theme 9: Focus on health and wellbeing, provide recreational, sports and leisure facilities

6.14 11 of the 178 responses included suggestions about focusing on the health and wellbeing of the residents. These range from prioritising working with the Council's health sector partners (e.g. Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership) to build a dementia-friendly world, or continuing to support

young people's mental health after they leave school, to ensuring sport and leisure facilities (indoors and outdoors) are available for the benefit of residents' health and wellbeing.

Theme 10: Streets' and other public spaces' cleanliness

6.15 9 of the 178 respondents provided comments recommending that the strategy should include outcomes relating to cleaner streets and public spaces. The areas mentioned include care of green spaces, tackling overhanging greenery, roadside rubbish, fly tipping, more street/pavement sweeping, keeping pavements and car parking areas tidy.

Theme 11: Supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable residents, including helping them to help themselves

6.16 8 of the 178 respondents commented on the importance of supporting the most vulnerable residents. The majority of these answers focused on the importance of providing help to people with additional needs, disabilities and carers. Suggested actions include, to encourage vulnerable people to be part of the community, to ensure provision for children with special educational needs, to support older people, including by providing quality care homes and tackling loneliness/isolation. In contrast, three of the responses suggested that people should be helped to help themselves or to reduce reliance on public services which they see as unaffordable.

Theme 12: Education, skills, apprenticeships

6.17 8 of the 178 responses provided comments to highlight the importance of education and skills for prioritisation in the Council Strategy. They fed back that education is an essential outcome for residents and that they would like to see better schools which should not be overcrowded. In addition to focusing on education attainment and vocational education, comments suggest a focus on other educational opportunities such as apprenticeships, upskilling people already in employment, but also on ensuring sufficient teachers for West Berkshire's schools.

Theme 13: Public transport/alternative transport options

6.18 7 of the 178 responses considered that public transport and alternatives to the more polluting options should be included in the Strategy. Some also linked the prioritisation of public transport with enabling residents to opt for solutions supporting a cleaner environment. It is also seen as an essential service for rural communities. Better train service to London is also mentioned, in particular following the electrification of the line.

Theme 14: Other feedback

6.19 The responses to consultation included other points that are not part of the themes listed above and had been mentioned only by a few people:

- Prioritisation of housing, including affordable
- Ensuring a free library service

- Give a particular priority a higher/lower importance
- Bidding for funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Access to buildings or to bus stops for people with disabilities
- Health and police services to be better resourced, to increase their availability and visibility
- Some suggesting that the Council Tax burden upon payers should be reduced (and reduce services), whilst others mentioning higher Council Tax and better services
- Applying the culture, processes, business models and technologies of the Internet era to respond to customer's raised expectations of service delivery
- Public toilets availability
- Town and Parish Councils and partner organisations welcomed commitments in the strategy about working together and fed back that they are open for stronger partnership working.

Proposals

6.20 It is proposed that the feedback from the public consultation, summarised in this paper, is considered as part of the process of finalising the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 and that the response to this feedback, together with the final version of the Strategy, are reported for approval to the Council's meeting post-election.

7 Other options considered

7.1 An alternative option was to continue to focus on the priorities set in 2019 for the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023. However, this option was disregarded as significant changes in the internal and external context in which the Council operates, evolving needs of our residents as highlighted by the evidence base and by the feedback received from residents through the representative residents' survey and from consultation exercises.

8 Conclusion

8.1 A good level of response was received to the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy 2023 - 2027 from individuals and on behalf of a number of organisations.

8.2 The feedback received in response to the public consultation on the Council Strategy shows that a high proportion of residents agree or strongly agree with the priority areas and the outcomes suggested in the draft Council Strategy.

8.3 Some of the respondents have provided additional details, highlighting the importance of particular priorities or outcomes for them. All responses have been analysed and grouped by themes in order to inform the process of finalising the Strategy, before asking the Council to approve it, together with the response to the feedback received from consultation, in May 2023.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

9.2 Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment

9.3 Appendix C – Draft Council Strategy (the version published for consultation in Jan 2023)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☒
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☒

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

Name: Catalin Bogos
Job Title: Performance, Research and Consultation Manager
Tel No: (01635) 519102
E-mail: Catalin.Bogos@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	To inform the Executive about the feedback to consultation which will be used to finalise the Council Strategy 2023 - 2027.
Summary of relevant legislation:	Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty which, in the exercise of its functions, includes the requirement to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, to advance equal opportunity and foster good relations.
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships	**Yes ☐ No ☒** The feedback from consultation detailed in this report will inform the decisions about the new priorities for the Council for 2023-27.
Name of Budget Holder:	**n/a**
Name of Service/Directorate:	**Strategy and Governance/Resources**
Name of assessor:	Catalin Bogos
Date of assessment:	10/03/2023
Version and release date (if applicable):	n/a

Is this a …. ?		**Is this policy, strategy, function or service … ?**	
Policy	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**New or proposed**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Strategy	**Yes ☒ No ☐**	**Already exists and is being reviewed**	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Function	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**Is changing**	**Yes ☐ No ☐**

Service	Yes ☐ No ☐

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To disseminate the feedback from public consultation.
Objectives:	Decision makers note the feedback from consultation and use it to inform the draft final version of the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027.
Outcomes:	The report is noted at the Executive's meeting and the feedback informs the final draft version of the Council Strategy 2023 – 2027 for approval at full Council's meeting post May 2023 elections.
Benefits:	The views of the respondents to consultation are informing the final version of the Council Strategy.

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	If approved, the suggested priorities and outcomes within the draft strategy will contribute to improved outcomes for all local people.	The draft Council Strategy has been developed using a wide range of evidence about resident need, including resident's views. This paper further expands on highlighting the feedback from consultation which will inform the final draft version of the strategy.
Disability		
Gender Reassignment		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
Pregnancy and Maternity		
Race		
Religion or Belief		
Sex		
Sexual Orientation		

Further Comments:

(3) Result

Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
If approved, the suggested priorities within the draft strategy will contribute to improved outcomes for all local people.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
If approved, the suggested priorities within the draft strategy will contribute to improved outcomes for all local people.	

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqIA Stage 2 required	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Owner of EqIA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqIA Stage Two:	

Name: **Catalin Bogos** **Date: 10/03/2023**

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Resources
Service:	Strategy & Governance
Team:	Customer Engagement & Transformation
Lead Officer:	Catalin Bogos
Title of Project/System:	Council Strategy 2023-2027
Date of Assessment:	10/03/2023

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
Will you be processing SENSITIVE or "special category" personal data? Note – sensitive personal data is described as "*data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation*"	☐	☒
Will you be processing data on a large scale? Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both	☐	☒
Will your project or system have a "social media" dimension? Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?	☐	☒
Will any decisions be automated? Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual's input is "scored" or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any "profiling" of data subjects?	☐	☒

	Yes	No
Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?	☐	☒
Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?	☐	☒
Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes? Note – this could include biometrics, "internet of things" connectivity or anything that is currently not w idely utilised	☐	☒

If you answer "Yes" to any of the above, you will probably need to complete Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two. If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

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Draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 Forward Together

For Consultation (January 2023)



West Berkshire Council

West Berkshire Council

Draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 Forward Together

For Consultation (January 2023)

Foreword

West Berkshire is a great place to live, work and learn. It is an area in which I am fortunate to serve as Council Leader and I am proud that in the past four years we were able to make such a positive impact on the district.

When we put together our Council Strategy 2019-23, none of us could have predicted the challenges we would face during this time. A global pandemic and a number of international humanitarian crises, which led to significant rises in the cost of living, meant that we had to step in to protect our community while delivering good local services and exciting new projects which enhanced the lives of local people.

The overarching theme of this draft strategy is 'Forward Together', which is the Council's motto. At no point since West Berkshire Council was formed in the late 1990s has it felt more appropriate to look to this motto when developing our Council Strategy. Without a doubt, the four years behind us have been tough for all of us and we must now focus on rebuilding some of what we have lost while reinforcing what we have gained. To help us in doing so we have community links which are stronger than ever and a shared sense of purpose to drive us.

I hope you will take the time to look at the outcomes we have developed using the feedback we collected from the community and give us your views on them.

Cllr Lynne Doherty, Leader of West Berkshire Council

Introduction: Forward Together towards a new Council Strategy

A Council Strategy is a business planning document that sets out our future priorities and planned outcomes. We produce one every four years to correspond with our election cycles using analysis of the evolving needs of our residents, feedback received from our Residents Survey and additional engagement with residents, as well as the information we have about the outcomes delivered against the objectives in our Council Strategy 2019-23 and the West Berkshire Vision 2036. The Council Strategy is the Council's overarching strategic document which impacts and is supported by a range of more specific strategies and policies (e.g. Adult Social Care Strategy, Environment Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Housing Strategy, Communication and Engagement Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy etc.).

Why do we need a Council Strategy?

- A clear Council Strategy ensures that the Council manages its resources effectively, setting the direction for all services to work together and follow.
- It ensures that projects can be delivered by the Council's services and that enough capacity is available to deliver them.
- It provides a focus for the Council's Executive to plan its work.
- It provides the framework for evaluating the Council's performance.

We have produced this draft document which proposes the outcomes that we will focus on delivering for local people in the next four years. They have been informed by the evidence we gathered and the need to respond to the challenges resulting from the aftermaths of the Covid-19 pandemic, the socio-economic impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and our ongoing efforts in response to the Climate Emergency, which was declared in 2019.

We have grouped these proposed outcomes into five priority areas:

- Providing opportunities for all and more help when you need it
- Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Stronger communities
- Great place to live, learn and do business
- Building public services for the future

The information that follows explains why we have selected the priorities and outcomes we have and we invite you to give your views on them. These views will then inform the final version of the strategy which will be considered for approval at the Council's meeting in May 2023. We look forward to hearing from you.

Key facts about our district

- West Berkshire has an estimated population of 161,400 in 2021, which is an increase of 4.9%, from around 153,800 in 2011. This is lower than the overall increase for the South East (7.5%) and England (6.6%).
- In 2020, for every resident aged 16-64, there were on average 1.1 jobs in West Berkshire. This is higher than the South East and Great Britain.
- A vibrant economy with 8,345 businesses, an increase of 6.9% since 2012.
- Healthy life expectancy at birth at 70.1 years for females and 69.4 for males are higher than the England average (2018-20).
- Similarly, life expectancy at birth, at 84.4 for females and 80.2 for males is higher than the national average (2018-20).
- Access to Heathrow Airport in less than 60 minutes and good connectivity North to South (A34) and East to West (M4).
- West Berkshire covers an area of 272 square miles which is over half of the geographical area of the county of Berkshire.

- Nearly three quarters of West Berkshire is classified as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- The total number of households (in 2022) is estimated as 66,700, an increase of 7% since 2011. It is expected that households will become smaller, with one person households increasing by an estimated 21.9% by 2043.
- 166 Children in Care were receiving services, which is below the England average (as a rate per 10,000 children) (Mar 2022).
- 273 Children in Need (including those subject to a CP or in LA Care) were supported, which is slightly above the England average (as a rate per 10,000 children) (Mar 2022).
- West Berkshire has 51 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 3 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), which are of national importance for animal and plant life.
- 85.2% of 16 to 64 year olds are economically active (people that are not retired, a student, a carer or unemployed). This is higher than the South East and Great Britain averages (June 2022).
- In 2020/21, there were 617 net completions of dwelling units. 73% of residential completions were on previously developed land. Since 2006/07, an average of 504 new homes have been built each year.
- Highly qualified workforce, 71.5% of 16 – 64 year olds living in the area qualified at level NVQ3 and above or general education equivalent. Better than South East (63.8%) and Great Britain (61.5%) (Dec 2021).
- At 28.85 the rate of violent crime per 1,000 population, is slightly higher than that for Thames Valley overall (27.74)
- The district has 27.7 miles of motorway, 78.5 miles of A roads and 782.4 miles of minor roads.
- West Berkshire has approx. 1,900 Listed Buildings, 90 Scheduled Monuments, 53 Conservation Areas, 39 Locally Listed Heritage Assets, 14 Registered Parks and Gardens and 1 Registered Battlefield – all these heritage assets contribute to the sense of place of the district.
- 1,792 older people and vulnerable adults were accessing long term support (Sep 2022).
- As of 2021, West Berkshire is the ninth least densely populated of the South East's 64 local authority areas, with around two people living on each football pitch-sized area of land.

Priority area: Providing opportunities for all and more help when you need it

West Berkshire is a great place to live, which is reflected in the fact that local people benefit from good health, educational and employment outcomes. The district is among the top 15% of local authorities in England for population health (ONS 2022), which means that residents have a good quality of life.

Local young people achieve well in education, in particular by the end of secondary school (GCSEs & A Levels) (KnowledgeHUB Nov 2022) thanks to the very high proportion of Good or Outstanding Ofsted-rated schools, our investment in building new schools (e.g. Highwood Copse School and the Theale Primary School) and expanding existing ones so parents have opportunities to secure a school place of

their choice. We are ambitious for all young people in West Berkshire and our continued commitment to offering an excellent level of education from a young age will open up opportunities for them to achieve the best they can.

Those who are most in need of our support are also well-served by our Children and Family Services, which are rated as 'Good' by Ofsted, and a wide range of Adult Social Care settings, most of which are judged as 'Good' or better by inspectors. Our challenge is that we have an ageing population (ONS Census 2021), a high proportion of people living in single occupancy households and some people, including children, facing the long term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. These are some of the factors which will result in increasing demand on social care, mental health and housing services.

We are better placed than most areas to face these challenges due to successful preventative work (for example, supporting nine in every 10 adult social care service users in the community and working with children and families at the early stages of their difficulties through our Early Response Hub, Family Safeguarding, Family Support and schools-based Mental Health Support Teams). Harnessing these preventative approaches and working in partnership with our residents and other organisations will help to further improve the range of services we offer so that our residents can achieve even better outcomes.

CASE STUDY – MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM

In 2020, the Council launched a Trailblazer Mental Health Support Team (MHST), providing support to 27 schools in West Berkshire. Following its successes, a further MHST has launched in September 2022, supporting an additional 25 schools. These teams have provided support to residents, including:

- **Brief individual and group**, low-intensity, **support for children and young people** (CYP) who are experiencing anxiety, low mood, friendship and behavioural difficulties.
- **Family interventions, supporting parents and carers** of children and young people who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties, including issues around conduct disorder, communications difficulties and anxiety.
- **School staff support** working with schools at a whole school, strategic level. This involves working with the Senior Mental Health Lead and existing service providers, **to map what provision is already in place and where the gaps are**. Addressing the gaps often leads to the delivery of **staff training** along with support and consultation to **monitor whole school well-being**.
- **Regular liaison with the Senior Mental Health Lead** in school **to work with specialist CYP MH services to ensure that children and young people receive appropriate support** as quickly as possible. This includes more specialist NHS mental health support and our support also ensures a smooth **transition back from specialist services**.

As a result, over 1100 children and young people have had early access to support and interventions which improved their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

What you have told us so far

The engagement work we have done with local people shows that residents have good levels of life satisfaction and happiness, and a strong sense of belonging to the local area. It also told us that housing, care and health, and access to leisure activities are services that residents would like to prioritise. In addition to this, further engagement work with seldom heard residents highlighted good schools and education as important enablers for them to achieve the outcomes they want.

Draft Outcomes for 2023-2027

We have considered the evidence and developed the following draft outcomes:

- Good education attainment results, exceeding National levels
- Good and Outstanding schools (Ofsted rating)
- Good or better adult and children social care services (Ofsted and Care Quality Commission ratings)
- Vulnerable children and families supported at early stages to prevent the need for more critical or statutory social services
- Solutions are identified to prevent homelessness and avoid rough sleeping
- Residents are supported to access the mental health services that they need
- Residents facing the greatest challenges are prioritised by wellbeing and social care services
- People living with dementia will experience joined up support from our social care services and our health partners

Priority area: Protecting and enhancing our environment

One of our greatest assets in West Berkshire is our natural environment, with almost three quarters of the district sitting within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Protecting and enhancing our environment remains a priority for us, reaffirming the commitment made by the Council in 2019, when we unanimously declared a Climate Emergency. We agreed to work towards achieving carbon neutrality for West Berkshire Council and enabling and encouraging residents and other stakeholders to make as much progress as possible towards carbon neutrality in the district by 2030.

In recent years, the Council has been installing electric vehicle charging points in car parks and on selected residential streets. We have implemented measures to increase the district's resilience to flooding, drought and other impacts of climate change. Over 600 additional properties are now protected as a result of new flood alleviation schemes implemented in the lifetime of the Council Strategy 2019-2023. We have also provided good local waste services, including a new food waste collection service, which have led to higher recycling levels in the district when compared to the national average.

In addition, we have invested significantly in our local infrastructure, including roads, footpaths and digital communications, to support our residents to travel around

sustainably, explore the district using active travel and to benefit from good physical and virtual connectivity.

The main areas we must continue to focus on are related to the climate emergency. We will need to build on the successes achieved in the last four years through our Environment Strategy to further expand opportunities to generate and use renewable energy, to increase the district's resilience to the impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding, droughts) and to work with residents and communities to respond together to this emergency. In addition, we must support local people to recycle and reuse more; maintain good quality roads and transport infrastructure; and protect, enhance and ensure accessibility to our local public natural spaces.

To do this, we must build on the new, creative ways we have been involving our residents in over the past few years. One such example is our multi award-winning Community Municipal Investment Bond which raised £1m to fund our environmental projects, including Solar PV installations, active travel infrastructure improvements and tree planting.

CASE STUDY- Community Municipal Investment

West Berkshire launched the United Kingdom's first Community Municipal Investment, or community bond, in late 2020. This ground-breaking bond was the result of months of hard work and was a genuinely innovative approach to delivering social value through finance.

Through this project, the Council was able to fund £1m worth of projects within the Environment Strategy using invested funds from individuals across the country to derive social value while also securing a return for investors.

The project has since won a number of awards including a Public Finance Award, has featured on the inaugural Net Zero 50 list and been shortlisted for two Local Government Chronicle Awards.

What you have told us so far

The majority of our residents told us that they see protecting the environment as a priority and that they would be taking their own action to achieve carbon neutrality (Residents Survey 2021). They reported that the quality of our roads and waste management, in particular better recycling and public space cleanliness, should be areas of focus.

Draft Outcomes for 2023-2027

We have considered the evidence and developed the following draft outcomes:

- Carbon neutrality achieved by West Berkshire Council by 2030
- Residents and businesses are enabled and encouraged to act on what they can do to contribute to carbon neutrality
- Installation of more renewable energy capacity

- Additional electric vehicle charging points installed, both in Council car parks and on residential streets without off-street parking
- Biodiversity net gain (including natural carbon reduction solutions) to offset new housing developments
- Our land's natural beauty is conserved and enhanced by integrated working with other local authorities, AONB and the Government
- Increased resilience to climate change by expanding flood prevention and minimising impacts of droughts
- Increased level of waste reused, recycled or composted
- Our primary, secondary and local road networks are maintained in a good state of repair
- Better travel options available to our residents including in rural areas
- Sustainable building, ensuring the right homes and the right jobs are in the right place
- Facilitate all residents' access to public open spaces
- Effective deterrence of fly-tipping

Priority area: Stronger communities

The Council does not work in isolation and has always looked to develop partnerships which enable residents, businesses and voluntary and community sector organisations to help themselves or receive help when needed. To support this, we have significantly enhanced our communication and engagement with residents through the use of newsletters, panels, webinars and events to involve local people more in our work. This was all the more important during the response to Covid-19, when our work with our communities, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary and other partner organisations was key to our response to, and recovery from, the pandemic.

By conducting public consultations, undertaking two Residents Surveys and engaging with seldom heard residents through outreach work, we have increased opportunities for a wider range of views, from people and communities across the district, to inform our strategies and plans (see further details on our Consultation and Engagement Hub). We value such contributions and are committed to do more in this area with an even greater focus on ensuring the voice of our younger residents is captured.

We have transformed the way in which residents access health and social care services, by strengthening our partnership working with the NHS, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary and community sector organisations and other key partners so that we can best respond to their needs. This helps us to offer the best possible support to our residents and businesses, which in turn boosts the district's resilience to economic, environmental or social challenges.

This joint working has made it possible to help our community through difficult circumstances by supporting our most vulnerable residents during Covid or offering a safe place for people displaced from their countries such as those from Afghanistan, Ukraine and Hong Kong.

CASE STUDY- Working with our communities

In March 2020, as communities across West Berkshire 'stood up' in response to the emerging Covid Challenge, the Council, in partnership with Greenham Trust and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, created the Community Support Hub to help coordinate the incredible 'community response'.

The Community Support Hub provided coordination, information and advice to community groups and individuals throughout West Berkshire, which enabled them support those who needed help.
Although the Community Support Hub fulfilled a pivotal role, it was the groups and individuals across the district that provided important and often essential help to those who needed to 'Shield' or who were finding it difficult to carry out everyday tasks.

During the response to Covid there were nearly 90 community groups and over 3,000 volunteers involved in helping others.
The Council has subsequently used the 'Hub Model' and enduring support from Greenham Trust and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to create a Homes for Ukraine Support Hub and most recently a Cost Of Living Support Hub.

The Council will seek to continue to work ***with*** residents and communities, to help themselves and others.

What you have told us so far

Our residents play an important role in making West Berkshire the great place that it is with around one in three residents reporting that they volunteer in their spare time. The main reasons for volunteering mentioned by residents were that they wanted to do good for others and the community (77%), followed by just over a quarter (28%) stating they wanted to feel more of a connection with their local community and that it would help with their mental health and wellbeing.

The great community spirit in West Berkshire was particularly prominent during the pandemic when local people stepped up to help others in the community at a time of crisis.

Draft Outcomes for 2023-2027

We have considered the evidence and developed the following draft outcomes:

- Children and young people will be better heard to influence change in their area
- Closer and more effective working with our communities and partner organisations (including Town and Parish Councils and the private sector

commissioned service providers) so residents achieve the outcomes that they need
- Improved health and wellbeing of our residents by working with Health and Wellbeing Board and other partner organisations
- West Berkshire continues to be a safe place
- Maximised engagement with the culture, arts and heritage offer
- More people enabled to be physically active in the district
- Reduced isolation (including rural isolation and young people isolation)

Priority area: Great place to live, learn and do business

West Berkshire's strong local economy is another reason why it is a great place to live. Our district is part of the successful Thames Valley economy, which showed strong resilience to the impacts of Covid-19 when compared with other parts of the country. During and since the pandemic, the Council has supported employees, self-employed residents and businesses by promptly distributing financial help, by providing advice and assistance to safely reopen once lockdown restrictions had been lifted, and continuing to offer advice and support for start-ups and companies wanting to expand. West Berkshire continues to maintain a strong labour market, including high employment levels, with the number of jobs exceeding the number of residents aged 16-64.

West Berkshire is amongst the top 10% of the most prosperous districts in the country. The local economy has the opportunity to employ residents with higher qualifications compared to other areas, with average wages above the regional and national levels. As the available jobs in the district are primarily in the Trade, Information and Communication, Manufacturing and Administrative domains, some of them with quickly evolving technologies and specialisations, it is important to maintain the focus on the continuous development of skills for all our residents through formal learning and education, but also by building on our successes achieved through Kick Start apprenticeship schemes, support careers fairs and work experience opportunities.

2021 Census data shows that the district has an ageing population which brings the challenge of making the district more attractive for our young people. This is exacerbated by the rurality of the district – over a third of the population living in rural areas – therefore, in addition to targeting opportunities in our town centres and working with the main employers in the district, we must also further develop our rural centres of excellence (horse racing industry, viticulture, tech etc.).

Our strong economy is supported by excellent physical and digital infrastructure. The district has excellent roads and rail transport infrastructure, links with other main economic centres such as London, Bristol, Oxford or the port cities in the South along the M4 and A34 corridors. Digital connectivity is vital for ensuring higher economic productivity especially following the change to a more remote working pattern since the pandemic. The Council has also completed a programme to ensure businesses and over 98% of people in West Berkshire are able to access ultrafast broadband ensuring the district has one of the best digital connectivity in the country.

A strong and resilient local economy requires continuous, long term prioritisation to ensure it withstands the impacts of international shorter or longer term challenges, such as the economic impact of the pandemic or of the conflicts impacting energy prices and the cost of living.

CASE STUDY- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) COVID SUPPORT AWARD

West Berkshire Council prioritised supporting its businesses through the pandemic. This included deferring business rates for the first few months of the pandemic, providing businesses with a wide range of advice and resources to support them to reopen, holding a number of business-focussed webinars and distributing millions of pounds in government grants.

The Council also created a unique local scheme called the Additional Restriction Grant (ARG) Challenge Fund which offered upfront grants for projects or investments that would support businesses' innovation, recovery and growth. The scheme with 'Green Growth' and 'Digital' innovation at its heart proved very popular with 130 applications and 44 grant awards being made to local businesses. These efforts resulted in the Council winning the South Central Federation of Small Businesses Local Government Award for Covid-19 Support in 2022.

What you have told us so far

Nine in every ten residents reported that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their local area as a place to live with around three quarters saying that they had high levels of satisfaction with their life. Feedback from the seldom heard groups highlighted the importance of making our urban centres attractive and vibrant including for young people. They also highlighted the importance of education at all stages to be prioritised.

We engage extensively with the business community, including in our rural areas, and we recently held a Rural Business Forum to hear their views. We also seek the views of a wide range of businesses through the Quarterly Business Survey undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce. This informs our priorities for supporting businesses, including how to use Government funding such as the Rural Prosperity and UK Shared Prosperity funds. Feedback from our rural businesses suggests that they want to diversify to increase jobs and skills in our rural areas, and would benefit from financial support to achieve this. Recruitment and inflation have also been raised as concerns from surveyed businesses across a range of industries.

Draft Outcomes for 2023-2027

We have considered the evidence and developed the following draft outcomes:

- New skills acquired by residents through lifelong learning

- Routes to employment are enhanced, including by supporting schools to encourage T Levels qualifications and further education
- Residents benefit from apprenticeships, a Council work experience programme, career advice and our support at careers fairs
- Investment in the district secured, from a range of businesses to remain competitive through a mixed economy
- Local economy benefits of a sustainable workforce (retention of professional jobs, placements for social care students from the university centre at Newbury College)
- Increased productivity in particular for rural based jobs by exploiting our existing rural clusters (viticulture, horse racing, tech, traditional farming) and supporting the environment around centres of excellence
- Local economic growth supported by infrastructure developments
- Vibrant local town centres
- Opportunities are created for young people to live, learn and socialise in the district, including by focusing on their needs when delivering town centres place making strategies
- Residents access more work, learning and leisure opportunities through increased digital connectivity

Priority area: Building public services for the future

We are proud of our strong record of delivering good local services while managing our budget and resources well. Our efforts have seen us being recognised as having among the best value for money council tax in the country and good levels of resident satisfaction. (LGA Value for money profiles)

Over the last few years, we have focused on prioritising the services that our residents needed the most and reviewing all our services to identify transformation opportunities to deliver outcomes for residents and communities in the most effective and efficient way. This focus placed us in a good position when we had to completely change our ways of working in order to respond to Covid challenges at local level. For instance, we were among the first local authorities in the country to adopt virtual meetings for our decision making bodies (Council, Executive and other Committee meetings) which increased the accessibility of the democratic process.

During the pandemic, residents, council employees and partner organisations, all experienced new ways of receiving and providing services. Enhanced communication and better use of digital technology have been vital for service delivery and helped a better, more visible and closer relationship with those who use our services. Similarly, closer working with Government departments allowed us to identify and offer local solutions to support our residents, such as Covid grants' distributions and hosting displaced Ukrainian families etc. The Council will explore further devolution initiatives from Government for the benefit of our residents.

Our residents have provided positive feedback about how the Council runs services and about the Council's response to the pandemic. As customers' expectations and

the ways of delivering services are evolving to a new, post-pandemic normal, the challenge remains to assess and continuously improve what we do to ensure our services remain effective and relevant for the future.

CASE STUDY- Household, Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) Booking

In early spring of 2020, many of the Council's facilities were closed as a response to the pandemic, including its HWRCs. The Council's Digital Services Team worked with the Waste Management Team and its booking platform supplier at pace during the first week of May 2020 to deliver a solution to manage demand for HWRCs, both so they could be operated in a Covid secure way, and to ensure queueing traffic would not become dangerous given the expected high demand when they reopened.

HWRC Booking was launched on 13 May 2020 with customers able to use the Click and Tip service online or phone the Contact Centre to book an appointment, allowing customers to choose their engagement channel.

During the first 18 months from the launch of the service, over a quarter of a million appointments have been made, with 97% of customers using Click and Tip and 3% using a phone to make their bookings..

Three separate customer surveys were undertaken between June 2020 and June 2021. Of the 3000+ respondents 79% expressed the view that the Council should keep the booking system, with 90% saying they had a positive experience of using it.

What you have told us so far

The majority of our residents gave us positive feedback about how we manage local services, the way in which we act on their concerns, and how effectively we keep them informed.

Some areas for attention are ensuring residents are clear how their Council Tax is being spent, how they can become further involved in our decision making and how we can make our services even more accessible.

Draft Outcomes for 2023-2027

We have considered the evidence and developed the following draft outcomes:

- Good quality public services for all (compared to all local authorities in England)
- Residents are more aware of the Council's services and how well we are performing
- Strong budget management (compared to all local authorities in England) and initiatives to generate financial efficiency
- Residents more engaged with the decision making processes about the services that impact them
- Continually improving customer experience and enable digital access option to services for the residents that want and can access them in this way

- Successful implementation of our new Customer Charter

DRAFT

2022/23 Performance Report Quarter Three

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Thomas Marino
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	9 March 2023
Report Author:	Jenny Legge/Catalin Bogos
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4291

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide assurance that the core business and council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 are being managed effectively, and where performance has fallen below the expected level, present information on the remedial action taken and the impact of that action.

2 Recommendation

2.1 To note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas, good results for the majority of the measures relating to the council's priorities for improvement, and remedial actions taken where performance is below target.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Human Resource:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Legal:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Risk Management:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Property:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Policy:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		
Health Impact:		x		
ICT or Digital Services Impact:		x		
Council Strategy Priorities or Business as Usual:	x x			Supports all priorities and core business of the Council Strategy 2019-2023.
Data Impact:		x		
Consultation and Engagement:	The information provided for this report, has been signed off by the relevant Head of Service/Service Director and Portfolio Holder.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This paper provides updates for each component of the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023:

- Non-targeted influencer measures for context.
- Targeted measures for each core business area.
- Targeted measures for each priority for improvement.
- Corporate health measures for internal context.

4.2 This is the first quarter where the data and reporting was produced through our newly implemented Integrated Performance, Risk and Project Management software

(InPhase). This gives stakeholders and residents access to explore the reporting information in more detail from the Citizen's Portal from the following link: https://westberksperformance.inphase.com/. A change in process and culture meant that Departments/Services were responsible for ensuring that data, and commentary for measures was entered into the system by the required deadline, rather than depending on the Performance, Research and Risk Team (PRR) for prompting, data entry and content editing.

4.3 The majority of the historic data has been imported, however there are some cases where planning patterns have been changed from e.g. quarterly to termly or academic year where past data needs to be quality assured and re-entered. Work is currently underway to ensure the accuracy of the data for these anomalies.

4.4 Benchmarking data is not yet available within the system and arrangements are being made to incorporate it for future performance reporting.

4.5 The **Influencer measures** indicated that the district continued to fare well. The high demand on our services remained elevated due to Covid-19 pressures. In some cases demand started to decrease compared to the previous quarters, but the main social care demand measures are still increasing.

4.6 The economic indicators show strong resilience, with footfall in Newbury Town Centre and the number of parking ticket sales continuing to further recover and improve.

4.7 The social care measures highlight increasing pressures and demand on services such as children social care, adult social care and housing.

4.8 Delivering our **Core Business activities** remains strong despite some challenges relating to staff retention and recruitment evident across all areas of work.

4.9 Of the measures rated Amber or Red, a number of areas to highlight include:

- Social care visits - staffing challenges impacted our social care services' ability to achieve visit compliance to child protection plan cases
- Planning applications determined on time – impacted by staff recruitment challenges, additional process requirements and consultation responses' timescales

4.10 Improvement activity through the Council Strategy **priorities for improvement** continued to progress, with the majority of measures targeted for this year being achieved. Areas of achievement to note include: successful outcomes from early response support for parents and children, our re-ablement service helping older people to remain in their own homes after being discharged from hospital, a high proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training, above target number of young people (including with special needs) involved in work experience,

4.11 Of the measures rated Amber or Red, a number of areas to highlight include:

- Educational attainment (provisional) – impacted by high levels of staff and pupil absence due to Covid and flu, a higher level of demand for support for pupils with

Special Educational Needs, an increase in the number of exclusions, and difficulties in retaining and recruiting teaching assistants;

4.12 The council's **corporate health indicators** highlight focus on resource management, a controlled approach, which will be further expanded, to manage service demand and inflation pressures on the Council's funding, resulting in an £1m budget overspend forecast and an increase in workforce turnover.

5 Supporting Information

Influencer measures

5.2 Non-targeted measures of influence are monitored to provide context to the work being carried out across Council services.

5.3 The major focus for the district continued to be on responding to a number of international and national challenges (supporting displaced people due to conflict, economic challenges) which impact at local level too.

5.4 Overall, the local **economy has remained strong**. Business rated industrial properties remained at consistent level, but for the quarter non-industrial units had declined. More people visited Newbury Town Centre than in the last seven quarters with footfall, and the sale of parking tickets in WBC managed car parks more than doubling on the same period in 2021. However, the number of planning applications fell overall, with 9% fewer being submitted.

5.5 Within the local **social indicators,** on the background of low crime rates, criminal activity increased slightly in all categories, but based on the information available is not associated to a particular causal factor. Incidents of anti-social behaviour returned to normal levels after a spike at September 2022 caused by the usual seasonal increase and it being the summer after Covid restrictions were lifted.

5.6 The demand to children's services although higher than previous years returned to more usual levels with regards to referrals and enquiries. However, the number of children in need continued to rise, due to ongoing challenges to recruit staff which increased the time taken to process the high number of referrals.

5.7 In adult social care (ASC), the rise in the number of new adult safeguarding enquiries remained higher than pre-Covid, but continued to decrease from its peak in March 2022.

5.8 The number of ASC clients requiring Long Term support increased 4.7% compared to the same period last year, continuing a steady increasing trend over the last two years.

5.9 Borrowing from libraries continued to rise, being 14.5% higher than at the end of December 2021.

Core Business and Priorities for Improvement Performance

Additional performance information is available from the Citizens' Portal by accessing the following link: https://westberksperformance.inphase.com/

Please note the legend for the tiles included on the Citizens' Portal:
Red, Amber, Green rating is based on a 5% tolerance from target.
Planned – refers to tasks/milestones in progress
Completed with a green star – refers to tasks/milestones which are completed and ahead of schedule
Completed with a red triangle – refers to tasks/milestones which are completed but after the deadline
? - means no actual value has been recorded
n/r - means actual value is not expected to be reported e.g. annual measure

Core Business Activities

5.10 Five of the eleven core business areas have achieved strong (Green) performance results against challenging targets and on a background of increasing demand on most of the Council's services:

- **Collecting bins and keeping streets clean** – strong reduction of household waste land filled and better than target recycling levels at Q3;
- **Countryside and open spaces** – progressing the survey of the highway verge network for the wildlife verges project, retained green flag status for Goldwell and Linear Parks
- **Culture, Leisure and libraries** – visits to libraries, Museum, Shaw House and West Berkshire's sports and leisure centres above targets
- **Economic Development** – delivered the quarterly business engagement events to provide advice and guidance
- **Providing benefits** – timely decisions on new and on changes to benefits claims

5.11 A further four of the eleven core business areas have achieved good performance, within the Amber threshold:

- **Council Tax and Business Rates collection** – better than target collection of Business Rates, but Council Tax collection is just under the target (impacted by Covid and Cost of Living crisis)
- **Ensuring the Wellbeing of Older People and Vulnerable Adults** – Impacted by the QCQ rating of one of the care homes, for which improvement measures are in place and being monitored, whilst within threshold (Amber) performance was achieved for timeliness of financial assessments.
- **Planning and Housing** – timeliness of planning application determination remained below local ambitious targets (Red), even if better than national standards, and continued to be impacted by vacancies in the service, consultations responses and additional processing requirements. The service is progressing an improvement plan to ensure the customers' aspirations are met. However, other measures for this core business area shows timeliness of assessment of Housing register application at 100% within timescales.
- **Supporting Education** – at 93.8% the % of schools judged good or better is just below (amber) the target of 95%. Targets achieved for parents receiving one of their preferred school places for their children.

5.12 Two of the eleven core business areas have are rated overall Red:

- **Maintaining our roads** – as this is an annual measure already reported in Q4 last year, there is no more up to date information about the % of A roads in need of repair which at 3% was below the challenging target of maximum 2%.
- **Protecting our children** – Increasing demand regarding the number of Child Protection Plans, staff turnover impacted workloads and recording of timely Core Group meetings, plus timely visits to Child Protection cases. The service is focusing on recruitment and on recording training. Targets are achieved or exceeded for Ofsted rating of our Children's Services and the timeliness of assessments.

Council Strategy Priorities for Improvement:

5.13 Results at the end of quarter three show that progress continued to be made to deliver the Council Strategy priorities for improvement with five of the six being RAG rated Green.

- **Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes –** Strong results have been achieved regarding 100% of rough sleepers being offered accommodation, care leavers in education, employment and training, support for families from the Early Support Hub and for vulnerable adults from Adult Social Care services.

  The number of staff enrolled on apprenticeship levy funded courses proved difficult to increase as staff returned to their normal routine post Covid-19. Work was carried out to promote WBC as an employer of choice e.g. careers fair, mock interviews in schools, however it will take time for new starters to impact on the take up of apprenticeships.

  Supporting more vulnerable young adults into employment resulted in nearly three quarters of our care leavers aged 19 to 21 benefiting of employment, education or training, compared to the national figure of 52%, and above our target of 60%.

  Almost 120 families successfully achieved the objectives of the Supporting Families Programme, which is a whole family approach to overcome disadvantages.

- **Support everyone to reach their full potential** - Provisional educational attainment results were impacted by high levels of staff and pupil absence due to Covid and flu, a higher level of demand for support for pupils with Special Educational Needs, an increase in the number of exclusions, and difficulties in retaining and recruiting teaching assistants. The evidence base for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework was completed, and the framework was due for completion during purdah, so finalisation and publication was delayed until after the local elections. The number of residents supported by a Befriender and the number of Befrienders are exceeding targets.

- **Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire -** The Berkshire Business Growth Hub supported many more businesses than expected. A proposal for the Newbury Masterplan project: Wharf redesign has been completed. Activities to develop a Thatcham town centre study and a Hungerford town centre

study were on track. The review of the Economic Development Strategy has been completed.

- **Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy** - Work was reported to be on track for connecting West Berkshire premises to Full Fibre with an increase from 25% to 80.2%. Whilst the number of affordable homes granted planning permission is below target, the actual number of completions at 169 has exceeded the target of 125.

- **Maintain a green district -** EV charging infrastructure was available in 32% of WBC public car park. Work with the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership (NSD), to commence at least 2 pilot projects to help inform the best way for the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership to support and facilitate projects is on track.

- **Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships** - By encouraging clients to use assistive technology and telecare, we increased the number of people who feel able to remain in their homes, but know that they can let others know when they need help.

Corporate Health

5.14 The provisional revenue outturn is a £1m forecast overspend which is being managed through a range of measures including deployment of reserves.

5.15 Staff turnover continued to rise to 19.0%, which was well above the WBC average rate.

Proposals

5.16 To note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas (in particularly challenging circumstances primarily due to recruitment difficulties in a number of areas), good results for the majority of the measures relating to the Council's priorities for improvement and remedial actions taken where performance was below target.

6 Other options considered

None considered.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Quarter three results show that strong performance levels have been maintained and key services delivered to residents as part of the activities in the Core Business category.

7.2 Action plans are in place to address performance measures rated "Amber" and "Red" and the Executive is asked to note these actions and the overall performance reported.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A - Influencer Measures

8.2 Note: Access to additional performance management information is available from the Citizens' Portal which can be accessed at https://westberksperformance.inphase.com/.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

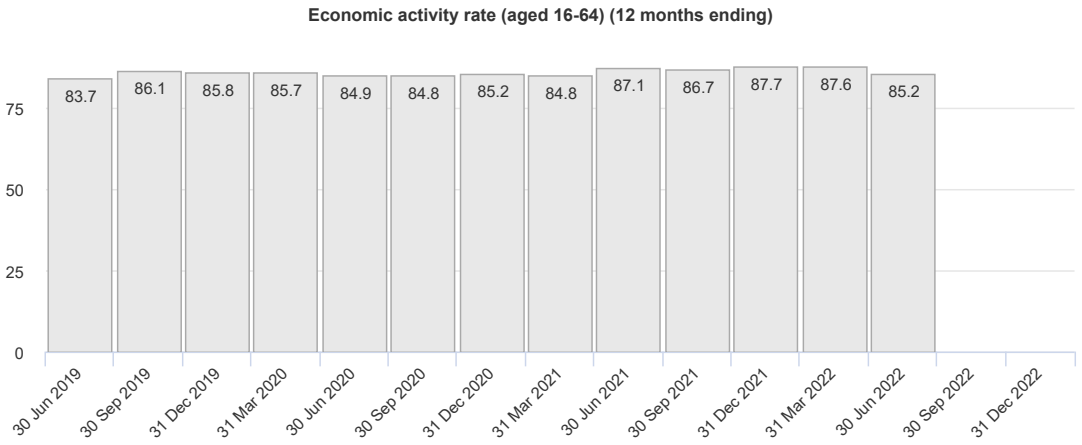
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☒

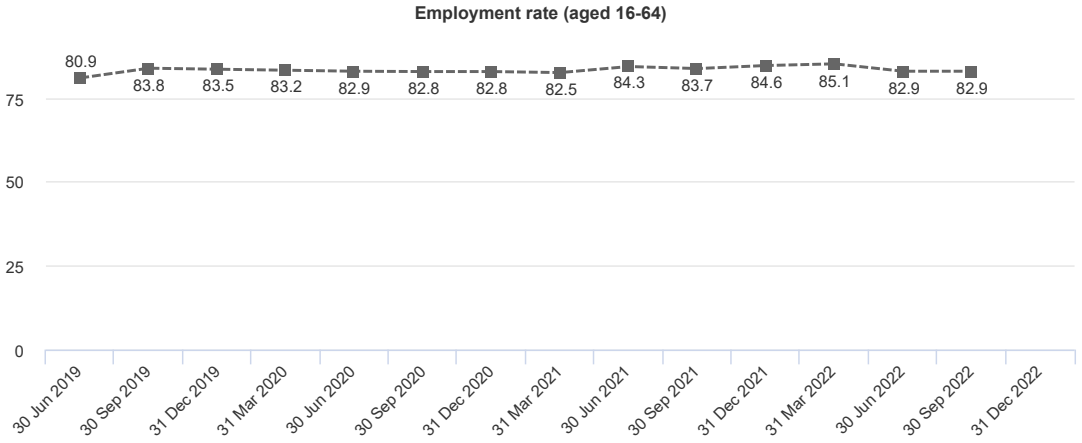
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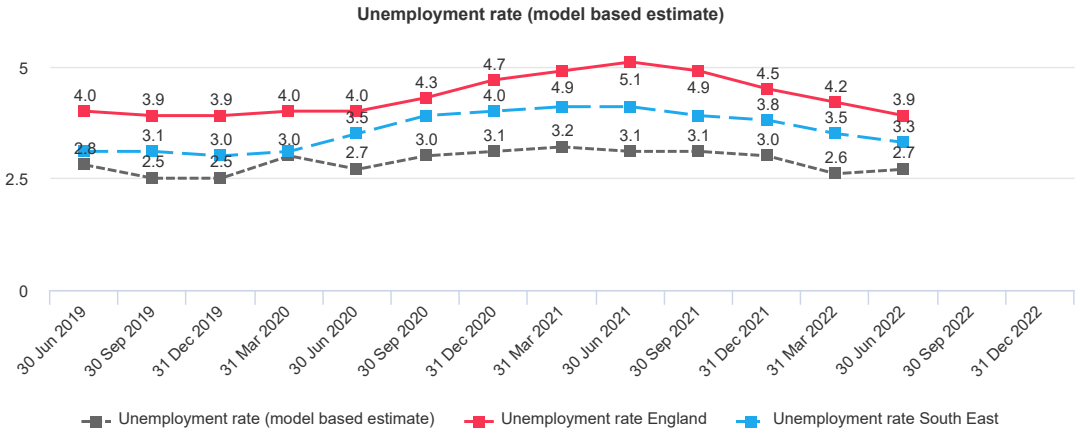
Name: Catalin Bogos
Job Title: Performance, Research and Risk Manager
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E-mail: Catalin.Bogos@westberks.gov.uk

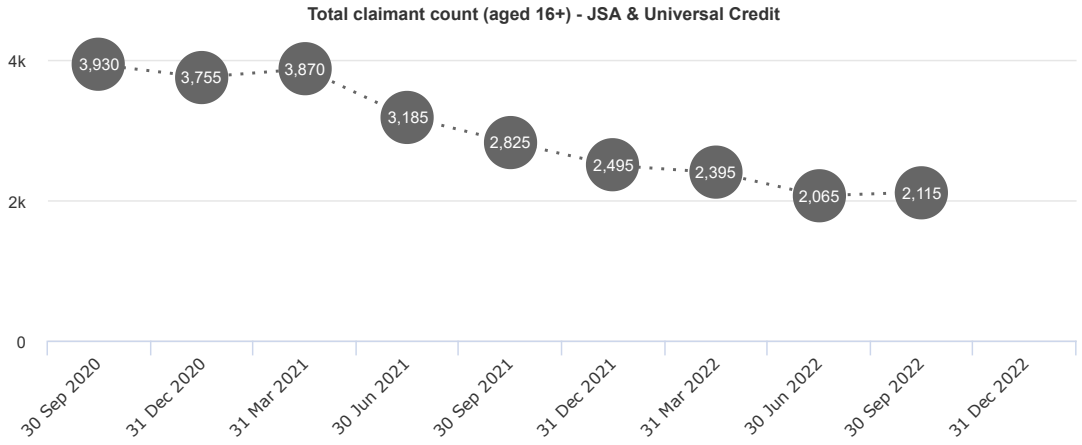
Influencer Measures Dashboard (Graphed)

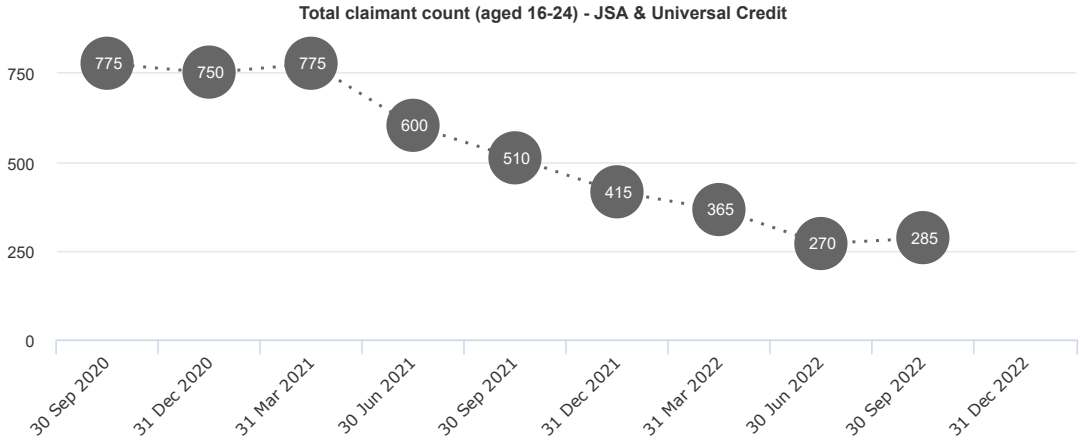
Economy

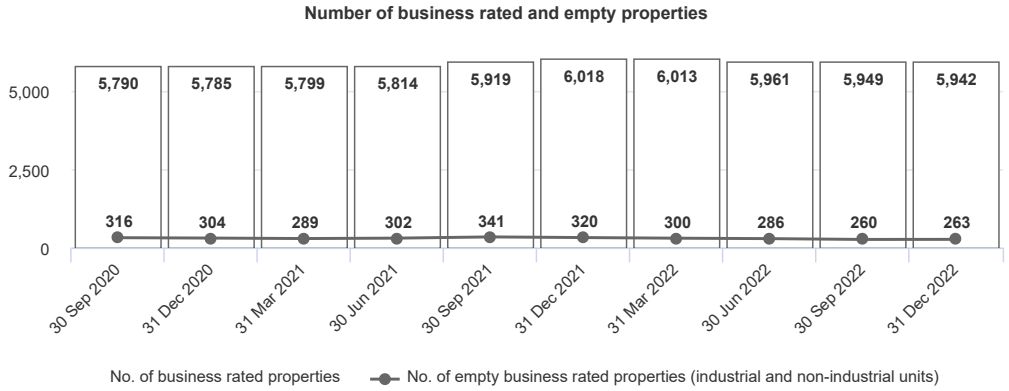


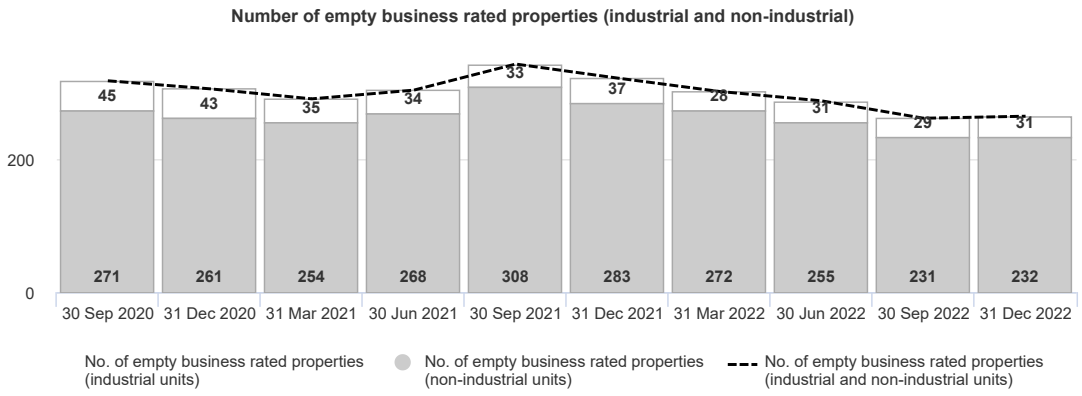


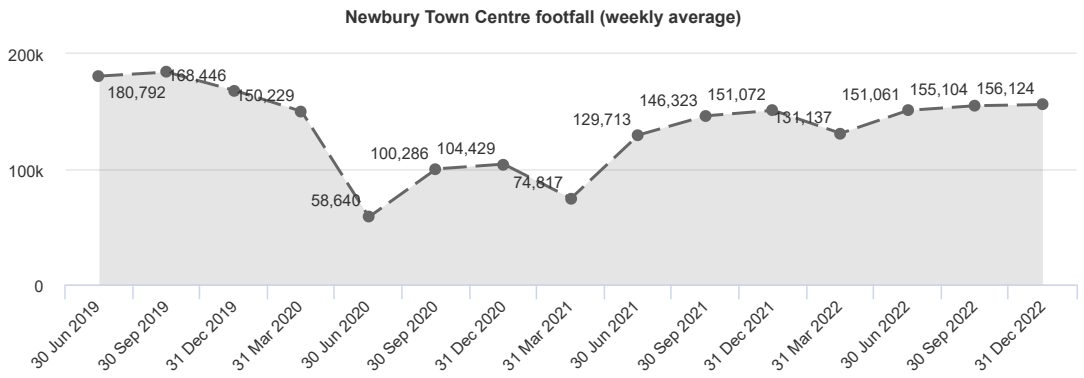



Total claimant count (aged 16+) - JSA & Universal Credit
4k
2k
0
3,930
3,755
3,870
3,185
2,825
2,495
2,395
2,065
2,115
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

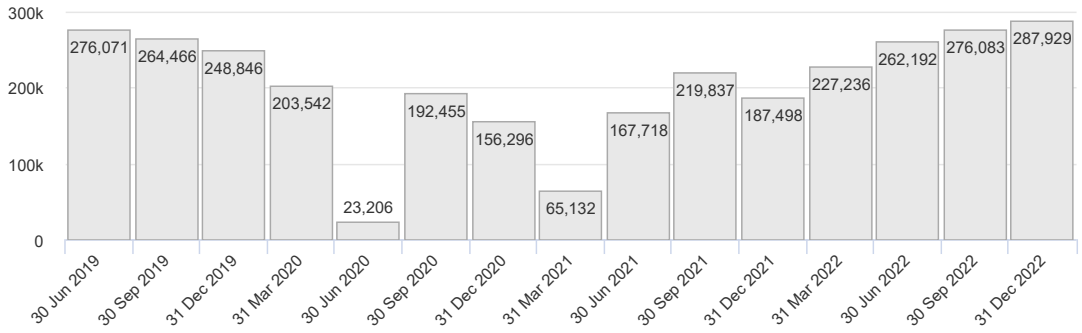

Total claimant count (aged 16-24) - JSA & Universal Credit
750
500
250
0
775
750
775
600
510
415
365
270
285
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022


Number of business rated and empty properties
5,000
2,500
0
5,790
5,785
5,799
5,814
5,919
6,018
6,013
5,961
5,949
5,942
316
304
289
302
341
320
300
286
260
263
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022
No. of business rated properties
No. of empty business rated properties (industrial and non-industrial units)

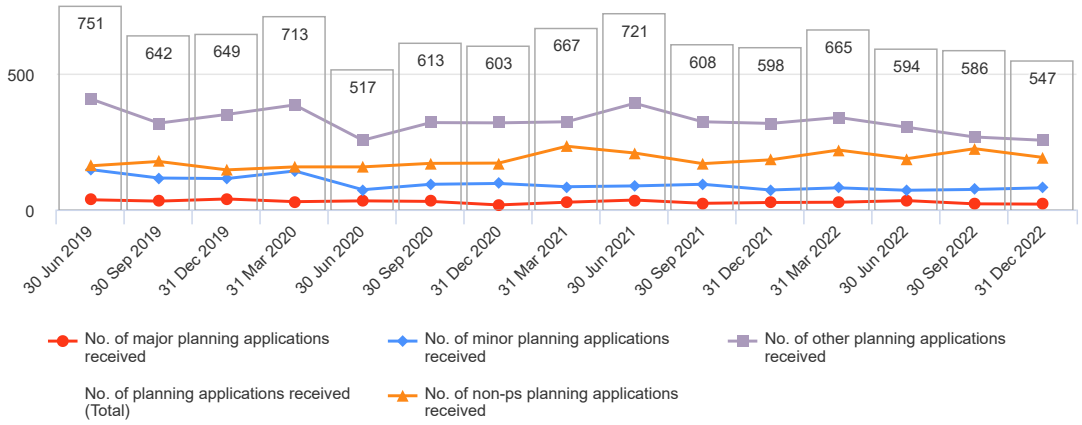

Number of empty business rated properties (industrial and non-industrial)
200
0
45
43
35
34
33
37
28
31
29
31
271
261
254
268
308
283
272
255
231
232
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022
No. of empty business rated properties (industrial units)
No. of empty business rated properties (non-industrial units)
No. of empty business rated properties (industrial and non-industrial units)


Newbury Town Centre footfall (weekly average)
200k
100k
0
180,792
168,446
150,229
58,640
100,286
104,429
74,817
129,713
146,323
151,072
131,137
151,061
155,104
156,124
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

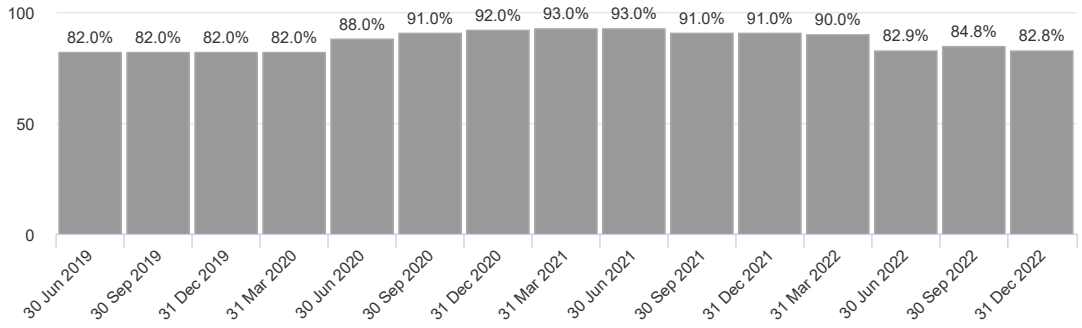
Number of parking tickets sold in WBC managed parking spaces (includes PaybyPhone ticket sales)



Number of planning applications received

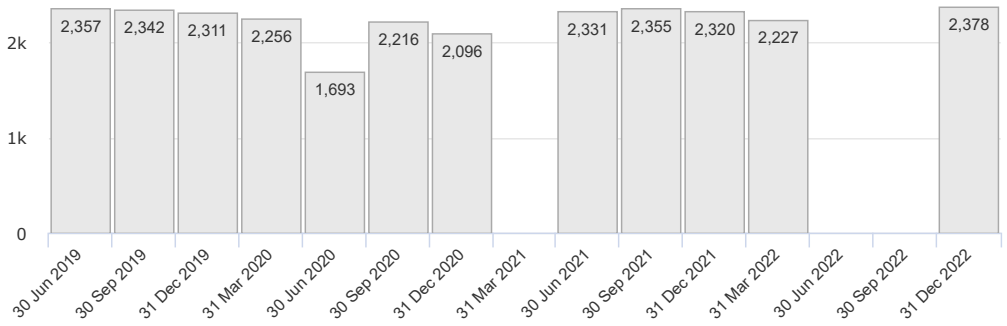


% Approval Rate (Planning Permissions)

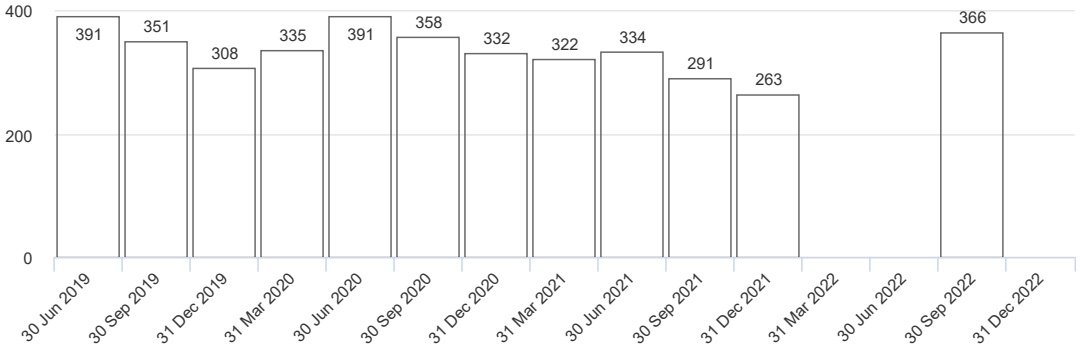


Data not available at Q1 and 2 2022

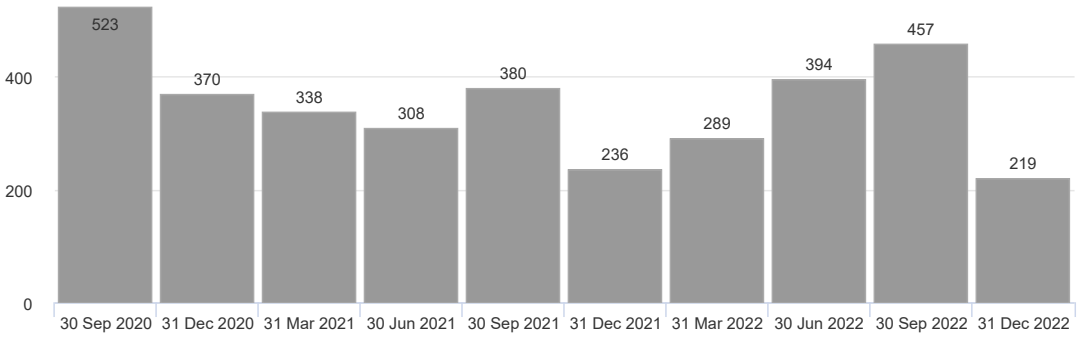
Number of all crimes reported to Thames Valley Police



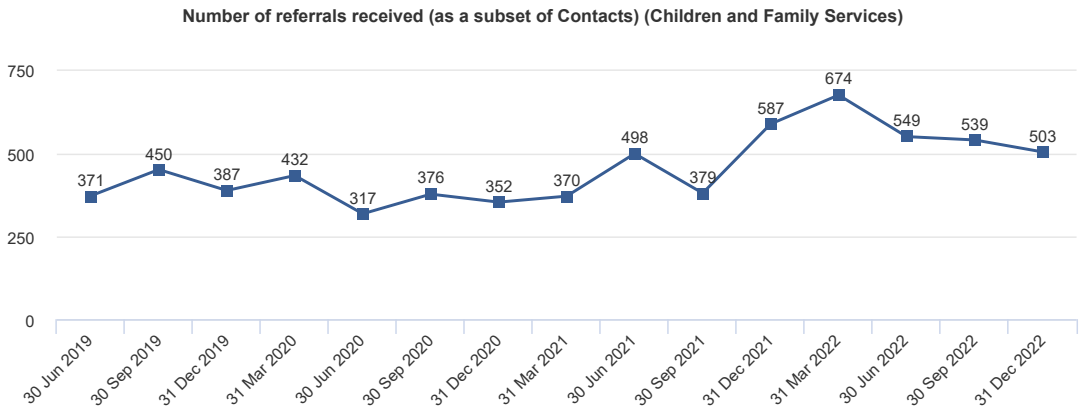
Number of Domestic Abuse incidents reported to Thames Valley Police (non crime)

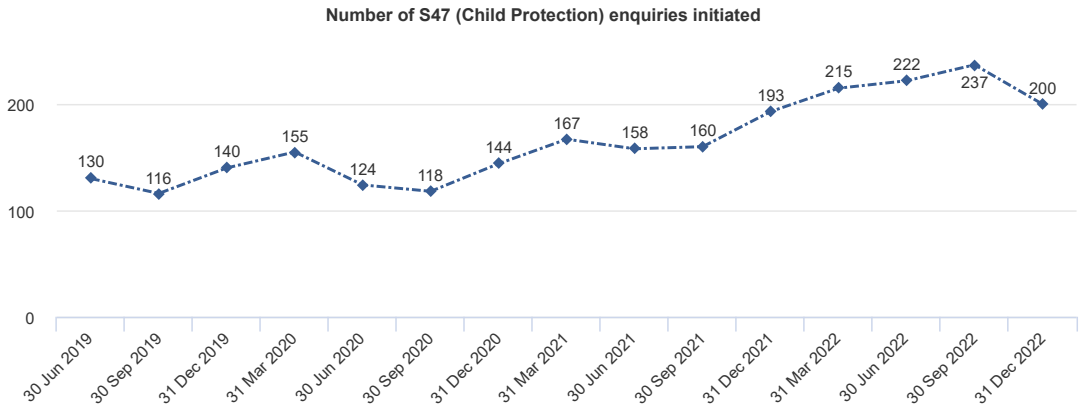


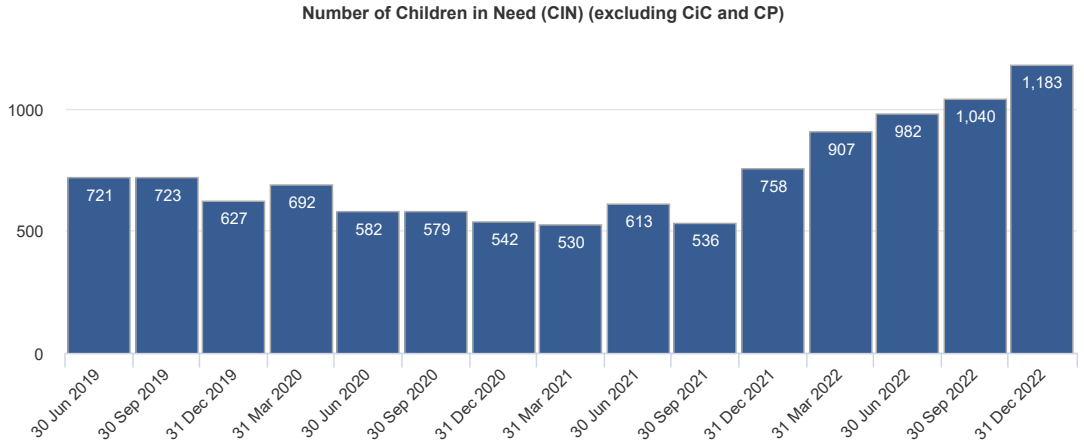
Number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents reported to Thames Valley Police



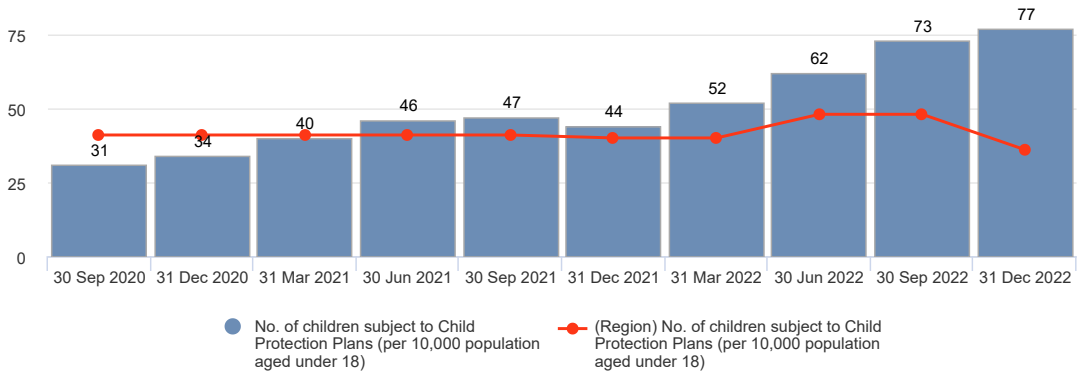
Social Care


Number of referrals received (as a subset of Contacts) (Children and Family Services)
750
500
250
0
371
450
387
432
317
376
352
370
498
379
587
674
549
539
503
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

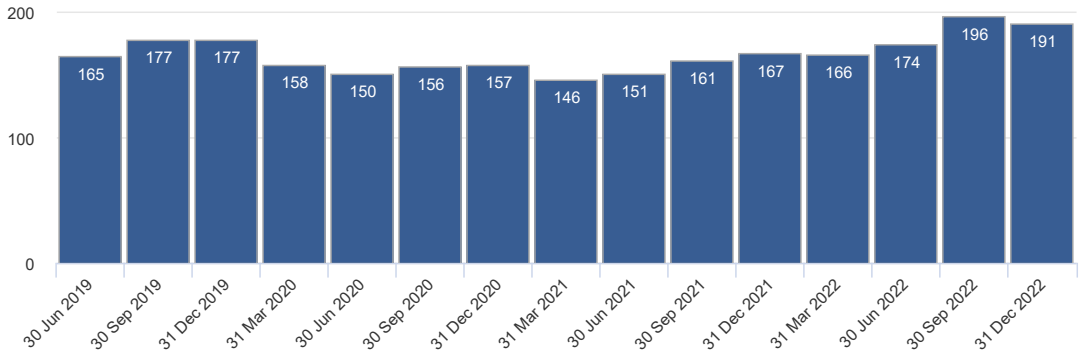

Number of S47 (Child Protection) enquiries initiated
200
100
0
130
116
140
155
124
118
144
167
158
160
193
215
222
237
200
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022


Number of Children in Need (CIN) (excluding CiC and CP)
1000
500
0
721
723
627
692
582
579
542
530
613
536
758
907
982
1,040
1,183
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

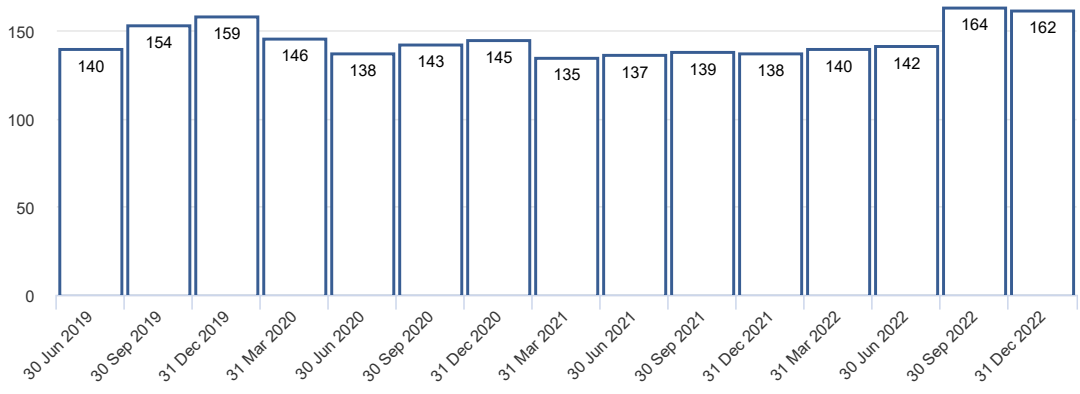
Number of children subject to Child Protection Plans (per 10,000 population aged under 18)



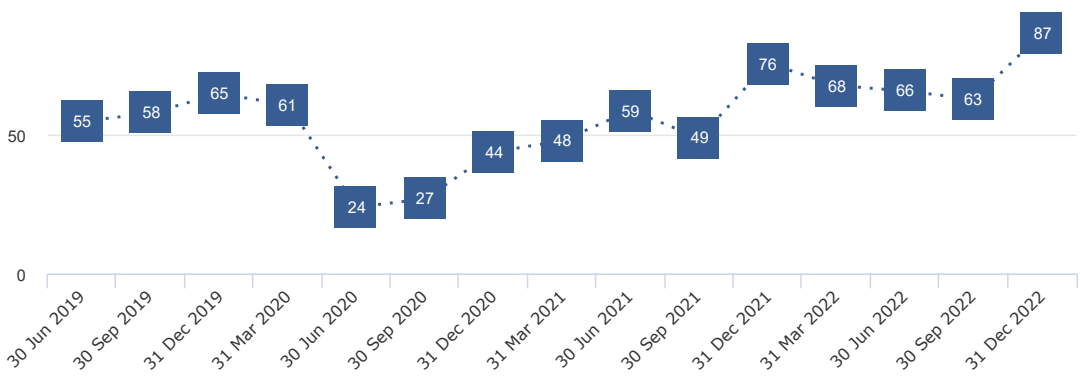
Number of Children in Care cases

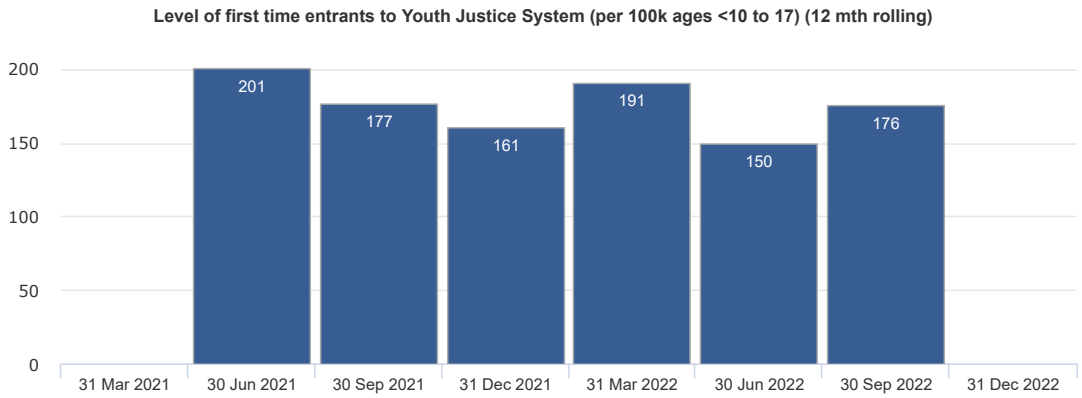


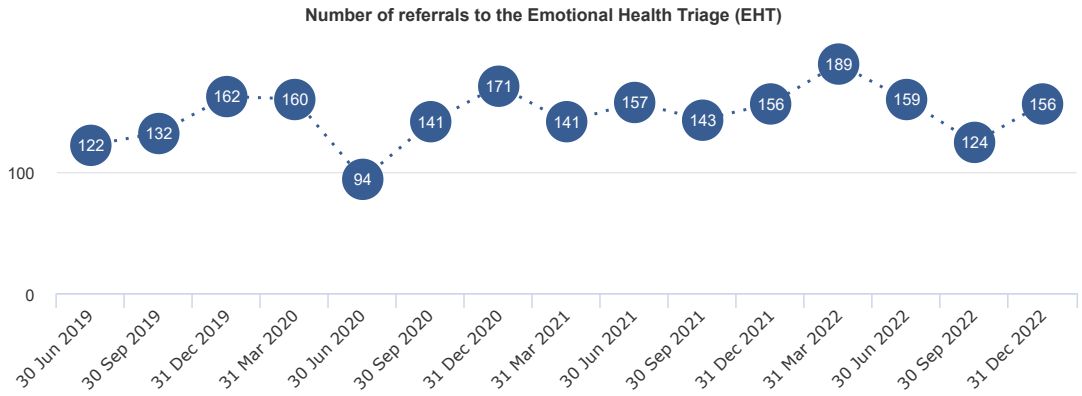
Number of Children in Care (excl. Un-accompanied Asylum Seeking Children)

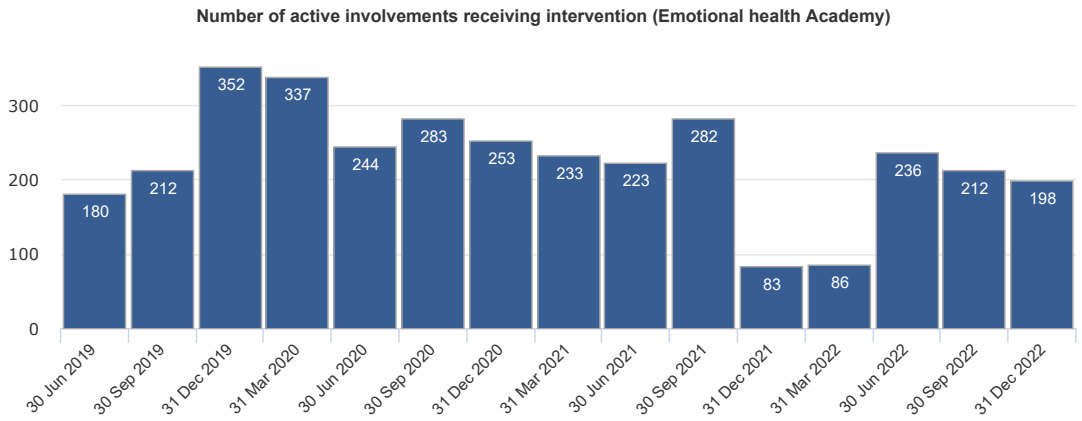


Number of Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) referrals received (QAAS)

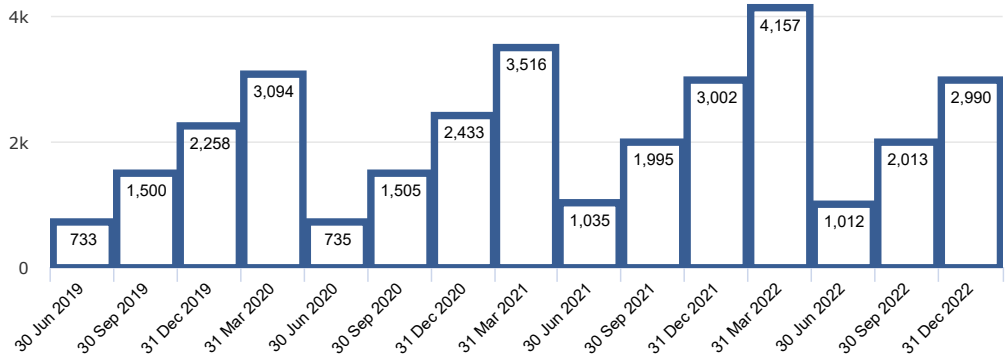



Level of first time entrants to Youth Justice System (per 100k ages <10 to 17) (12 mth rolling)
200
150
100
50
0
201
177
161
191
150
176
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

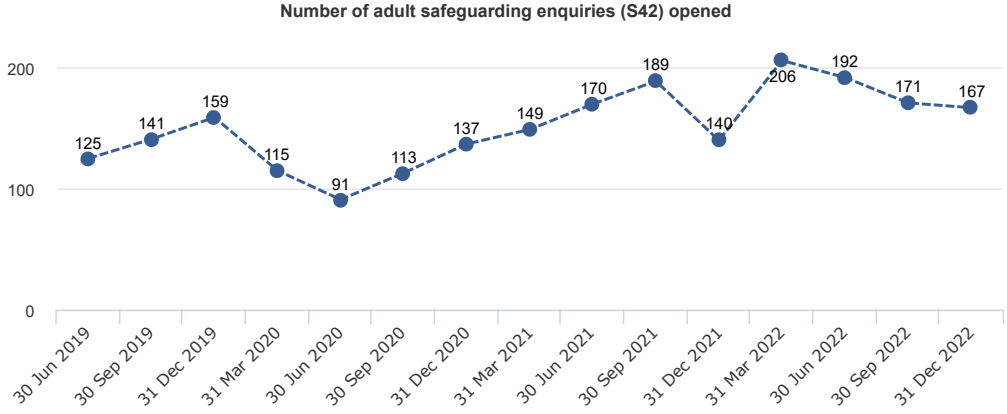

Number of referrals to the Emotional Health Triage (EHT)
100
0
122
132
162
160
94
141
171
141
157
143
156
189
159
124
156
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022



Provisional data

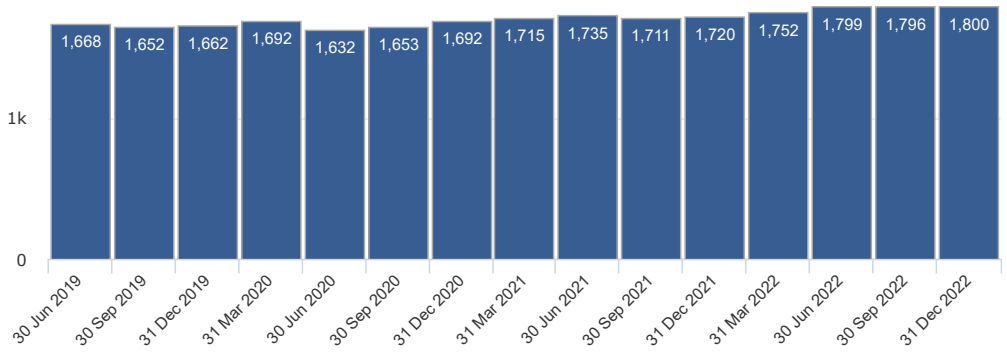


Provisional data



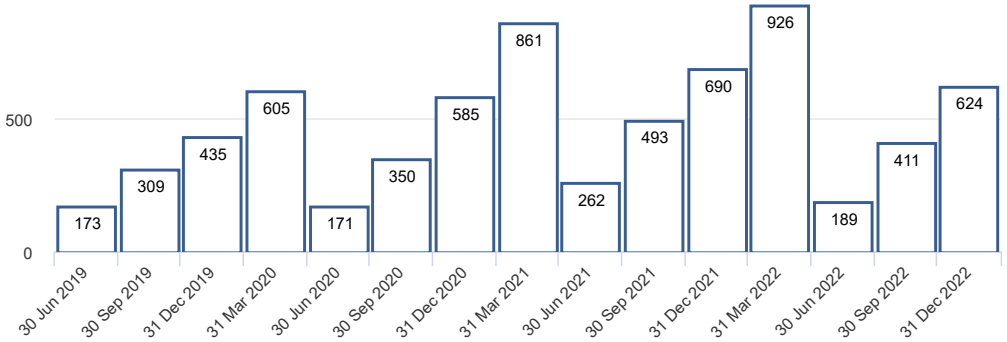
Provisional data

Current Long Term Support client (LTS All Ages) (incl. community, residential & nursing care)

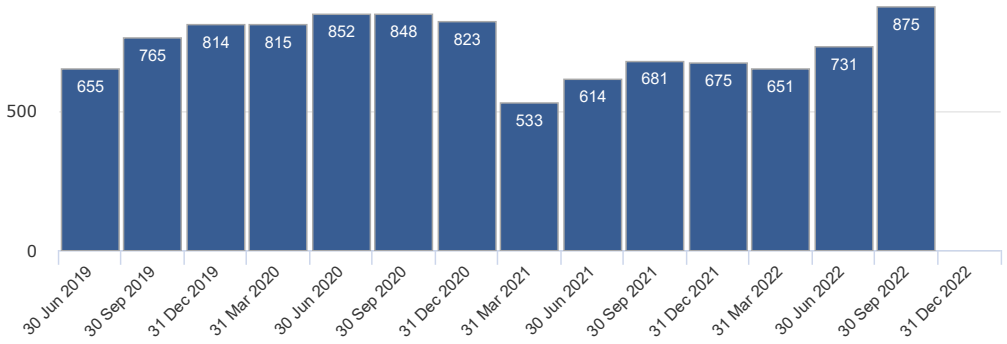


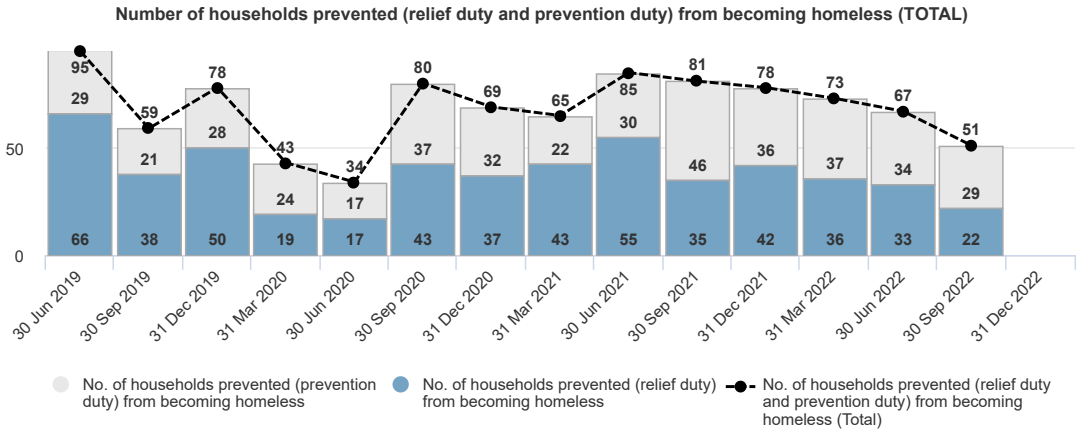
Provisional data

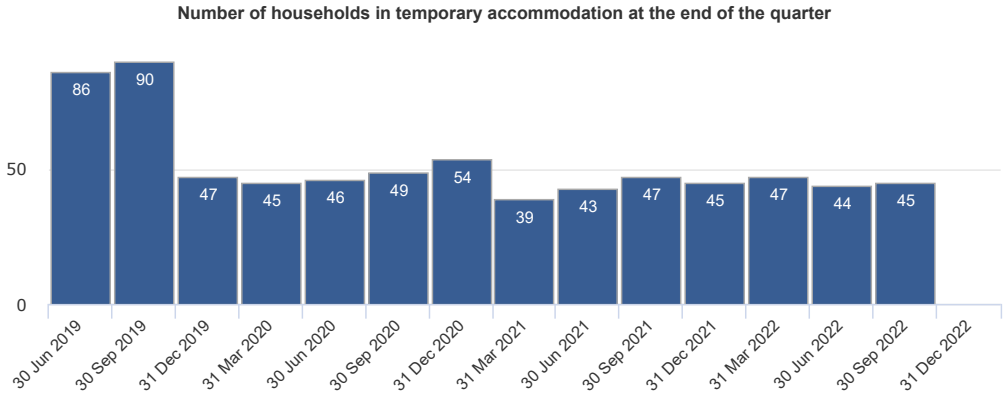
Number of people accessing reablement (Short Term support to maximise independence) (cumulative ytd)

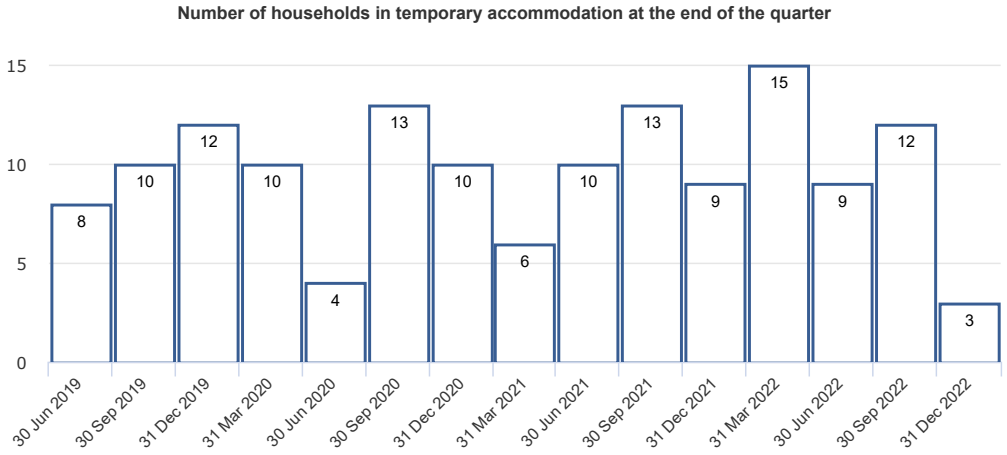


Number of active (qualifying) households on the Housing Register

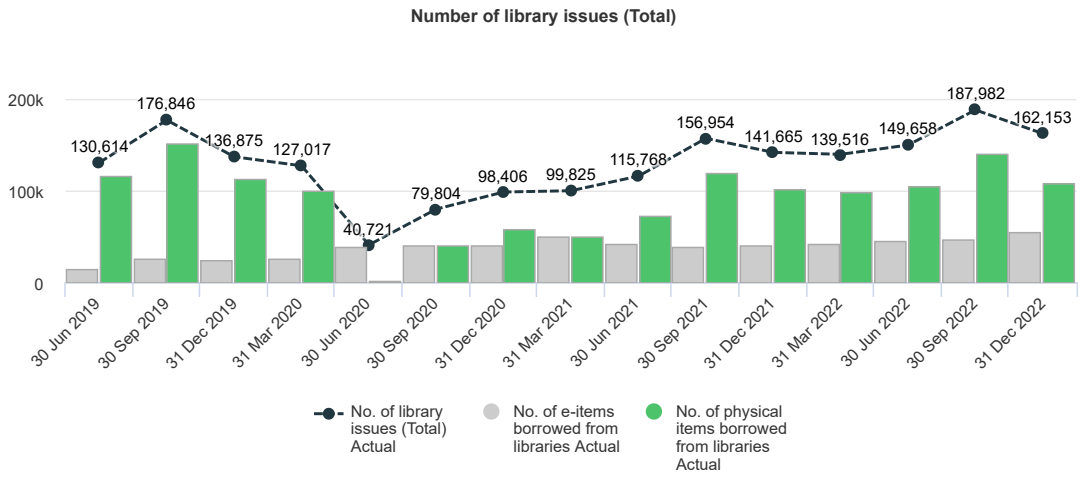


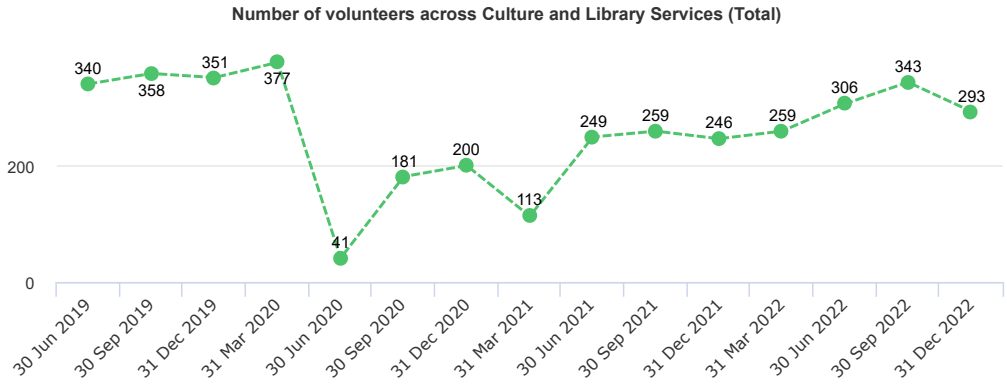


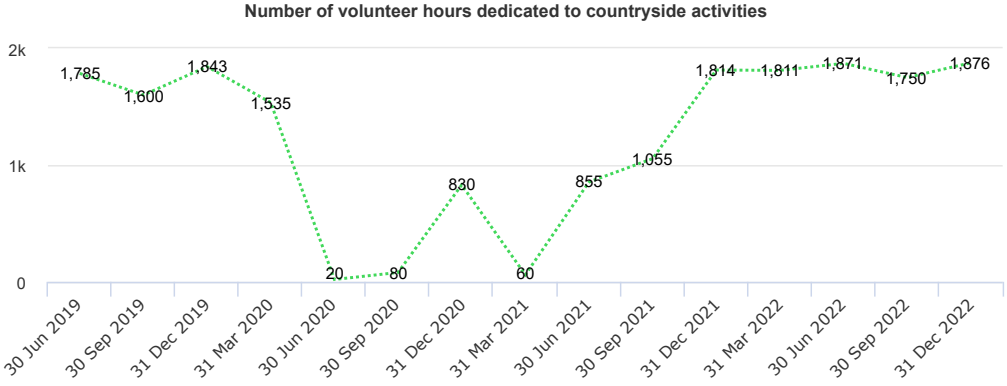




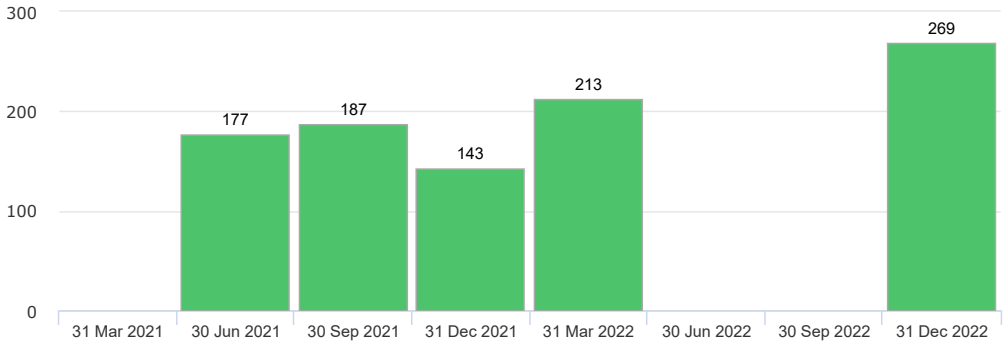
Environment


Number of library issues (Total)
200k
100k
0
130,614
176,846
136,875
127,017
40,721
79,804
98,406
99,825
115,768
156,954
141,665
139,516
149,658
187,982
162,153
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022
No. of library issues (Total) Actual
No. of e-items borrowed from libraries Actual
No. of physical items borrowed from libraries Actual

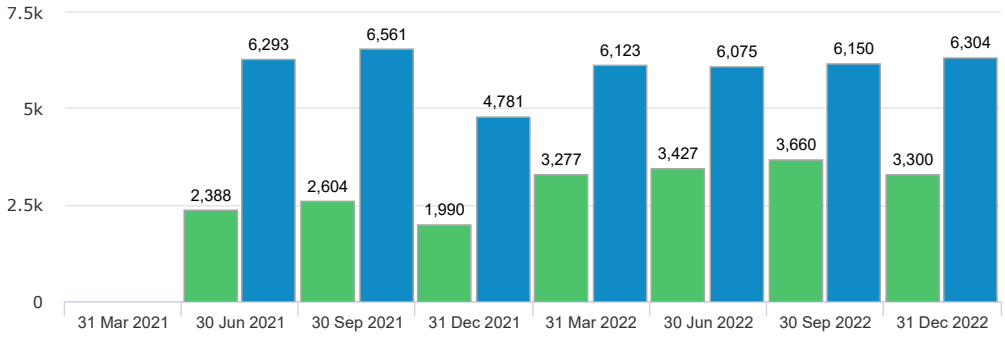

Number of volunteers across Culture and Library Services (Total)
200
0
340
358
351
377
41
181
200
113
249
259
246
259
306
343
293
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022


Number of volunteer hours dedicated to countryside activities
2k
1k
0
1,785
1,600
1,843
1,535
20
80
830
60
855
1,055
1,814
1,811
1,871
1,750
1,876
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

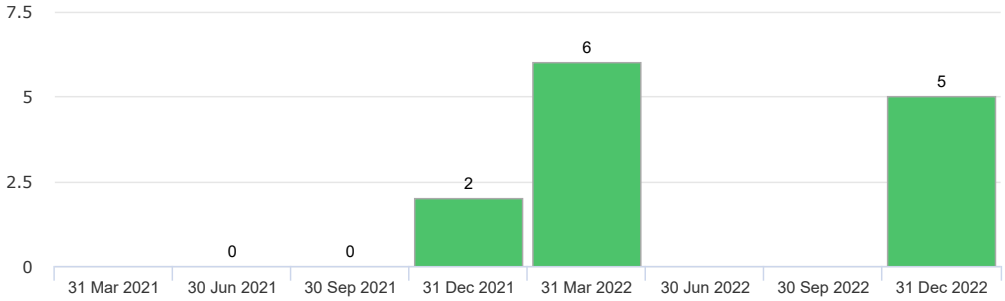
Number of individuals who have attended the Activity for Health programme in previous quarter

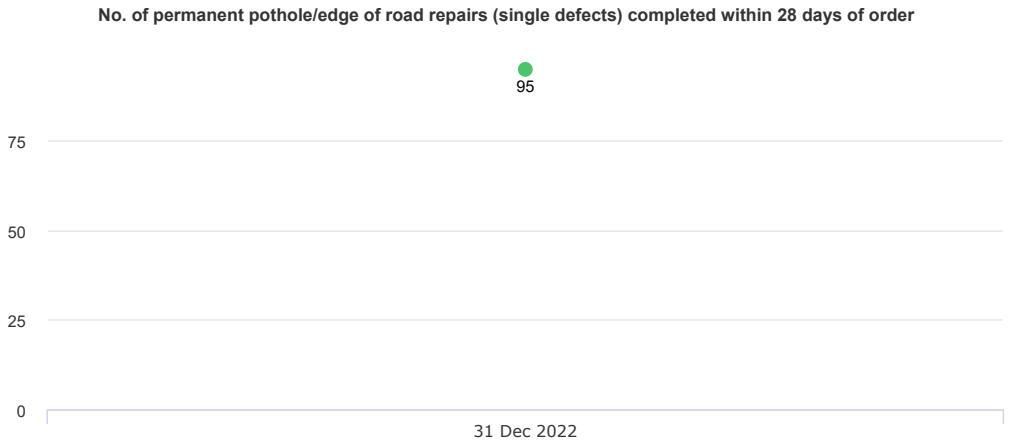


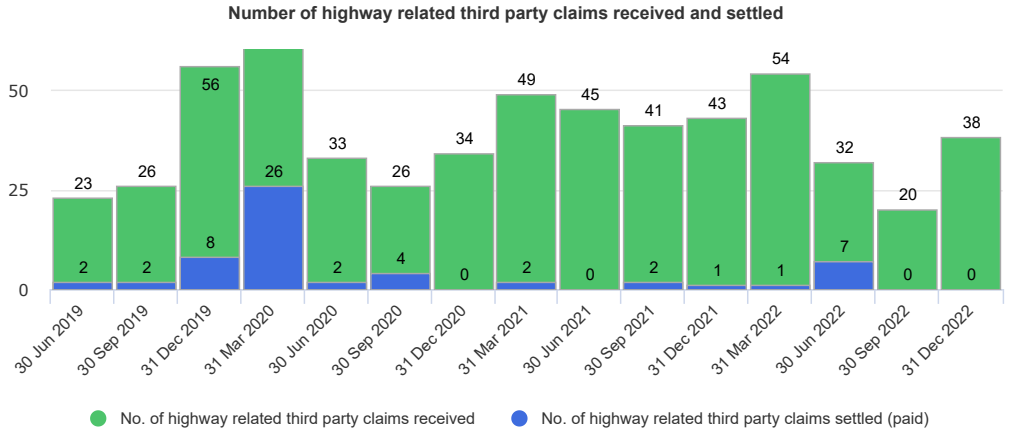
Number of individuals using a sports or leisure centre in previous quarter (split by age)

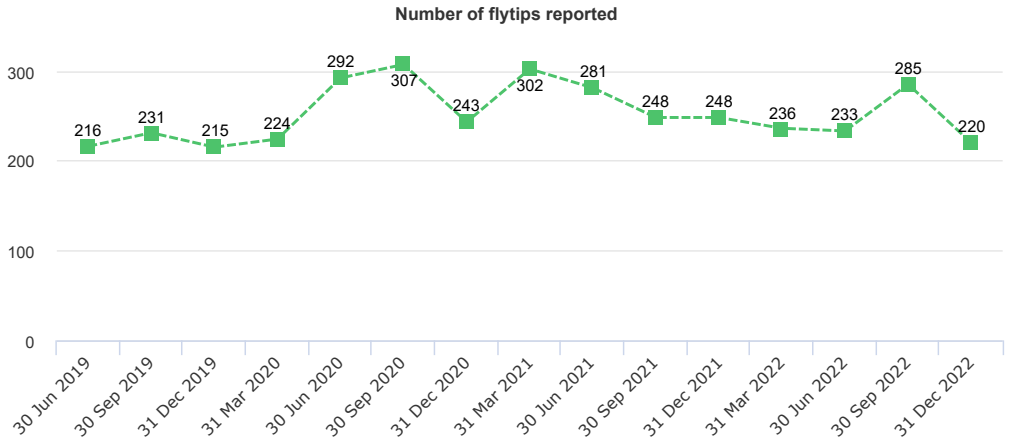


Number of CiC and Care leavers aged between 18 and 25 using leisure centres in previous quarter




No. of permanent pothole/edge of road repairs (single defects) completed within 28 days of order
95
75
50
25
0
31 Dec 2022


Number of highway related third party claims received and settled
50
25
0
23
26
56
26
33
26
34
49
45
41
43
54
32
20
38
2
2
8
26
2
4
0
2
0
2
1
1
7
0
0
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022
No. of highway related third party claims received
No. of highway related third party claims settled (paid)


Number of flytips reported
300
200
100
0
216
231
215
224
292
307
243
302
281
248
248
236
233
285
220
30 Jun 2019
30 Sep 2019
31 Dec 2019
31 Mar 2020
30 Jun 2020
30 Sep 2020
31 Dec 2020
31 Mar 2021
30 Jun 2021
30 Sep 2021
31 Dec 2021
31 Mar 2022
30 Jun 2022
30 Sep 2022
31 Dec 2022

Statutory Consultation on Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2023

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Tom Marino
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4298

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To review the published hackney carriage fare scale in light of a request from the Taxi Trade to modify the tariffs and to determine the consultation process that must be undertaken if the Executive resolves to vary the current table of fares.

2 Recommendations

That the Executive

2.1 **NOTES** the existing tariffs which have been in place since 29 July 2022 (Appendix A).

2.2 **CONSIDERS** the proposed modifications from the Taxi Trade (Appendix B) and the outcome of the recent non-statutory consultation undertaken with the Taxi Trade as set out in Appendix C.

2.3 **RESOLVES,** with the exception of the fouling charge**,** whether or not to make variations to the current table of fares for hackney carriage tariffs based on the proposals set out in Appendix B this report.

2.4 **CONSIDERS** whether or not to include a fouling charge on the tariff card and if so **RESOLVES** that a £100 (interior) and £25 (exterior) charge be consulted on.

If the Executive decides to make any changes to the current table of fares they are asked to:

2.5 **RESOLVE** that the period within which objections to the variation(s) can be made (the statutory consultation) will be the 11 May 2023 to the 25 May 2023 or a longer period determined at the meeting.

2.6 **AGREE** that a public notice (akin to the one set out in Appendix D) will be placed in the Newbury Weekly News and the Reading Chronicle on the 11 May 2023.

2.7 **AGREE** that the consultation will be promoted on the website and a note will be displayed at the Market Street Offices by the 11 May 2023.

2.8 **AGREE** that a copy of the notice should be emailed individually to all West Berkshire licensed Hackney Carriage Proprietors for their comments.

2.9 **NOTE** that if objections are received, and not withdrawn, the Executive at the 08 June 2023 meeting will consider the objections and determine whether the varied table of fares shall be modified or not, and set a date when the varied table of fares, with or without modification, will come into operation. The implementation date must be no later than two months after the period for objections closes.

2.10 **NOTE** that if no objections are received, or if the objections are withdrawn, the varied table of fares will come into effect on the day after the statutory consultation closes.

2.11 **NOTE** that the outcome of the statutory consultation and any subsequent decisions of the Executive will be reported back to the July meeting of the Licensing Committee.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no specific financial implications for the Council arising from this report. The consultation, including the cost of notices in newspapers, will be undertaken using existing resources.
Human Resource:	Any actions will be met from within existing resources.
Legal:	The procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements are stipulated within Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. The procedure is prescriptive and requires that a decision to make/vary a table of fares is made first. Following this, there is a statutory consultation requirement, to allow for any objections to the new/varied table to be made. The remainder of the process is dependent on whether any objections are received (and not withdrawn) or not There is no right of appeal so any legal challenge to the decision(s) made in relation to a new/varied table of fares would be by way of judicial review. The function of making/varying the table of fares for hackney carriages is a function of the Executive (which could be

	exercised in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation). Beth Varcoe has been consulted.			
Risk Management:	None			
Property:	None			
Policy:	Any changes to the tariffs that impact on the Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy will be reflected in that document.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**

Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		Nationally young women are one of the largest groups to use taxis. Other groups, such as those who are disabled and those who are elderly may also use taxis more frequently. Any change to fares suggested could impact these groups financially, but equally there needs to be a viable taxi trade to provide a taxi service for these groups and all residents/visitors to West Berkshire. While it is accepted that any changes to the tariffs might have a disproportionate impact on some of the protected groups this report is seeking observations on the impact of those changes if Members are minded to consult on them. Any statutory consultation, as a result of a proposal to change the current fares, will be conducted in accordance with statutory requirements and provide an opportunity for protected groups to comment on impact. The review of the current fares is seeking to protect the public from excessive fares but at the same ensuring that this remains a profitable sector and therefore retaining drivers and operators to provide the service to those who rely on it. Any objections, including those relating to equalities, will be reported back to the Executive.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		See above

Environmental Impact:		X		None
Health Impact:		X		None
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		The notice will be placed on the website by the Public Protection Partnership and will also be placed on the West Berkshire Council consultation portal.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The provision of a viable taxi trade in the district will support a number of the priorities in the Council Strategy, in particular they are associated with supporting businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire.
Core Business:		X		Providing support to the taxi trade forms part of the business as usual for the Public Protection Partnership.
Data Impact:				None
Consultation and Engagement:	The procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements are stipulated within Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. An informal non-statutory consultation was undertaken with the trade as set out in Appendix C. The Licensing Committee have been consulted outside of the meeting cycle on the proposals in this report. No comments were received.			

4 Supporting Information

Introduction

4.1 The process of setting a fare increase is complex and a balance needs to be struck between the legitimate aims of the taxi trade to maintain profitability in the face of increasing costs, while protecting the public from excessive fares.

4.2 Local authorities have a statutory power to set the **maximum fares** that licensed hackney carriages (taxis) can charge for a journey. Under Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, local authorities have the power to "…fix the rates or fares within the district as well for time as distance, and all other charges in connection with the hire of a vehicle or with the arrangements for the hire of a vehicle, to be paid in respect of the hire of hackney carriages by means of a table (hereafter in this section referred to as a "table of fares") made or varied in accordance with the provisions of this section."

4.3 This legislation does not specify any restrictions on the number of or timings for subsequent changes/variations to the table of fares; a local authority can exercise their power whenever they deem reasonable and appropriate. There is also flexibility in terms of whether the power is exercised to increase or decrease existing rates, or to devise a new table of fares altogether.

4.4 The trade are not obligated to charge the maximum fare. This means that hackney carriage drivers are within their rights to negotiate the fare down provided that the final agreed fare is no more than the maximum set.

4.5 Any changes to the current tariffs would need to be subjected to a statutory consultation process.

Background

4.6 The current tariff scale was confirmed by the **Executive on the 07 July 2022.** A subsequent delegated officer decision taken on the **23 September 2022** sought authority to present the published hackney carriage fare table agreed at the 07 July 2022 Executive meeting in an alternative format. This was in order to remove any ambiguity around charges for multi seater vehicles and was designed to assist both the trade and their customers.

4.7 It was agreed at the 26 October 2021 meeting that variations to the tariffs would be reflected on at the January Taxi Trade Liaison Group (TTLG) meeting each year. A proposal could then be put forward for consultation and implementation later during that calendar year should the group be minded to propose any variations.

4.8 At 09 January 2023 TTLG meeting it was suggested that the trade would like to amend the annual cycle relating to tariffs. They requested that any changes coincide with the financial year i.e. they should be implemented by the 01 April annually. This would require a discussion at the October TTLG meeting and the subsequent timetabling of reports to the Executive to allow an implementation date of the 01 April. The trade accepted that in order to go through due process it would not be possible to achieve this target date in 2023. It was agreed that the proposed modifications would be brought to the March Executive for discussion with a view to any modifications agreed being implemented in June or July 2023 at the latest should the Executive be minded to make any modifications.

4.9 The trade representatives present at the TTLG meeting made the following suggestions in relation to modifications to the tariffs as well as operating practices:

- For 2023 they would like to see an uplift of the fees linked to Consumer Price Index (circa 10% in November 2022) to offset the increased costs associated with running their businesses including vehicle costs, parts, tyres, servicing, insurance, electricity costs etc
- If approved they would like the modification to be implemented as close to the 01 April as was practicably possible but accepted that for 2023 the implementation date was likely to be in June or July;
- They would like the maximum fouling charges to be revisited and increased and suggested that a maximum charge of £200 should be implemented;
- They would like to see calendar time and date controlled meters to be mandated;
- They would like the words 'Hiring when journey commences between' to be revisited and replaced to reflect journeys between certain times; and
- The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy be amended to mandate a requirement for all vehicles to accept card and online payments.

4.10 Following the meeting the trade submitted the proposed modifications to the tariffs as set out in Appendix B. Officers have consulted the wider trade informally to establish their views on modifications to the tariffs as well as the matters raised at the meeting set out in paragraph 4.9 above. The outcome of the non-statutory consultation is set out in Appendix C.

4.11 We received only nine responses to the informal consultation. The responses were from a mixture of hackney carriage and private hire drivers and operators. The majority of the respondents supported a circa 10% increase in the tariffs in 2023, requested that the flag rate remained unchanged and that the tariff modifications be linked to CPI each year. They also supported the modifications being aligned to the financial year. The responses around fouling charges were less conclusive.

Interior: 4 respondents stated that £100 would be more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £150 would be more appropriate; 2 respondent stated that £200 would be more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £250 would be more appropriate; 1 person did not respond to this question.
Exterior: 5 respondents stated that £25 was acceptable; 2 respondents did not respond to this question; 1 respondent stated that £50 was more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £75 was more appropriate.

4.12 To provide some additional context for the table of fares a comparison of the cost of a two mile fare across 350 local authorities as at 13 March 2023 can be found at: **https://www.phtm.co.uk/newspaper/taxi-fares-league-tables.**

4.13 The proposed modification would see a two mile journey during hours when tariff 1 was in operation in a saloon car increase from £8.00 to £8.70.

4.14 The table below summarises the key changes proposed by the trade:

	Tariff 1	Tariff 2	Tariff 3

MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:

Initial Flag			
Current	£5.00	£7.50	£10.00
Proposed	£5.00	£7.50	£10.00
Yardage			
Current	20p/135.385 yards	30p/135.385 yards	40p/135.385 yards
Proposed	40p/ 243.692 yards	60p/ 243.692 yards	80p/ 243.692 yards
First Mile			
Current	£5.40	£8.10	£10.80
Proposed	£5.80	£8.70	£11.60
Per Mile			
Proposed	£2.60	£3.90	£5.20
Current	£2.90	£4.30	£5.80
Waiting time			
Current	20p/ 24 secs £30p/h	30p/ 24 secs £45p/h	40p/ 24 secs £60p/h
Proposed	40p/43.636 £38p/h	60p/43.636 £49.50p/h	80p/43.636 £66p/h
Fouling	**Interior**	**Exterior**	
Current	£75	£25	
Proposed	£200 * see recommendation 2.4	£50 * see recommendation 2.4	
Applicable Times			
Current	MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:		
Proposed	MAXIMUM fare for any part of a journey dependant on Time, Day and Date:		

4.15 Members at the 23 January 2023 Licensing Committee and Legal Officers raised concern about making the fouling tariff a maximum charge as it could be difficult to quantify the loss of earnings and degree of soiling for example. This could lead to a large number of appeals. The preference would be to set a standard charge to be determined by the Executive. As with the mileage tariffs the trade would not necessarily have to charge the maximum. It has been suggested that irrespective of the proposed charge the Executive agrees that the word 'maximum' be removed in relation to fouling on the tariff card.

4.16 In respect of the fouling charge the Executive is asked to consider the proposal from the trade raised at the January TTLG meeting (£200 interior), the written proposal from the trade (£200 interior and £50 exterior) and the comments received during the consultation as set out in paragraph 4.11 and agree the level of fouling charge they would like to include in the consultation. Some comparator data is set out in the table below. Based on this information Officers recommend that the fouling charge to be consulted on be set at £100 for the exterior of the vehicle and that the current £25 charge for the interior of a vehicle be retained in the consultation.

Licensing Authority	Fouling/Soiling Charge
Reading	Fouling of Vehicle Interior (£40) Fouling of Vehicle Exterior (£10)
Bracknell	Fouling of Vehicle Interior (£50)

MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:

	Fouling of Vehicle Exterior (£10)
Wokingham	Fouling of Vehicle Interior (£75) Fouling of Vehicle Exterior (£15)
Windsor and Maidenhead	Soiling interior (£80) Soiling exterior (£20)
Slough	£100 requested by trade
Basingstoke & Deane	Fouling inside or outside the vehicle Tariff 1 (£50), Tariff 2 (£75), Tariff3 (£100)
South Oxfordshire	£150 maximum
Vale of White Horse	£150 maximum
Surrey Heath	Soiling the carriage exterior leaving it unfit for immediate subsequent hiring (not shown on the meter) £20 Soiling the carriage interior leaving it unfit for immediate subsequent hiring (not shown on the meter) £100
Swindon	When the customer has soiled the vehicle requiring off the road valeting £75
Wiltshire	Minimum of £100
Rushmoor	Up to £100
Winchester	Maximum of £75
Oxford City	£50
East Hampshire	£75

4.17 The trade suggested that they would like the current wording on the table of fares to be amended which would require the statement 'Hiring when journey commences between' to be revisited and replaced to reflect journeys between certain times see applicable times in the key changes table. This would deal with the issue of journeys that spanned more than one tariff time. This would not affect set fares which would still be charged at the fare agreed before the journey commenced. Legal Services have confirmed that the wording should reflect the legislation and they would therefore not support making the changes proposed by the trade.

4.18 The Licensing Committee at the 23 January 2023 meeting were supportive of amending the Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy to require the installation of time and date controlled meters and the acceptance of card and online payments in addition to the ability to pay with cash. They did however have concerns about wifi coverage across the district which could impact on the ability to pay by card. The use of card and online payments are not mandated by many authorities. It is therefore not proposed that this is mandated but that the installation of card facilities be encouraged. No charges should be made for making use of these facilities.

MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:

Proposals

4.19 In order to set maximum fares, the 1976 Act prescribes a statutory consultation process and a means of dealing with objections in relation to a local authority's adoption or variation of a fares table. The proposed timetable is set out below.

Decision Made to Consult	23 March 2023 Executive
Statutory Consultation	11 – 25 May 2023
If no Objections or Withdrawn Revised Tariffs Implemented on:	26 May 2023
If Objections Received they will be reviewed at	08 June 2023 Executive
Revised Implementation Date (must be within 2 months of consultation closing)	Must be between the 09 June and 24 July 2023.

4.20 If the Executive decide to vary the table of fares the Council must publish a notice setting out the changes in at least one local newspaper. Officers propose that the public notice should be placed in both the Newbury Weekly News and the Reading Chronicle. This is in line with what was agreed when the fees were consulted on in 2021 and 2022. The example in Appendix D would be amended to reflect any changes agreed by the Executive should they be minded to modify the current tariffs.

4.21 The notice must specify the period that readers will have to object to the changes set out in the notice. The period must be at least fourteen days from the date of the first publication of the notice. The notice should also set out how the objections should be made. It is proposed that the notice is placed in the newspapers on the 11 May 2023 and that the consultation period run from this date until at least the 25 May 2023. This is in line with the statutory requirement to consult for a minimum of 14 days. The Executive is asked to consider if they are of the view that the 14 day period is acceptable or not.

4.22 A copy of the notice must be displayed at the Council's Office and in addition a copy will also be placed on the Public Protection Partnership's website and the consultation will be included on the Council's consultation portal. The Council could also choose to email a copy of the notice to individual members of the trade. Officers would recommend that this is done.

4.23 If no objections to the variation are received within the consultation period or if all objections are withdrawn, the revised fares will come into operation on the date of the expiration of the consultation period specified in the notice or the date of withdrawal of the last objection, whichever date is the later.

4.24 If objections are received these must be considered and the matter would be discussed by Members at the 08 June 2023 Executive meeting. A further date would then need to be set by the Executive to determine when the varied table of fares, with or without modifications following consideration of the objections, would come into force. This date is required to be no later than 2 months after the consultation period closes (e.g. 24 July if the consultation runs to the 25 May 2023), but could be earlier.

4.25 A report would be taken to the 10 July 2023 Licensing Committee meeting to inform that Committee of the outcome of the consultation and any further decision taken by the Executive, if they are required to make a further decision.

5 Other options considered

5.1 Not to make any variations to the tariffs.

5.2 To delay the decision to make any variations until later in the year.

5.3 To consult on the existing fouling charge or the charges proposed by the trade.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The issue of setting fares for hackney carriage drivers is an important one primarily for two reasons. The fares set by local authorities largely determine the ability of drivers to earn a decent living but also functions to ensure that passengers receive a fair deal when taking a journey in a licensed hackney carriage. Having informally consulted the trade, Members are asked to seek a way forward in terms of fare setting in 2023.

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix Ai and Aii – Existing Tariffs

7.2 Appendix Bi and Bii – Proposed Table of Fares

7.3 Appendix C – Outcome of the Non-Statutory Consultation process

7.4 Appendix D - Public Notice

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

Name: Moira Fraser
Job Title: Policy and Governance Principal Officer
Tel No: 01635 519045
E-mail: moira.fraser@westberks.gov.uk

Hackney Carriages Table of Fares (29 July 2022)

MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:
A lesser fare can be agreed prior to commencement of the journey.

Taxi Plate Number	Tariff 1	Tariff 2	Tariff 3
Licensed to Carry Passengers Any comments regarding this vehicle or driver should be made to: West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 2AF Or via email to licencing@westberks.gov.uk Quoting the above Taxi Plate number or drivers badge number	(Standard Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T1"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 25th, 26th, 31st December and 1st January)	(Time and 1/2 Saloon) Indicated by a **"T2"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 00:00 and 06.00 Monday to Sunday. 2. 22:00 and 23:59 Monday to Sunday. 3. 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 26th, 31st December & 1st January.	(Double Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T3"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers. 1. 00.00 and 23.59 on 25th December 2. 00.00 and 05:59 on 26th December. 3. 00.00 and 05:59 on 1st January.
	Tariff 1 Multi (Standard Time Multi) Indicated by a **"T1 b"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 5 or more passengers 1. 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 25th, 26th 31st December and 1st January)	**Tariff 2 Multi** (Time and a ½ Multi) Indicated by a **"T2 b"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 5 or more passengers 1. 00:00 and 06.00 Monday to Sunday. 2. 22:00 and 23:59 Monday to Sunday. 3. 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 26th, 31st December & 1st January.	**Tariff 3 Multi** (Double Time Multi) Indicated by a **"T3 b "**on the taxi meter Any journey with 5 or more passengers 1. 00.00 and 23.59 on 25th December 2. 00.00 and 05:59 on 26th December. 3. 00.00 and 05:59 on 1st January
Initial Flag The first 1489.235 yards (1361.756 meters) (11/13 mile)	T1 £5.00 / T1b £7.50 (First mile =£5.40) / (First mile =£8.10)	T2 £7.50 / T2b £11.25 (First mile =£8.10) / (First mile =£12.15)	T3 £10.00 / T3b £15.00 (First mile =£10.80) / (First mile =£16.20)
For each subsequent 135.385 yards (123.796 meters) (1/13 of a mile) completed or part thereof	T1 20p / T1b 30p (£2.60 running mile) / (£3.90 running mile)	T2 30p / T2b 45p (£3.90 running mile) / (£5.85 running mile)	T3 40p / T3b 60p (£5.20 running mile) / (£7.80 running mile)
Waiting time: for every period of 24 seconds or part thereof (Below 11.54 mph is charged as waiting time	T1 20p / T1b 30p T1 (£5.00 per 10 mins, £30.00 per hour) T1b (£7.50 per 10 mins, £45.00 per hour)	T2 30p / T1b 45p T2 (£7.50 per 10 mins, £45.00 per hour) T2b (£11.25 per 10 mins, £67.50 per hour)	T3 40p / T3b 60p T3 (£10.00 per 10 mins, £60.00 per hour) T3b (£15.00 per 10 mins, £90.00 per hour)

Where the taxi is used for pre-booked journeys the fare shall be calculated from the point in the district at which the hirer commences their journey. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sec. 67)
If a Hackney Carriage is booked by telephone, facsimile, e mail, or other electronic means a booking fee may be charged by prior arrangement only.
Congestion Zone Charges, Tolls or similar will be applied for any journey where such charges or tolls are incurred.
Fouling will be charged at a maximum of (£75 interior) (£25 Exterior)

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Hackney Carriages Table of Fares (29 July 2022)

MAXIMUM fare for any hiring when the journey commences:
A lesser fare can be agreed prior to commencement of the journey.

Taxi Plate Number	Tariff 1	Tariff 2	Tariff 3
Licensed to Carry Passengers Any comments regarding this vehicle or driver should be made to: West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 2AF Or via email to licencing@westberks.gov.uk Quoting the above Taxi Plate number or drivers badge number	(Standard Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T1"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 25th, 26th, 31st December and 1st January)	(Time and 1/2 Saloon) Indicated by a **"T2"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 00:00 and 06.00 Monday to Sunday. 2. 22:00 and 23:59 Monday to Sunday. 3. 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 26th, 31st December & 1st January.	(Double Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T3"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 00.00 and 23.59 on 25th December 2. 00.00 and 05:59 on 26th December. 3. 00.00 and 05:59 on 1st January.
Initial Flag The first 1489.235 yards (1361.756 meters) (11/13 mile)	**£5.00** First mile =£5.40	**£7.50** First mile =£8.10	**£10.00** First mile =£10.80
For each subsequent 135.385 yards (123.796 meters) (1/13 of a mile) completed or part thereof	**20p** £2.60 running mile	**30p** £3.90 running mile	**40p** £5.20 running mile
Waiting time: for every period of 24 seconds or part thereof (Below 11.54 mph is charged as waiting time)	**20p** £5.00 per 10 mins, £30.00 per hour	**30p** £7.50 per 10 mins, £45.00 per hour	**40p** £10.00 per 10 mins, £60.00 per hour

Where the taxi is used for pre-booked journeys the fare shall be calculated from the point in the district at which the hirer commences their journey. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sec. 67)
If a Hackney Carriage is booked by telephone, facsimile, e mail, or other electronic means a booking fee may be charged by prior arrangement only.
Congestion Zone Charges, Tolls or similar will be applied for any journey where such charges or tolls are incurred.
Fouling will be charged at a maximum of (£75 interior) (£25 Exterior)

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Hackney Carriages Table of Fares With Effect from X

MAXIMUM fare for any part of a journey dependant on Time, Day and Date:

A lesser fare can be agreed prior to commencement of the journey.

Taxi Plate Number ??? Licensed to Carry ? Passengers Any comments regarding this vehicle or driver should be made to: West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 2AF Or via email to licencing@westberks.gov.uk Quoting the above Taxi Plate number or drivers badge number	**Tariff 1** (Standard Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T1"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays,24th,25th,26th,31st December and 1st January) **Tariff 1 Multi** (Standard Time Multi) Indicated by a **"T1 b"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 5 or more passengers 1. 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays,24th,25th,26th 31st December and 1st January)	**Tariff 2** (Time and 1/2 Saloon) Indicated by a **"T2"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 00:00 and 06.00 Monday to Sunday. 2. 22:00 and 23:59 Monday to Sunday. 3. 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 26th, 31st December & 1st January. **Tariff 2 Multi** (Time and a ½ Multi) Indicated by a **"T2 b"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 5 or more passengers 1. 00:00 and 06.00 Monday to Sunday. 2. 22:00 and 23:59 Monday to Sunday. 3. 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 26th ,31st December & 1st January.	**Tariff 3** (Double Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T3"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers. 1. 00.00 and 23.59 on 25th December 2. 00.00 and 05:59 on 26th December. 3. 00.00 and 05:59 on 1st January. **Tariff 3 Multi** (Double Time Multi) Indicated by a **"T3 b** "on the taxi meter Any journey with 5 or more passengers 1. 00.00 and 23.59 on 25th December 2. 00.00 and 05:59 on 26th December. 3. 00.00 and 05:59 on 1st January
Initial Flag The first 1340.307 yards (1225.576 meters)	T1 £5.00 / T1b £7.50	T2 £7.50 / T2b £11.25	T3 £10.00 / T3b £15.00
For each subsequent 243.692 yards (222.831 meters) completed or part thereof	T1 40p / T1b 60p	T2 60p / T2b 90p	T3 80p / T3b 120p
Waiting time: for every period of 43.636 seconds or part thereof	T1 40p / T1b 60p T1 (£5.50 per 10 mins, £33.00 per hour) T1b (£8.25 per 10 mins, £49.50 per hour)	T2 60p / T1b 90p T2 (£8.25 per 10 mins, £49.50 per hour) T2b (£12.37 per 10 mins, £74.25 per hour)	T3 80p / T3b 120p T3 (£11.00 per 10 mins, £66.00 per hour) T3b (£16.50 per 10 mins, £99.00 per hour)

Where the taxi is used for pre-booked journeys the fare shall be calculated from the point in the district at which the hirer commences their journey. (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sec. 67)

If a Hackney Carriage is booked by telephone, facsimile, e mail, or other electronic means a booking fee may be charged by prior arrangement only.

Congestion Zone Charges, Tolls or similar will be applied for any journey where such charges or tolls are incurred.

Fouling will be charged at a maximum of (£200 Interior) (£50 Exterior)

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Hackney Carriages Table of Fares With Effect From

MAXIMUM fare for any part of a journey dependant on Time, Day and Date:

A lesser fare can be agreed prior to commencement of the journey.

Taxi Plate Number ??? Licensed to Carry ? Passengers Any comments regarding this vehicle or driver should be made to: West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 2AF Or via email to licencing@westberks.gov.uk Quoting the above Taxi Plate number or drivers badge number	Tariff 1 (Standard Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T1"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 06:00 and 21:59 Monday to Saturday (Excluding Bank Holidays, Public Holidays,24th,25th,26th,31st December and 1st January)	Tariff 2 (Time and 1/2 Saloon) Indicated by a **"T2"** on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 00:00 and 06.00 Monday to Sunday. 2. 22:00 and 23:59 Monday to Sunday. 3. 06.00 and 21.59 Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays, 24th, 26th,31st December & 1st January.	Tariff 3 (Double Time Saloon) Indicated by a **"T3"**on the taxi meter Any journey with 1-4 passengers 1. 00.00 and 23.59 on 25th December 2. 00.00 and 05:59 on 26th December. 3. 00.00 and 05:59 on 1st January.
Initial Flag The first 1340.307 yards (1225.576 meters)	**£5.00**	**£7.50**	**£10.00**
For each subsequent 243.692 yards (222.831 meters) completed or part thereof	**40p**	**60p**	**80p**
Waiting time: for every period of 43.636 seconds or part thereof	**40p** £5.50 per 10 mins, £33.00 per hour	**60p** £8.25 per 10 mins, £49.50 per hour	**80p** £11.00 per 10 mins, £66.00 per hour

Where the taxi is used for pre-booked journeys the fare shall be calculated from the point in the district at which the hirer commences their journey. (Loca l Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sec. 67)

If a Hackney Carriage is booked by telephone, facsimile, e mail, or other electronic means a booking fee may be charged by prior arrangement only.

Congestion Zone Charges, Tolls or similar will be applied for any journey where such charges or tolls are incurred.

Fouling will be charged at a maximum of (£200 interior) (£50 Exterior)

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Public Protection Partnership | Bracknell Forest West Berkshire

Outcome of the Non-Statutory Hackney Carriage Tariffs Consultation with the Taxi Trade

Background

West Berkshire Council is committed to balancing the legitimate aims of the taxi trade to maintain profitability in the face of increasing costs, while protecting the public from excessive fares. The current hackney carriage fare scale came into effect on the 29 July 2022. An amendment to the presentation of the tariffs was agreed in September 2022 which provided separate tariff cards for multi seater and saloon vehicles.

As was previously agreed a discussion about the tariffs took place at the 09 January 2023 Taxi Trade Liaison Group meeting where the trade suggested that:

- For 2023 they would like to see an uplift of the fares linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI) (circa 10% in November 2022);
- If approved they would like modifications to be implemented as close to the 01 April as was practicably possible each year but accepted that for 2023 the implementation date was likely to be in June or July;
- They would like the maximum fouling charges to be revisited and increased and suggested that a maximum charge of £200 should be implemented;
- They would like to see calendar time and date control on the meters to be mandated;
- They would like the words 'Hiring when journey commences between' to be revisited and replaced to reflect journeys between certain times; and
- The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy be amended to mandate a requirement for all vehicles to accept card and online payments.

As a result of these discussions a report was taken to the Licensing Committee on the 23 January 2023 where it was agreed that an informal consultation should be undertaken with the wider trade to establish their views.

What Was Proposed

The Licensing Committee proposed the following timetable for considering any modifications to the tariffs in 2023 provided that a formal request was received from the trade:

25 January to 08 February 2023	Two week informal consultation with the trade on any proposals put forward at this meeting.
20 March 2023	Special Licensing Committee to be updated on the proposals being presented to the Executive for consideration (any comments made at the LC to be reported either verbally or as a to follow item to the Executive)
23 March 2023	Formal Report Setting out Proposals to the Executive

11 May to 25 May 2023	Statutory consultation (minimum of 14 days) the timing can be amended at the discretion of Executive Members but needs to reflect that the implementation date must be within two months of the consultation closing.
09 June 2023	Decision taken by the Executive if any objections to the modifications are received and the Executive must set a date when the varied table of fares, with or without modification, will come into operation. This date must be within two months of the consultation closing. If no objections are received or if they are withdrawn the modified tariffs would come into effect on the day after the statutory consultation closes or the date of withdrawal of the last objection whichever date is the later.
July 2023	Outcome of the consultation to be reported back to the Licensing Committee.

Who and How we Consulted

The Licensing Committee requested that an informal (non-statutory) consultation be undertaken with the trade to ascertain the level of support for the proposals raised at the Taxi Trade Liaison Group meeting on the 09 January 2023. A consultation document was emailed to all Members of the trade on the 26 January 2023. The consultation was open for comments from members of the West Berkshire Taxi Trade from the 26 January 2023 to the 09 February 2023.

The consultation sought to establish:

1. The extent to which the trade supported aligning future tariff changes to the financial year i.e. implementing them as close to the 01 April each year as was practicably possible;
2. The extent to which the trade supported the mandating of acceptance of card and other electronic payments;
3. The level of support for requiring meters to be capable of being time and date controlled;
4. What changes should be made to fouling charges for both the interior and exterior of vehicles;
5. Suggestions for resolving disputes between the trade and customers in relation to fouling charges;
6. Whether or not the trade supported displaying saloon and multi- seater tariffs on different cards;
7. Whether or not the trade supported the 50% uplift for multi-seater vehicles;
8. If the trade supported linking annual modifications to tariffs to the Consumer Price Index;
9. If there was support for increasing tariffs by 10% in 2023;

10. What percentage of change to the tariffs the trade supported for 2023; and
11. The level of support for keeping the flag rate the same in 2023.

What You Told Us

The Council received nine responses to the survey. Of those respondents five identified themselves as WBC Licensed Hackney Carriage Drivers, two were both Hackney Carriage Drivers and WBC Licensed Operators, albeit one was a Private Private Hire Operator and one a Private Hire Driver.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree with the proposal to align any modifications to the tariffs with the start of the financial year (i.e. from the 01 April in any year modifications are made) as of 2024?

Response:

- 7 (78%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement;
- 1 respondent agreed with the statement; and
- 1 person disagreed with the statement but did not offer a reason for doing so.

Comments

(C1) The cost of living is going up and up and although some think it's expensive all other charges are going up such as repairs etc. The cars need to be kept in good condition and legal

Question 3*:* To what extent do you agree with the request that the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy includes a requirement mandating that all vehicles accept card payments?

Response:

- 7 (78%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement (see C2 and C3 below);
- 1 respondent neither agreed or disagreed with the statement; and
- 1 respondent strongly disagreed with the statement for the reason set out in section C1 below.

Comments

(C1) A crazy idea there are operators like me that do mainly contract work and a card machine is an expense not needed. Also in rural areas there could be a problem with reception. As long as an operator informs the passenger they may prefer to pay by BACS. If it is private hire this can easily be informed. My own work is probably 95% contract work and I think the benefits would out way the risks.
(C2) ensure the public can get home now nearly all banks have shut
(C3) should be implemented ASAP

Question 4: To what extent do you agree with the request that all meters must be capable of being time and date controlled?

Response:

- 7 (78%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement (see C2 below); and
- 2 (22%) respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal with one citing the reason set out in C1 below.

Comments

(C1) An added expense. I don't have a meter as I am private hire. Perhaps insist when a car has a new meter installed it should be time/ date controlled
(C2) protect public from being overcharged

Question 5: Current Maximum Fouling Charges are set at £75 (Interior) and £25 (exterior). What changes, if any, do you think should be made to these charges?

Interior: 4 respondents stated that £100 would be more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £150 would be more appropriate; 2 respondent stated that £200 would be more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £250 would be more appropriate; 1 person did not respond to this question
Exterior: 5 respondents stated that £25 was acceptable; 2 respondents did not respond to this question; 1 respondent stated that £50 was more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £75 was more appropriate.

Question 6: **If fouling charges are set as a maximum would you always charge the maximum?**

Yes	4
No	5

Question 7: If the answer to the above is no what factors would you use to determine the charge?

(C1) If it can be cleaned and safe to use then I would use my initiative. However if car is off road the £200 is a must but you also have loss of earnings.
(C2) How bad it was
(C3) The charge would be the same cost as charge to myself for cleaning if able to keep the contact of customer or would take maximum if not able to keep contact of customer
(C4) Dependent on the mess and time of day/shift
(C5) depending on mess

Question 8: How would you propose that any disagreements on the level of fouling charges be resolved?

(C1) It should be down purely to the driver. As stated it is not just the cleaning fee it is also the loss of earnings.
(C2) consultation
(C3) I would like to think the council would have our backs with any disputes with the public
(C4) reasoning
(C5) I will call to police
(C6) Difficult but I would like to think that the person doing the fouling is willing to pay
C7) All depends on circumstances. Some fouling is tantamount to criminal damage

Question 9: To what extent do you support the introduction of different tariff cards for saloon vehicles and multi seaters?

Response:

- One respondent stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and the remaining 8 respondents were strongly supportive of the new tariff cards for the reasons set out below.

Comments

(C1) Makes sense. If a larger car during the day or night why shouldn't it be more
(C2) makes it a lot easier to explain to customers
CC3) good idea

Question 10: To what extent do you support the current uplift of 50% for vehicles that are carrying five or more passengers?

Response:
One respondent stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and the remaining 8 respondents were strongly supportive of the 50% uplift for multi seater vehicles citing the reasons below.

Comments

(C1) saves people money not having to get 2 cars and helps pay for the extra costs
(C2) these vehicles can cost a lot more than a standard car

Question 11: To what extent do you agree with the suggestion that modifications to the tariffs be linked to the Consumer Price Index each year?

Response:
One respondent stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and the remaining 8 respondents were strongly supportive of linking annual price increases to CPI.

Comments

(C1) Drivers need to maintain their cars. If you are not earning extra money to pay the higher operating costs then people may start to cut corners.

Question 12: The Taxi Liaison Group discussed increasing the fares by circa 10% in 2023. To what extent would you support this proposal?

Response:

- One respondent did not answer this question;
- 5 respondents were strongly supportive;
- 1 respondent agreed with the proposal;
- 1 respondent neither agreed nor disagreed;
- 1 respondent disagreed with the statement (see C1).

Comments

(C1) I just think with the cost of living crisis at the moment we run the risk of putting up prices too much for the public to accept.
(C2) cost of living in West Berkshire is going up all the time
(C3) cost of living

Question 13*:* If the tariffs are to be modified in 2023 what would be your preference?

10% decrease	1 (may be an error as they were also strongly supportive of 10% increase see question 12)
5% decrease	0
Stay the same	1
5% Increase	0
10% Increase	7
Other	0

Question 14: If the Executive is minded to amend the tariffs to what extent do you with the suggestion that the flag rate should not be changed?

Response:

- 5 respondents strongly agreed with this suggestion;
- 1 respondent agreed with retaining the current flag rate;
- 3 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal;
- None of the respondents objected to the suggestion.

Question 15: Any Other Comments:

(C1) I would like the Licensing Authority to move legislation a lot quicker than at present. West Berkshire Taxi standards are lagging a long way behind other authority areas.

What We Are Proposing To Do

The outcome of the non-statutory consultation will be sent to all members of the West Berkshire taxi trade and will be published on the Public Protection Partnership website. It will also be circulated to Members of the Licensing Committee and the Portfolio Holder. It will help to inform the report to the Executive and will be included as an attachment to that report.

The outcome of this initial consultation will be taken to a Special Licensing Committee meeting on the 20 March 2023 where Members will be asked to discuss the outcome of the non-statutory consultation.

As there is support for modifying the tariffs a report will now be taken to the Executive meeting on the 23 March 2023. The Executive will make a decision about any proposed modifications, the methodology for undertaking the required statutory consultation and timetabling. These decisions will be undertaken in accordance with the procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements as stipulated within section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

If changes are proposed to be made the Council will publish a notice setting out the proposed changes in at least one local newspapers which will explain that readers will have at least fourteen days from the date of the first publication of the notice to object to the change. Notices will also be displayed at the Council Offices and will be placed on the Public Protection Partnership and Council's website and information will be emailed to the Trade.

If no objections to any proposed variation are received within the consultation period or if all objections are withdrawn, the revised fares will come into operation on the date of the expiration of the consultation period specified in the notice or the date of withdrawal of the last objection whichever date is the later.

If objections are received the matter will be discussed by the Executive at the 08 June 2023 Executive meeting and a further date would need to be set to determine when

the new table of fares, with or without modifications following consideration of the objections, would come into force. This date is required to be no later than two months after the consultation period.

WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Section 65 Hackney Carriage Fares

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that West Berkshire District Council proposes to vary the table of fares chargeable in the District as follows:

i. For the first 1340.307 yards - £5.00
ii. For each subsequent 243.692 yards – 40p
iii. Waiting Time 43.636 seconds – 40p
iv. Fouling charge for interior (£100) and exterior (£25) of vehicle.

A full set of proposals, including what will happen if there are objections, can be found at: *will insert the WBC consultation portal link here.*

Any objections to the proposed variations should be submitted in writing addressed to Sean Murphy at the address below by THURSDAY 25 MAY 2023.

A copy of the notice is available for public inspection during normal office hours at the address below for 14 days from the 11MAY 2023.

If no objections are received by Thursday 25 MAY 2023, or any such objections are subsequently withdrawn, the revised table of fares shall come into operation from FRIDAY 26 MAY 2023.

Sean Murphy
Public Protection Manager
Public Protection Partnership
Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury
West Berkshire RG14 5LD

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Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Howard Woollaston
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	15 March 2023
Report Author:	Paul Martindill
Forward Plan ref:	EX4332

1 Purpose of the Report

To update on the revised capital costs for the Newbury Sports Hub, following the Judicial Review, which can be delivered at cost certainty for £3.878M and progress into a Delivery Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services to complete the scheme.

2 Recommendation

2.1 To approve the allocation of £3.878M to complete the development of Newbury Sports Hub and thereby achieve the delivery of the number one priority in the Playing Pitch Strategy and to give approval, subject to planning permission, for the signing of the Development Management Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services.

2.2 In consultation with the Portfolio Member for Finance and Economic Development, the Executive Director of Resources is given delegated authority to approve additional costs arising in relation to this development up to a maximum of £250k above £3.878M.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The award of the contract to build Newbury Sports Hub was agreed by the Executive on 16 December 2021. An allocation of £3.351M was also approved. This was based on a cost plan formulated on 22 October 2021 with a projected 26 week construction commencement programme starting in January

	2022. A further £250k was allocated for Executive Director approval to cover the costs of expected planning conditions, which were unknown at the time of the report. Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) have subsequently costed the 29 planning conditions and reviewed inflationary pressures and provided a revised cost fee of £3.696M. The revised costs represented an increase of £345K which remained valid until 13 May 2022. WBC has not signed the Development Management Agreement (DMA) due to the claim for Judicial Review, which has delayed the commencement of the construction programme. On 3rd February 2023, the High Court dismissed the Judicial Review and ALS have now submitted further revised costs of £3.878 million for Executive approval prior to signing the Development Management Agreement for the Newbury Sports Hub. The Council has been informed that the claimant is intending to pursue a further appeal to the court of appeal. Any appeal would result in further delays to the process, with potential financial implications arising due to inflationary pressures.
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	A claim for Judicial Review (JR) was issued on the 26th April 2022, and by an order dated 3rd February 2023, the claim was dismissed by the High Court. The claimant's application for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal was also rejected by the High Court. The claimant has informed the Council of their intention to appeal the decision to the Court of Appeal. However, no valid application has been served on the Council. Completion of both the Agreement for Lease (see below) and the DMA would commit the Council to the costs of the project but works cannot commence until final determination of planning (including the JR or any appeal). The Council will not complete the Agreement for Lease or DMA until planning is in place.
Risk Management:	Risk was minimised by stopping the development of the Sport Hub whilst the High Court considered the claim for Judicial

	Review. If the appeal is granted and the JR claim is accepted by the High Court, this may subsequently result, amongst other factors, in the voiding of the planning decision. The delay has had inevitable financial implications due to cost inflation but, at the point of approval to delay, this was believed to be less than the cost of commencing the scheme and then pausing works or reinstating works. This risk would remain whilst any appeal remained pending.			
Property:	The development has been subject to a land deal and lease with Newbury Rugby Club. These agreements have not been signed due to the risks associated with the JR claim but are ready to be signed, subject to the conclusion of the determination of the claim.			
Policy:	The project will be delivered in accordance the National Planning Policy Framework. Specifically it addresses the need to increase the provision of artificial grass pitches as detailed in the Playing Pitch Strategy.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			Future demand and supply analysis shows a significant deficit for all pitch typologies across West Berkshire. The provision of the Artificial Grass Pitch will assist in meeting latent demand and facilitate growth for participation for adults and children in football and rugby.

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The new pavilion and grounds will be fully accessible. The Sports Hub has been incorporated into the new leisure management contract and market testing is in progress to ensure the future programme benefits all sections of the West Berkshire community. Officers are also working in partnership with the Football Association to explore development partnerships for football.
Environmental Impact:	X			This has been addressed through the planning conditions. Multiple measures are in place including the expansion of hedgerows, creation of a wildflower meadow, tree planting (via the Queen's canopy already undertaken) and a bee bank. The Pavilion will achieve an excellent BREEAM rating for energy management.
Health Impact:	X			The new 3G pitch will increase opportunities for children to be active and can provide a variety of football programmes, for adults such as "walking football," enabling less active and older people to continue to participate in sport.
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		None
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Sports Hub delivers a key priority within the Playing Pitch Strategy.
Core Business:	X			The Newbury Sports Hub will enhance the sports infrastructure within West Berkshire. The operational management of the service is included in new leisure management contract that is currently out to tender. The sports hub will have a

				positive impact on increasing levels of physical activity for adults and children.
Data Impact:		X		None
Consultation and Engagement:	Consultation and engagement was undertaken and reported to Executive in April 2021.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 The Council received a claim for Judicial Review (JR) in relation to the planning permission which had been granted for the Sports Hub. The Judicial Review and any subsequent appeal have implications for both the timeline for the completion of the Sports Hub, and the associated costs of development.

4.2 Following the hearing of the claim for Judicial Review that took place on 19 January 2023, the High Court dismissed the claim and refused to grant the claimant leave to appeal against that decision. The Council has recently been informed that the applicant has applied for leave to appeal directly to the Court of Appeal, but it has not been served with the appellants notice. Any request for leave to appeal is therefore out of time, and could only proceed if a request for an extension of time were allowed by the Court of Appeal. On the basis of the information known by the Council, there is no basis upon which the Court could reasonably grant an application for an extension of time in the circumstances.

4.3 To progress the project, revised costs have been established and require member approval prior to signing the DMA with Alliance Leisure Services Limited.

4.4 Following the completion of the signed agreement, mobilisation will commence with an estimated lead-in time of 16 weeks to supply energy to the work site and a 26 week construction period, thereafter.

4.5 The Sports Hub has been included within the new Leisure Management Contract and operation of the site can commence on completion of the capital works.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The Judicial Review brought against West Berkshire Council was rejected by the High Court following a number of hearings (the latest being 19 January 2023). The claimant has since indicated that a further appeal to the Court of Appeal is intended to be pursued.

5.2 To date the Newbury Sports Hub project has been delayed for 14 months during the course of this action.

Background

5.3 The Executive agreed a land deal with Newbury Rugby Club for the site of the Newbury Sports Hub on 24 April 2021

5.4 An Executive decision was taken to build the Newbury Sports Hub on 16 December 2021, with an agreed budget of £3.351 million, with Executive Director approval to add a further £250k as the scheme was developed to cost certainty and for the discharge of any planning conditions.

5.5 Planning permission was granted for the development of Newbury Sports Hub on 16 March 2022 with 29 planning conditions.

Scope of the Project

5.6 The scope of the Sports Hub has not changed during the past 14 months. The Sports Hub will deliver a new sports stadium to meet the standards of a Step 4 ground, enabling local football teams to play their home matches at the venue. The Step 4 ground grading will enable local teams like Newbury FC, who have maintained their commitment to relocate to these facilities, to achieve promotions without the need to change their home ground.

5.7 The Sports Hub significantly increases the capacity for both football and rugby and it is projected that more than 2,000 bookings will take place each year, when the site reaches operational maturity.

5.8 The full details of the project are listed below:

(a) A pavilion with 400 square metres of internal space containing:

- Four team changing rooms, officials changing room and medical room
- Club/committee meeting room
- Function room/social area
- Kitchen/Servery
- Staff office
- Toilets for visitors and spectators

(b) A 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with dimensions of 106m x 70m

- Fully accessible spectator stand
- Six sports lighting pillars
- Equipment storage containers and equipment including goals
- Essential maintenance equipment including pitch roller
- 4.5m high fencing around the pitch and double turnstile access for spectators.
- The 3G AGP pitch will be marked for both football and rugby and delivered to FIFA and World Rugby Regulation 22 standards

(c) A new car park encompassing 52 spaces including two disabled bays, electric charging points and bike racks.

(d) The development also includes ground works to meet the planning condition of a 10% increase in bio diversity on the site. This is achieved by:

- Planting of the Queen's tree canopy.
- Doubling the width of more than 300m of hedgerow on the borders of the site
- Planting wildflower meadows on two banks of the site
- Introducing a bee bank

Mobilisation

5.9 The lead-in time for securing energy to the site is 16 weeks and the construction will be completed over a 26 week period.

5.10 In order for clubs to use the Sports Hub as their home venue, registration with local leagues is required in March of each year. If works commence in April 2023 the Sports Hub should be ready for registration with local leagues in March 2024, enabling teams to play their home matches at the Sports Hub from September 2024.

Updated costs

5.11 The revised costs are shown in the table below:

Cost Certainty Summary at 21.2.23	**Phoenix & S& C Slatter**	**Phoenix and Velocity Sports**
3G Artificial Pitch with perimeter fencing, floodlighting, macadam hard-standing areas, storage container, spectator stands and associated features	£1,475,575	£1,329,972
Single Story Sports Pavilion building, car park and external works	£2,083,429	£2,083,429
BREEAM consultant fee	£2,250	£2,250
Provisional sum. External signage and Fixture, fittings & Equipment	£25,000	£25,000
Provisional sum, performance bond	£7,850	£7,850
Project Management Fees, Delivery Fees and UKLF Charge	£145,628	£137,064

Project Costs	£3,739,731	£3,585,565
Client Held contingency – Pitch	£186,987	£179,278
Client Held contingency – Club House	£113,208	£112,780
Overall cost and contingency (excl. VAT)	**£4,039,926**	**£3,877,623**

5.12 The Velocity submission aligns more closely to the specification, however, S&C Slatter have put forward an innovative proposal using an organic infill. SSL have flagged risks with this option and would not warrant the performance, although S&C Slatter would provide a performance warranty. The proposal put forward by S&C Slatter is unproven at this point in time and, given the requirement of the pitch to meet and retain FIFA and World Rugby Regulation 22 standards, it would appear prudent to proceed as per the specification and consideration could be given to looking at the innovative proposal when the pitch requires replacement in the future.

5.13 Therefore, the budget figure for the project will be £3.878 million. This assumes entering into contract by mid-April with a practical completion date of December 2023. Any delays in entering into contract will require a review of the ongoing inflationary impact on costs.

5.14 The current budget requirement reflects an increase of £527,000 as a result of the Judicial Review application and subsequent appeals.

Project Timeline

5.15 Assuming the DMA can be signed at the end of March the current project timeline is summarised as follows:

Executed DMA and JCT	Design Work & Mobilisation of Supply Chain.	Collation Info to Assist Discharge & Discharge Time frames	Commence Work on Site / Practical Completion
24.3.23	Design Work (8 wks) 27.3.23 – 28.5.23 Mobilisation of Supply Chain (8 wks) 14.4.23 – 8.6.23	Collation info (3 wks) 24.3.23 – 13.4.23 Discharge Timeframe (8 wks) 28.4.23 – 22.6.23	Commence on Site: PPS 22.6.23 Velocity 23.6.23 Practical Completion: PPS 21.12.23 Velocity 23.11.23

6 Other options considered

6.1 The other substantive option is not to progress with the scheme. If the Council determined not to progress, it should be noted that, whilst there are some options to develop more artificial grass pitches, no site has been identified, to date, that has sufficient space to develop a ground to a Step 4 standard. The development of the Sports Hub will deliver against the Council's ambition as detailed in the Playing Pitch Strategy and not progressing with the scheme is not recommended as an option.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Demand for football has continued to grow across West Berkshire and the success of the national women's football team has acted as a catalyst to significantly increase demand for playing football for women and girls. The latest data in the Stage E review of the Playing Pitch Strategy showed that more than 50 teams are having to travel outside of West Berkshire to access pitches.

7.2 This information is supporting the case for the development of new facilities within West Berkshire as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan and the creation of the Newbury Sports Hub, alongside further artificial grass pitches, will play a significant role in addressing this demand.

8 Appendices

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Officer details:

Name: Paul Martindill
Job Title: Interim Consultant (Leisure)
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Contract Award for Leisure Management Contract

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Howard Woollaston
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	10 March 2023
Report Author:	Chris Pathmadeva, Category Manager – Communities and Wellbeing
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4221

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This paper seeks Executive approval to award the Leisure Management Contract following a tender process

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive resolves to:

(1) award the Leisure management contract to the successful bidder in consultation with the s151 Officer and the Portfolio holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture.

(2) delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services in consultation with the Interim Executive Director (People) to;

(a) finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments (such amendments shall not be substantial or material) to the terms of the agreement necessary to produce a final agreement for execution and to enter into that agreement; and

b) finalise and enter into appropriate leases and/or licences required for the operator's occupancy of each facility managed by the operator under the leisure contract.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The fixed management fee, paid per annum, can be met from existing budgets. This fee is subject to CPI annually, the budget for this will be addressed through the budget build process
Human Resource:	TUPE will apply to this contract
Legal:	The procurement exercise has followed a rigorous process using the competitive procedure with negotiation in order to achieve a feasible, deliverable and most economically advantageous tender for the Council. This procedure and the manner in which it has been conducted is in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 and the Council Constitution. Throughout the process it has been made clear to bidders that there will be no substantive change to the contract terms which were advertised as part of the procurement documentation and on which there have been a great number of clarifications. Aside from those areas where the Council has agreed to make amendments during the clarification and negotiation phase (such amendments having been made available to all bidders at the respective stages of the process) and those to 'perfect' the contract with the winning bid information no further amendments will be accepted. Drafting control in respect of these permitted amendments will remain with the Council and a final contract will be issued for execution to the winning bidder should the Executive pass the resolutions
Risk Management:	Two final bids were received but one bid was not compliant with the Council's instructions for the final bids. As such, and following attempts to clarify the non-compliant final bid, the Council rejected that bid and excluded the bidder concerned from the process. Whilst there is a risk of challenge to such a decision this was balanced against the risks of accepting a non-compliant bid which could also lead to a procurement challenge.
Property:	The facilities within the leisure contract are held by the Council under differing ownership tenures. Four of the facilities are situated on school sites, and with the exception of the

	Northcroft Leisure Centre, each of the other facilities are subject to joint use agreements. The tenures of each facility are as follows:- <u>Northcroft Leisure Centre (LC) and Lido</u> The Council has absolute freehold ownership of this site. <u>Willink LC</u> This facility is located on a school site for which the Council has absolute freehold ownership. There is a joint use agreement relating to the use of the facility by the school. <u>Hungerford LC</u> This facility is located on a school site for which the Council has freehold ownership. There is a joint use agreement relating to the use of the facility by the school. <u>Kennet LC</u> This facility is located on a school site for which the Council has freehold ownership. There is a joint use agreement relating to the use of the facility by the school. <u>Newbury Sports Hub</u> This facility is to be constructed by the Council and will located on land for which the Council will be granted a 40 year lease by the Newbury Rugby Club. There will be a joint use agreement relating to the joint use of the facility by the Rugby Club. Further details relating to the Sports Hub and its construction are set out in a separate report. <u>Cotswold Sports Centre</u> This facility is located on a site owned by Tilehurst Parish Council. The Council has a leasehold interest in the site and is currently holding over under protected business tenancies. Property Services are in negotiation with the Parish Council for the grant of new leases for the duration of the leisure contract but with an option to break in favour of the Council. The site is subject to a joint use agreement with the Parish Council. <u>Lambourn Centre</u> The Council is the freehold owner of the site. The Centre is subject to a joint use agreement with Lambourn Parish Council.

	Downland Centre This facility is located on a school site for which the Council has no freehold or leasehold ownership.			
Policy:	N/A			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers
Environmental Impact:	X			See section 5.9 of this report
Health Impact:	X			See section 5.9 of this report
ICT Impact:				N/A.
Digital Services Impact:				N/A

Council Strategy Priorities:				Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes
Core Business:				BAU
Data Impact:				N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	Soft market testing was undertaken by external consultants to ascertain interest in the Contract. Public consultation was undertaken with regards to specific projects (such as the Lido and Sports Hub) Howard Woollaston – Portfolio Holder Dawn Bond – Solicitor Sarah House – Chartered Legal Executive Lisa Potts – Finance Manager Procurement Board Bevan Brittan – external legal advice			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report seeks approval from Executive to award a 10 year contract (with an option to extend for a further period of 5 years) relating to the provision of Leisure Management services across West Berkshire following a tender process conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 as a Competitive Procedure with Negotiation process.

4.2 The preferred option for procurement was approved by Procurement Board via a Procurement Strategy approved in October 2021.

4.3 The Council are procuring an Operator Partner to manage, operate and maintain a number of existing leisure and community facilities. The Contract will commence on 1 July 2023 and have a maximum term of 15 years (10-years with a possible extension of a further 5 years).

4.4 The Facilities included in the contract are as follows:

- Northcroft Leisure Centre (LC) and Lido

- Willink LC
- Hungerford LC
- Kennet LC
- Newbury Sports Hub
- Cotswold Sports Centre
- Lambourn Centre
- Downland Centre

4.5 Interest was received from seven operators which, following the multiple stage procurement process, resulted in six initial bids and eventually two final bids. The evaluation panel consisted of 2 officers from the Sport and Leisure Team and 2 staff from Strategic Leisure, an external consultancy firm employed by the Council to assist with the procurement process. The evaluation criteria was based on 60% Quality (including 10% Social Value) & 40% Price

4.6 The successful bidder scored 9,140 points out of 10,000 in the final scoring matrix.

4.6 Officers are therefore seeking approval from Executive to formally award the Contract to the successful bidder.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 Following the submission and approval of the Procurement Strategy in October 2021 to Procurement Board, the Leisure Management Invitation to Tender was advertised on the Council's procurement portal and all relevant Government portals in April 2022.

Background

5.2 Strategic Leisure undertook soft market testing to determine interest in the contract. A key finding was that in the context of West Berkshire's ageing leisure building stock, the provision of capital investment by the Council was a critical factor in determining the attractiveness of the contract and the potential for increased revenue generation.

5.3 Like many industries, the leisure sector faces an unprecedented challenge from the energy and cost of living crisis, with current projections indicating large scale failure of services as a direct result of the situation. Leisure assets are by their nature energy-intensive buildings, with both cooling and heating costs, with the latter being exacerbated by the onset of the winter season.

5.4 Operators providing public services on behalf of Councils tend to operate on very small profit margins. They often do not have the level of reserves built up that are required for unforeseen circumstances such as the energy crisis. Figures from the National Leisure Recovery Fund show that providers used almost £125 million of reserves to sustain

themselves through Covid, leaving them too depleted to last through this period of high energy prices

5.5 In other areas, local authorities have overseen the closure of their leisure facilities, some on a permanent basis and others over the winter period, whilst others are reviewing their options closely including reducing opening hours and staff reductions

5.6 The LGA wrote a letter to Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt and Secretary of State Michael Gove in January 2023 on the urgent support needed for public sport and leisure services. The LGA urged the Government to act swiftly with three key measures:

- Reclassify pools and leisure centres as energy intensive in the Energy Bills Discount Scheme so they can access the higher level of energy price discount.
- Set out what tangible support it will provide to the wider sector – including gyms and sports facilities – to help navigate the energy crisis across 2023 so that service restrictions and facility closures can be minimised.
- Set out a "plan for the growth" for the sector by aligning the proposed new Sports Strategy with the Spring Budget to unlock the potential of the sector to support the economic, health, and social wellbeing of the nation

Proposals

5.7 All bids received were evaluated in accordance with the published evaluation criteria. The quality criteria was assessed over 14 method statements based on the following topics:

- Health, wellbeing, programming and social value
- Staffing (structure, training and development)
- Marketing Media, Communications, Public Relations and customer experience
- Pricing for Activities
- Maintenance
- Environmental, waste and pest control management
- Management, performance management and reporting
- Health and safety management, Quality Assurance and Compliance with legislation and Industry Standards
- Catering, retail and vending
- IT, telephones and online booking system
- Management of car parks, outdoor areas, landscape and site furniture
- Mobilisation following appointment/Innovation and added value
- Newbury Sports Hub
- Capital investment (not scored)

5.8 The successful proposal scored the highest quality marks, achieving 51% out of the maximum 60% available. The submission outlined a particularly bespoke leisure offering for West Berkshire and provided an enormous amount of added value which was reflected in their evaluation scoring.

5.9 The successful bidder will facilitate access to a network of modern and sustainable facilities – with proposals to develop, modernise and enhance Northcroft alongside potential investment options for Kennet and Willink LCs.

5.10 The operator are fully committed to developing a partnership with the Council to successfully deliver the West Berkshire Leisure Operating Contract strategic outcomes, enhancing the reputation of the Council and the operator as a recognised *"physical activity and leisure brand"* across the District. The proposals submitted will deliver a market-leading service, through more effective partnerships and enhanced quality in facilities and programmes in support of the Council's outcome requirements.

5.11 In respect of the quality aspects outlined above, the successful proposal offers the following value:

Health, wellbeing, programming and social value

A new Corporate Community Health and Wellbeing Framework in West Berkshire, aligned to meet the specific objectives of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

A number of Community Health & Wellbeing and Outreach programmes, including delivery for those from areas of higher need through reduced or free activity initiatives.

A number of excellent examples of programmes and delivery of outcomes, over and above what was included in the Council's specification:

The successful bidder's GP Referral scheme is a proposed solution for people with health conditions to increase physical activity levels and improve health.

The successful bidder will work in partnership with GP Social Prescribers to identify referrals who qualify for free facility activity passes. With a focus on key target groups, the successful bidder will develop the Social Prescribing scheme across West Berkshire, working with partners (e.g. West Berkshire H&W Board) to promote all activities through the EA card, local GPs surgeries etc with programmes available in the sites/ across the community.

Social Value - Utilising 4Global Social Value reporting and Single Customer View data, the successful bidder will effectively monitor the outcomes the partnership is delivering through sport, activity and health programmes. They will provide a focussed and strategic approach to the delivery of wider social value outcomes through:

- employment of a Social Value Champion (Health Development Manager) to work with the H&W and facility management teams to improve Social Value return across West Berkshire
- a focussed, strategic approach to delivery of wider social value for residents and colleagues

- measurement through othe 4Global Social Value Calculator tool, providing analysis of the successful bidder's operational impact
- a strategy to help local communities continue to recover from the impact of Covid by creating community hubs where people will want to live, work, undertake leisure/social activities
- a strategy to support improved economic equality, creating a vibrant economy and matching local skills provision with future job/career opportunities – through recruitment, apprenticeships and work placements
- delivery of community health and wellbeing initiatives, improving the health and wellbeing of residents through better access to facilities - an inclusive approach to physical and mental wellbeing and reduction in health inequalities
- a focus on fighting climate change in partnership with the Council

Staffing (structure, training and development)

Their staffing proposals will deliver a quality service by providing:

- sufficient, competent on-site and H&W teams focussed on delivering a quality service
- a workforce development strategy delivering social value and improved retention / succession
- competitive rates of pay and benefits (aligning hourly rates to the current National Living Wage which is increasing in April 2023) and welfare schemes including occupational health, free centre memberships, Cycle to Work scheme etc.
- a high-level performance and standards of customer service at all times
- a structure based on the scale of the Contract
- apprenticeship strategy focussed on developing 5 colleagues from local communities annually.

Marketing Media, Communications, Public Relations and customer experience

Their approach will enhance the current service and create a consistent approach to improve awareness and accessibility including provision of the following:

- focused approach to Marketing, PR and Customer Care to achieve a balance of community and commercial outcomes, supporting increases in participation and increased Social Value
- plans that reflect local trends, venue capacity, Health and Wellbeing strategies, targeted participation and social demographics of West Berkshire
- a robust system to handle complaints and comments which complies with Council policy
- a specific PR Plan which is aligned to the marketing plan and activity programme

Pricing for Activities

They will deliver:

- a pricing strategy created through analysis and research of the local community market needs, whilst maximising commercial opportunities to provide an improved revenue position for the Council
- offer low cost / no cost activity through their facility and H&W programmes - for low-income individuals and families
- a pricing structure that considers protected bookings, all activity areas and provides a clear strategy for maximising revenue - memberships, swimming lessons, block bookings and casual usage across all user groups (adult, junior, senior, concessions)
- Innovative reporting methods to evidence the delivery of positive impact in West Berkshire through our programming and pricing approach

Maintenance

Within the existing contract with Parkwood Leisure, planned and reactive maintenance costs are shared with the leisure operator and hence the Council has subsequently held a budget to manage these responsibilities. To improve operational efficiency and response times within the new Contract, the successful bidder will be responsible for meeting the cost of all planned and reactive maintenance and equipment maintenance.

- the direct employment of a dedicated, full-time Maintenance Manager
- technology-based asset management systems and maintenance fund allocation to operations throughout the contract term ensuring the facilities consistently retain their 'fresh' appearance
- all servicing, repairs undertaken by in-house staff or via valued subcontractors – local SMEs and national
- a focus on low-carbon, sustainable operational delivery
- site specific, detailed cleaning schedules to include daily, weekly, monthly and annual cleaning
- provision of specific cleaning equipment for all facilities

Environmental, waste and pest control management

Through their environmental strategy and systems the successful bidder will bring a series of benefits incorporating their carbon reduction plans, techniques and environmental commitments, including:

- a clear, actionable strategy to maximising energy conservation; working with their partner organisations and engagement with colleagues (bringing cultural change)
- measurement and monitoring of emissions and building of business cases for opportunities derived from their Energy Action Plans and support from specialist partners
- facility specific Energy Engagement Plan (EEP) – a manual to promote, drive and educate colleagues with the techniques to reduce consumption

- expertise of in-house resources; field-based Regional Technical Manager who will play a major role in establishing procedures, training of the Maintenance Engineer and Carbon Reduction Co-ordinators
- user engagement – particularly the increased number of users attracted; persuading them to use more sustainable forms of transport, re-cycle more and reduced carbon footprint
- An innovative Carbon Reduction Delivery Plan - designed to ensure activity meets key Council targets
- working with their waste partner to introduce their 'Dashboard customer hub' to review/assess waste performance – targeting 100% landfill diversion within the contract

Catering, retail and vending

Their approach to catering will provide:

- high quality in-house operated F&B service at Northcroft, with an new café development serving the leisure centre and Lido, with menus catering for customers and park visitors
- corporate activity days / events / meetings at Northcroft Lido with buffet/corporate hospitality menus
- a clear plan for F&B facilities and services across the Contract, including vending and water fountains
- professional approach to the management of F&B services achieving 5/5 food hygiene certification
- free Wi-Fi for added value and the comfort of connectivity for bookings / socialising
- increased marketing/advertisement opportunities of café/events through social media/website
- providing lunches for children's holiday activities, hospitality and events catering
- healthy options to include nutrition bars, fresh fruits etc
- catering for vegetarians, vegans, persons with specific dietary needs, especially gluten and dairy free, ensuring strict compliance with the UK Food Information Amendment ('Natasha's Law' effective since 1st October 2021)

Newbury Sports Hub

The new contract also includes for the full year operation of Newbury Sports Hub based on a projected opening in January 2024. Within their proposals they commit to:

- developing strong partnerships with stakeholder clubs to develop a programme of community activity, events, etc., fully utilising the facilities on offer
- increasing outdoor attendances
- a colleague structure focussed on increasing participation and collaborative working with partner clubs – including development of a volunteer pool for match days and events
- sports pathways through a football development programme in partnership with Newbury FC.

Risks

5.12 As outlined earlier in the report, the impact of utility costs in this contract has been significant. To put this into context, at the commencement of the tender exercise operators were given utility tariffs by the Council to price their consumption against and bids were received on this basis at the initial stage. However following the war in Ukraine and the subsequent surge in utility costs, the Council asked tenderers to apply their own utility tariffs for the contract.

5.13 Should utility rates drop, the Council will be in a position to invoke utility benchmarking at the end of year 1 of the Contract and an updated management fee will then apply from the start of year 2. It should be noted that the reverse applies should utility rates continue to increase and furthermore, the Council removed a cap on annual utility benchmarking. Officers envisage this improves the Council position so as not to cap any expected decrease in costs over the life of this particular Contract.

5.14 The Council will be seeking a flexible partnership approach to risk sharing in the event of a future pandemic and to operate the service scope within parameters which are affordable to the Council.

5.15 The significant increase in participation is linked to the delivery of capital projects, particularly at Northcroft LC (dryside) to be completed in years 1 and 2 of the new Contract. The Council will work in close partnership with the new operator to deliver the planned investment programme.

5.16 Ultimately the leisure operator carries the risk of meeting the income targets they have set within their proposal and for the delivery of sustainable leisure facilities over the Contract period.

Finance

5.17 The annual management fee is a payment from the Council to the successful bidder, subject to CPI in April of each year (NB – CPI is applied at the anniversary of the Contract each year however the CPI figure for that particular April is used). There are a number of levers the Council can pull to adjust this figure to a more favourable position. In particular, fuel benchmarking can be invoked by either party on an annual basis. Should, as current forecasts predict, energy prices decrease then the benchmarking procedure will allow for the management fee to be revised accordingly

5.18 Within the current existing contractual payment arrangements the Council are paying both the management fee and support costs with Parkwood Leisure operating at zero profit. The monthly costs to the Council varies but averages at around £40,000 per month.

5.19 The new contract fee represents a significant reduction in costs and risk to the Council whist providing a range of new and enhanced services and transferring additional responsibilities to the operator as detailed below.

New Responsibilities

To improve operational efficiency the following changes of responsibility have been enacted within the new contract:

a) West Berkshire Card

The Council have been responsible for cost of the administration of the West Berkshire Card (£27k) however within the new contract the Leisure Operator will be responsible for both the administration and the cost of the West Berkshire Card

b) Maintenance Responsibilities

Within the existing contract with Parkwood Leisure, planned and reactive maintenance costs are shared with the leisure operator and hence the Council has subsequently held a budget to manage these responsibilities (£100k). To improve operational efficiency and response times within the new Contract, the Leisure Operator will be responsible for meeting the cost of all planned and reactive maintenance and equipment maintenance.

c) Outreach Services

The new Contract contains a new dedicated Health and Wellbeing team focused on outcomes for activity development that are dedicated to the provision of outreach services and improving the health and wellbeing of residents. This means that services will take place in a range of community settings including village halls, local parks etc targeting residents who are inactive and building their confidence to participate regularly in physical activity.

d) Lido

The management fee for the new Contract also includes for the operational costs of the new lido, interactive play facilities and slides. Within the current Contract, the lido only operated for an average of 11 weeks per year whilst in the new Contract the lido is operational for six months each year (April to September).

e) Newbury Sports Hub

The new Contract also includes the full year operation of Newbury Sports Hub based on a projected opening in January 2024. The successful bidder's offer includes a football development post and a substantial football development programme whilst it will also secure a home venue for Newbury FC for participation in league and cup competitions who have continued to express their commitment to locating at the Sports Hub.

6 Other options considered

6.1 Extension with the incumbent operator Parkwood Leisure – the current contract has been extended to the maximum allowed under the current terms.

6.2 Officers utilised the Sport England facilities planning model tool to determine if the scale and location of West Berkshire's leisure centres were appropriate for the existing population and projected population growth up to 2036. The outcome of this was that the existing leisure centres are appropriately located to serve the needs of the population and the scale of provision was also appropriate. However the age of the existing stock was highlighted as an issue which could affect future demand. The planned capital investments are designed to help alleviate this issue. In the future the report advised that rationalising the service could provide benefits with the opening of a new leisure centre which could cover the catchment area of more than one of West Berkshire's existing centres. The issue of identifying a location for a new leisure centre is highlighted for future consideration in the leisure strategy 2022-32.

6.3 Closure of services – leisure centres are community hubs and participants utilise the services for social and health reasons. For older people, the social aspect is often of particular value and this was highlighted in the public consultation underpinning the leisure strategy. Additionally, leisure centres are homes for local sports clubs and the only venues where schools can meet their curriculum obligations to teach children to swim 25metres and Key Stage 2. Any closure should be considered in the context of an Equality Impact Assessment.

6.4 Bring service back in house – this would require a major restructure of the leisure team and result in a considerable increase in costs for core services such as HR, Payroll, ICT as more than c200 staff would be joining the Council.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The Executive resolves to:

(1) award the Leisure management contract to the successful bidder in consultation with the s151 Officer and the Portfolio holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture

(2) delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services in consultation with the Interim Executive Director (People) to;

(a) finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments (such amendments shall not be substantial or material) to the terms of the agreement necessary to produce a final agreement for execution and to enter into that agreement; and

b) finalise and enter into appropriate leases and/or licences required for the operator's occupancy of each facility managed by the operator under the leisure contract

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

8.2 Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

Evaluation Report compiled by external consultants, Strategic Leisure

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: ALL

Officer details:

Name: Chris Pathmadeva
Job Title: Category Manager – Communities & Wellbeing
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E-mail: chris.pathmadeva1@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	Contract Award for the provision of Leisure management services for the period from July 2023 to June 2033
Summary of relevant legislation:	
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Name of Budget Holder:	**Jim Sweeting**
Name of Service/Directorate:	**Communities and Wellbeing / People**
Name of assessor:	Chris Pathmadeva
Date of assessment:	14 February 2023
Version and release date (if applicable):	

Is this a …. ?		**Is this policy, strategy, function or service … ?**	
Policy	**Yes ☐ No ☒**	**New or proposed**	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Strategy	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**Already exists and is being reviewed**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Function	**Yes ☐ No ☐**	**Is changing**	**Yes ☒ No ☐**
Service	**Yes ☒ No ☐**		

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	The primary objective of the procurement was to operate a financially sustainable sport and leisure service which meets the relevant strategic objectives of the Leisure Strategy 2022-32
Objectives:	Removing the barriers to participation in physical activity
Outcomes:	Create a more physically active and healthy community
Benefits:	Improvements in mental and physical health and increased sense of community cohesion

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?		
Group Affected	**What might be the effect?**	**Information to support this**
Age	Positive	The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers
Disability	Positive	The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers
Gender Reassignment	N/A	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	N/A	
Pregnancy and Maternity	N/A	
Race	Positive	The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers
Religion or Belief	Positive	The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and

		Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers
Sex	Positive	The contract requires adherence to Equality Act 2010 and The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance for Employers
Sexual Orientation	N/A	
Further Comments:		

(3) Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Clauses within the contract address the requirement to adhere with equality legislation (Schedule 19) and promote equal opportunities	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Clauses within the contract address the requirement to adhere with equality legislation (Schedule 19) and promote equal opportunities	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a EqIA 2.

If an EqIA 2 is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the EqIA guidance and template – http://intranet/index.aspx?articleid=32255.

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqIA Stage 2 required	**Yes ☐ No ☒**
Owner of EqIA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqIA Stage Two:	

Name: Chris Pathmadeva **Date: 13 February 2023**

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	People
Service:	Communities and Wellbeing
Team:	Leisure
Lead Officer:	Paul Martindill
Title of Project/System:	Leisure management contract
Date of Assessment:	14 February 2023

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
Will you be processing SENSITIVE or "special category" personal data? Note – sensitive personal data is described as "*data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation*"	☐	☒
Will you be processing data on a large scale? Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both	☐	☒
Will your project or system have a "social media" dimension? Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?	☐	☒
Will any decisions be automated?	☐	☒

	Yes	No
Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual's input is "scored" or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any "profiling" of data subjects?		
Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?	☐	☒
Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?	☐	☒
Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes? Note – this could include biometrics, "internet of things" connectivity or anything that is currently not w idely utilised	☐	☒

If you answer "Yes" to any of the above, you will probably need to complete Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two. If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

Contract Award - Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	7 February 2023
Report Author:	Gary Clarke
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4294

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This paper seeks Executive approval to award the Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract, following a tender process.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive resolves to:

a) award the contract for the provision of building maintenance services to the successful bidder; and

b) delegate authority to Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services to finalise the terms of the contract as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments to the terms of the contract which are necessary to reach final agreement but do not materially affect the intent and substance of the contract.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The estimated contract value is up to £4.2m over 5 years, based on pre-pandemic spend data and includes 10% inflation (CPI 9.9% August 2022). Funded by Capital. As per the Council's constitution, spend under £100,000 requires authority from the relevant Head of Service. Prior to each activity being carried out under the term contract, a quotation for the works will be received from the

	term contractor and will be approved by Head of Service and Budget Manager (if different). A standard schedule of call out fees will apply to reactive works. Approved by Finance Ian Wigginton 27/01/23.			
Human Resource:	N/A			
Legal:	The procurement has complied with the PCR 2015 and the Council's Contract Rules of Procedure. A bespoke JCT Measured Term Contract has been drafted and will need to be completed as between the Council and the successful bidder. Approved by Claire Say 02/02/23.			
Risk Management:	See paragraph 5 Supporting Information			
Property:	A total of 126 properties will be covered by this contract			
Policy:	N/A			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A

Environmental Impact:	X			A robust maintenance contract ensures that the Council manages its resources effectively
Health Impact:	X			Well maintained properties are likely to have positive mental and physical impact
ICT Impact:		X		N/A
Digital Services Impact:		X		N/A
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			A robust maintenance contract ensures that the Council manages its resources effectively
Core Business:		X		N/A
Data Impact:		X		N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	Claire Say – Legal Services Leah Rinaldi - Insurance Manager Andi Blinco – Maintenance and Facilities Manager Vickie Collins – Construction & Facilities Category Manager Ian Wigginton - Snr. Finance Manager			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report seeks approval from the Executive to award the Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract to the winning bidder.

4.2 The contract duration is 3 years with a 2 year extension.

4.3 A Measured Term Contract as proposed will create a mechanism allowing the Council to instruct services or works at different locations without needing to procure a new contract each time. As per CIPFA recommendations, a 70/30 split between planned maintenance to reactive maintenance in the value of the contract has been applied.

4.4 The proposed contract will be with the winning bidder to provide professional trade services to assist in the planned works, maintenance and reactive repairs to the Council's portfolio of 126 properties throughout West Berkshire including; Corporate Offices, Resource Centres & Care Homes, Leisure Centres, Shaw House, Newbury Museum & Libraries, Pupil Referral Units and Family Hubs, School Caretaker Bungalows and Temporary accommodation properties managed by Housing Services.

4.5 The proposed contract will cover all categories of work for reactive repairs, planned maintenance and minor work projects up to a value of £100,000 per activity/project. Within this category the contractor will be required to respond to planned works orders and provide a responsive repairs service both during and outside normal working hours.

4.6 Approval of the award of the contract will ensure the benefits of the Term Contract structure will be delivered where they relate to reducing costs and delivering efficiencies in the provision and delivery of maintenance and repair activities across the 126 sites.

5 Supporting Information

Overview and Procurement Strategy

5.1 This report outlines the estimated value and the expected benefits of awarding the Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract. This process was run as an open tender process approved by the Procurement Board on 27th October 2022. The tender documents were published on InTend on 16th December 2022.

5.2 34 contractors initially expressed an interest in the project. 4 contractors submitted a tender return.

5.3 The tender received was evaluated on the basis of 60% price and 40% quality (including 10% Social value). The pricing strategy was to ask for pricing against a set number of likely scenarios, day rates for skilled work and call out charges.

5.4 The quality strategy was to assess answers to questions related to Programme Management, Health and Safety, customer service capability in managing appointments, responsiveness and management of emergency call-outs and social value.

5.5 The total number of marks available was 1000. The winning tender scored 800.

Background

5.6 The estimated contract value is estimated up to £4.2m over 5 years, based on pre-pandemic spend data and includes 10% inflation (CPI 9.9% August 2022). The award of the contract is expected to deliver the following advantages;

(a) Efficiency – reducing internal and external transactions costs by providing a clear and simple route to supplying the services.

(b) Economy – Agreed rates for repair and maintenance work reduces exposure to fluctuating prices of labour and materials and allows the commissioning officer to concentrate of the delivery of the service without the need to engage in further negotiation.

(c) Effectiveness – Management of one supplier for a variety of services will enable better monitoring of quality and performance and simplify communications.

Other Proposals

5.7 The existing arrangement for ad hoc commissioning of works does not provide the advantages of the proposed long term contract. Short term contracts are not recommended as a short term contract is unattractive to suppliers and are not advantageous to the Council as a short term contract provides no scope for suppliers to manage mobilisation costs.

Key risks

5.8 Key Risk assessment

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Owner	Counter Measure
Contractor goes into administration	Med	Possibility of no contractor cover depending on administration status	WBC/Contractor	Financial checks prior to award Revert to temporary contractor cover if necessary
Contractor enters formal liquidation	Low	No Contractor cover	WBC	Revert to temporary contractor cover
No 24hr Cover	Med	No emergency response	WBC	Seek temporary cover
Poor performance	Low	Quality	AB/Contractor	Measured Improvement/communications
No reactive response within agreed SLA's	Low	H&S, No Services	WBC	Improve/communications/action plan

6 Other options considered

6.1 The existing arrangement for ad hoc commissioning of works does not provide the advantages of the proposed long term contract. Short term contracts are not recommended as a short term contract is unattractive to suppliers and are not advantageous to the Council as a short term contract provides no scope for suppliers to manage mobilisation costs.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The Executive resolves to:

a) award the contract for the provision of building maintenance services to the successful bidder; and

b) delegate authority to Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services to finalise the terms of the contract as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments to the terms of the contract which are necessary to reach final agreement but do not materially affect the intent and substance of the agreement.

8 Appendices

NONE

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Officer details:

Name: Gary Clarke
Job Title: Procurement Officer
Tel No: 01635 876304
E-mail: Gary.Clarke1@westberks.gov.uk

Item 18:

Member Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 23 March 2023.

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Councillors in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

A. **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"Given the High Court Judgement where the Council Established that Monks Lane Sports Hub is not a replacement but a standalone – How will the council now fulfil its obligation to provide a replacement for Faraday road as the LRIE and Faraday Road football ground are redeveloped?""

B. **Question submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture:**

"Given the delay because of the confusion in planning, has the Council refreshed its business plan for Monk's Lane?"

C. **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships:**

"Given that the Lib Dems have committed, should they take power, to appointing an opposition party Member as Chair of the Oversight and Scrutiny Management Commission and that the current Chairman indicated in his closing speech that in certain scenarios (for example, call-ins), OSMC should be chaired by a Councillor from an Opposition Group, would the current Conservative Executive be willing to also commit to the same?""

D. **Question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships:**

"The Lib Dems have previously requested of the portfolio holder that the Advisory Groups (for example, EAG) be open to the public by default and only closed when confidential information needs to be shared. Would the current administration agree that doing so might improve the public's faith in the council as a whole and lead to better transparency in decision making?"

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 6a of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Agenda Item 20.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 6a of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Agenda Item 21.

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