

Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan



Issues, Options & Ideas

Progress Report July 2021

What Is A Neighbourhood Plan?
Youth Engagement Work
Emerging Policies & Projects
Potential Interventions Map

*... and a chance to contribute your ideas
and comment on the work so far*

What Is The Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan?

Cirencester Town Council is supporting the preparation of the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan, being prepared by the local community, the people who know and love Cirencester best. This will ensure that Cirencester gets the right development in the right place. When complete, the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan will be used to influence and to decide planning applications, including new buildings and changes to existing buildings and the use of land across the whole town.

The neighbourhood plan is being prepared by Steering Group of local people on behalf of the Cirencester Town Council. This report sets out progress so far and the ideas, issues

and options discussed by the Steering Group. Cirencester has a rich history and a bright future. The Steering Group would like to hear from you and to get your thoughts on that future. You can do this by providing your own ideas and by commenting on those set out in this report.

Neighbourhood planning is a powerful tool that gives communities statutory powers to shape how their communities develop. The Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan will be a document that sets out planning policies for the whole of the town, consisting of the eight election ward boundaries of Abbey, Beeches, Chesterton, Four Acres, New Mills, St Michael's, Stratton and Watermoor.

Time Line

Plan Preparation Actions



March 2020	Early community engagement via a questionnaire survey
rest of 2020	Thematic Groups develop specific policy and project ideas
Spring 2021	Digital focus groups held on Zoom to test ideas further
April to June 2021	Youth engagement with college and local schools
July 2021	Preparation of this Progress Report
Summer 2021	Consultation on this Progress Report

Estimated Forward Time Line



Autumn 2021	Refine policy and project ideas based on feedback received
Winter 2021	Further public consultation and engagement work
Spring 2022	Formal 6-week (minimum) consultation of full draft of the plan
Spring 2022	Revisions and changes based on consultation results
Summer 2022	Submission of revised plan to Cotswold District Council
Late 2022	Independent examination
Spring 2023	Referendum (plan obtains legal force if supported at referendum)

Youth Engagement with Cirencester College

Earlier this year, the neighbourhood plan team worked with young adults from Cirencester College, who shared their experiences of life in the town and the things they would like to improve in the future.

With the support of the geography staff, the college students participated in a design workshop in Cricklade Street, using foam blocks light enough to move but strong enough to sit on. These blocks sparked illuminating conversations with the public about how the town can be better designed as a place to stay rather than a place to shop and how it can be more welcoming to young people.



What the college students said ...

"We come to town to meet up, to go to a café"

"We often meet in Abbey Grounds as it is a more open space"

"It would be good if there were fewer cars in town"

"We like Black Jack Street because there are lots of independent shops, there is lots to look at and it feels like you are in another country"

"Black Jack Street is nice because there are plants outside the shops, it looks more welcoming than Cricklade Street"

"Abbey Gardens could have more events, such as five-a-side football"

"There needs to be more public space – the area behind Cricklade Street – there is loads of space here but it is badly designed, this could be a great social space with a market"

"There are no public toilets in the park or town centre and there really needs to be otherwise you have to go into a café"

"We really like the area outside the Abbey with the coffee vans and informal seating"

"The skate park is far away from town. It's like we don't belong in town. If the skate park was closer to town we would use the shops and cafés"

To see more results and to add your own ideas to the mix, please go to www.cirencesternp.org



Youth Engagement with Local Schools

Meanwhile, the neighbourhood plan team have asked children at several local schools — **Chesterton, Watermoor, Stratton, Paternoster and Powell's** — for their ideas. These younger children from across Cirencester have been creatively designing playful new spaces. Using a bespoke worksheet distributed through the schools, they were asked a series of questions and invited to draw ideas for the future. Below is a summary of the main messages received.

Q. Talk to each other about your journey to school. Please write down three things that would improve your journey.



1

Modes of Transport

More Cycle Paths or Routes
Less Traffic & Fewer Cars
More Cycling

65

16

14

8

Number of responses from the total of 97 received that included these types of details...

... and the top three suggestions within that category of response



2

Maintenance

Less Dog Mess
Cleaner, Less Litter
Fewer Potholes

52

16

13

10



3

Improving Streets & Paths

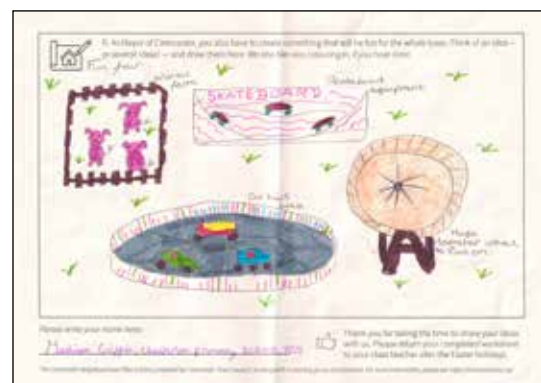
Lower Speed Limits, Less Speeding
Wider Walking Paths
More or Different Routes

42

7

7

6



Here are just a few examples of the 97 schools worksheets returned to the project team. Careful analysis of all the drawings provided an insight to the types of changes this age group would like to see.

To see more results and to add your own ideas to the mix, please go to
www.cirencesternp.org



Q: Imagine you have a friend from far away coming to visit. They want to see Cirencester. Where would you take them and why?



1	Pretty Outdoor Places	69
	Abbey Grounds	18
	Parks	17
	Cirencester Park	15



2	Urban & Civic Places	48
	Museum	8
	Shops	6
	Town Centre	5



3	Adventure Activities & Sports	29
	The Outdoor Pool	9
	Other Swimming Pools	5
	Leisure Centres	3

Q. You are Mayor of Cirencester! Please create something that will be fun for the whole town. Think of an idea — or several ideas!



1	Sports & Adventure Activities	52
	Trampoline Park	10
	Water Park	10
	Skate Park	8



2	Entertainment & Things To Do	52
	Cinema	11
	Fun Fair	7
	Theme Park	5



3	Playground Equipment	50
	Slides	10
	Swings	10
	More Playgrounds	6

Draft Vision, Aims & Objectives

DRAFT VISION The Cirencester

Neighbourhood Plan needs a Vision Statement at the beginning, to help set the scene. Neighbourhood plan vision statements can be a single sentence or a few paragraphs, setting out in words the type of place the town and surroundings should be like in the future. What sort of place will Cirencester be to live, work and visit? What sort of qualities and characteristics it should exhibit? This is the draft Vision Statement (right) developed by the Steering Group and based on all the research undertaken to date. **What do you think? Do you agree?**



From Roman origins to a bright zero carbon future, Cirencester — the capital of the Cotswolds — will be a place that responds fully to the climate emergency, where we can celebrate the town's rich history and attractive appearance; where we can enjoy spending time, both in the urban streets and spaces and in the green open spaces and nature reserves; where workers, residents and visitors want to be; where developments integrate the needs of people and nature; and where there is a distinctive character and identity, rooted in traditional town centre uses, all enriched by new businesses and sustainable economic activity



DRAFT AIMS & OBJECTIVES What do the planning policies and projects in the plan seek to achieve? How do they work together? The aims and objectives should be concise statements setting out what protections and enhancements to Cirencester will be brought about by the plan. These are important as they will become benchmarks against which the effectiveness of the plan will be assessed post-referendum. Below is a set of draft aims and objectives. **What do you think?**

To comment on the draft Vision, Aims & Objectives, please go to www.cirencesternp.org and complete the survey

1. *Maintain and enhance the distinctive Cotswold visual character of Cirencester, its immediate setting, and the wider neighbourhood area.*
2. *Coordinate all new development so that it contributes to the "20 Minute Neighbourhood Model" including the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and essential services for the whole community.*
3. *Create a robust yet flexible network of streets and spaces to effectively promote active travel modes, for both current and future populations.*
4. *More effectively integrate the outlying residential areas with the town centre core, overcoming the barrier effect of highways infrastructure as currently experienced.*
5. *Reduce demand for energy, improve air quality, mitigate flood risk and achieve net zero carbon.*
6. *Protect and enhance the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the built environment and the wider countryside.*
7. *Raise the quality of new development through use of sustainable materials, methods, details, and inclusive design that responds to the Cirencester context.*
8. *Ensure that land made available for development will be developed in an efficient manner, in such a way as to improve people's quality of life, for both new and existing residents.*
9. *Manage the threat of flood by safeguarding functional floodplain and ensuring that such measures necessary to protect the area are undertaken.*
10. *Deliver the community infrastructure necessary to support an evolving town into the future.*

Emerging Planning Policies

The main part of a neighbourhood plan is a series of planning policies that will be used to determine future planning applications e.g. should a development proposal be granted planning permission or not? The planning policies will be used to help make these decisions. The draft planning policies in this report have been developed by the Steering Group and are grouped into six different themes or topic areas. At the present time, the draft policies are only short one-liners. The final policy statements will be more comprehensive.

What do you think? Do you agree? Are there issues important to you that you feel are missing from this set of draft planning policies?



Access & Movement

** active travel means walking and cycling*

1. *Improve active travel* routes that connect outlying residential areas (e.g. Stratton, the Beeches etc) with the town centre core.*
2. *Establish better active travel links between the town and the surrounding countryside e.g. Water Park, Kemble etc.*
3. *Through a range of coordinated measures — including street design, town centre management, signage, and a vehicle parking strategy — seek to reduce the number of vehicle movements within the town centre.*
4. *Support for the development of a single public transport hub, that will allow convenient and easy access to bus services, car clubs and taxi ranks.*
5. *Backing for measures that make walking and cycling more convenient across Cirencester.*



Design & Built Environment

6. *New development and their designs to respond positively to the Cotswold vernacular and the distinctive Cirencester context.*
7. *New developments to be sited in ways that protect and enhance identified views and vistas e.g. of church towers.*
8. *Promotion of locally affordable new homes in the most sustainable locations.*
9. *Encourage the conversion of upper floors across the town centre to residential uses to support a larger population living in the centre.*
10. *All development proposals required demonstrate how they will contribute to the "20 Minute Neighbourhood Model" — see interventions map for details.*



Quality of the Public Realm

11. *Support for proposals that enhance the quality of streets and spaces, such as better surface materials, more generous space for pedestrians and improved lighting.*
12. *Proposals that make Cirencester more walkable and more sociable, that identify and enhance spaces for social encounters — "bumping spaces" — will be supported by the plan.*
13. *Through the submitted Design & Access Statements (DASs) planning applications will be expected to demonstrate how they can enhance the town's streets and spaces and how they respond to relevant street design guidance.*
14. *Protect identified and mapped Non-designated Heritage Assets.*
15. *Support for a heritage trail, new wayfinding systems and quality signage.*

Emerging Planning Policies /... continued



Economy

16. *Proposals that offer to introduce the missing elements of the “20 Minute Neighbourhood Model” to the town will be supported.*
17. *Proposals that will erode the critical mass of town centre economic activity will be resisted. This includes proposals that will convert employment, leisure, food/drink, commercial or social spaces to residential uses.*
18. *New models of town centre economic activity, such as hybrid spaces — cafe, workshop, performance, health, education, co-working, social and/or community spaces — will be supported.*
19. *Protection of ground floors within the town centre core from conversion to residential. This will safeguard street level spaces for retail, social, community and entrepreneurial activity that will maintain a vibrant and lively town centre atmosphere.*
20. *Protect, enhance existing employment areas (e.g. Love Lane Industrial Area) allowing flexible growth through the sensitive introduction of new economic uses and activities. Seek the repurposing of out of town retail “sheds” to alternative commercial or social use as retail demand declines.*



Environment & Climate Change

21. *Support for proposals that move the town towards net zero carbon and mitigate the effects of climate change.*
22. *Identify and protect Local Green Spaces (LGS) as designated by the plan. These are spaces that are local in character, in reasonably close proximity to the community and hold a particular local significance, for example because of their beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.*
23. *Protect and enhance land identified as important for biodiversity, wildlife habitats and/or wildlife corridors, river corridors and wetlands.*
24. *Protect the functional floodplain from development, with the exception of essential infrastructure works required by flood mitigation.*
25. *Development proposals to accord with approved sustainable ultra-low carbon construction methods and “Building With Nature” techniques.*
26. *Measures that improve air quality across the plan area, especially in the town centre, will be supported.*



Wellbeing & Community

27. *Health Impact Assessments (HIA) will be required to support certain types of planning applications (criteria to be determined) with a key issue for HIAs to address being the cycling and walking characteristics of each new developments and how they collectively contribute to the connectivity of the whole town.*
28. *Protect and enhance access to open spaces — especially those that are green, open and accessible for recreation, sport and play — in order to support physical, social and mental wellbeing.*
29. *Support a network of appropriate play spaces for all ages.*
30. *The plan will promote new town centre cultural and leisure activity and destinations.*
31. *Require new development to limit light and noise pollution to enhance the ambience of the town and maintain dark skies at night.*

To comment on the draft Planning Policies,
please go to www.cirencesternp.org
and complete the survey

Draft Plan Projects List

Neighbourhood plan projects are the capital works (e.g. a new community centre, a new stretch of footpath, investment in children's play area) or management initiatives (e.g. a town centre manager, a tourism strategy, a new community group that can collaborate and raise funds) that will ultimately be how some or all of the planning policies will be implemented

Here is a list of draft projects for inclusion in the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan. **What do you think? Do you agree? Are there projects that you feel are missing from this set of projects?**

1. *Introduce flood alleviations schemes at various locations across the town, as appropriate*
2. *Establish a series of connected cycle paths around the edge of town ("the wheel") that connect to routes into the town centre ("the spokes")*
3. *Establish longer distance cycle paths as follows: from Cirencester to Kemble; from Cirencester to South Cerney; and from Siddington to Stratton (improving the current inadequate shared space along the Gloucester Road)*
4. *A project to encourage the opening up of school buildings and grounds for community and public use during holidays, weekends and evenings*
5. *Ensure future technological requirements for vehicle fuel systems and energy sources are provided across the whole town e.g. Public electric vehicle charging points, hydrogen delivery pumps etc*
6. *Funding for regular, all-week (including late evening) public transport connections to key regional centres (e.g. Cheltenham), rail interchanges, hospitals and local destinations (e.g. Fairford and Tetbury)*
7. *Establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for the town centre*
8. *Establish a Town Centre Manager*
9. *Create a Cirencester Tourism Strategy, separate but linked to Cotswold-wide strategy*
10. *Establish better links with regional/ Gloucestershire business and skills bodies and exploit Cirencester's education cluster reputation to attract new businesses*
11. *Reconnect the Roman amphitheatre to the town centre, working with AQIVA and GCC Highways to identify a new connection location, funding and type, to be supported by brown heritage signage and maintenance*
12. *Project to identify methods and locations for new physical connections — including footpaths, cycleways, bridges, light-controlled crossings — to better link outlying residential areas with the town centre*
13. *Identify existing playgrounds in need of funding and/or maintenance and gaps in provision where new play spaces should be provided*
14. *Identify an alternative site and an operator for a new cinema project, to be part of a venue that can also support live music*
15. *Increase the number of neighbourhood assets (e.g. community spaces, play areas etc) in The Beeches, Outer Watermoor and Chesterton*
16. *Create a walking map for Cirencester, that identifies small spaces for social encounters, together with green and pleasant routes to link where people live with the town centre.*
17. *Audit mapping of all sports and recreational facilities to ensure the type, distribution, and quantity is appropriate for a growing population*
18. *Audit mapping of social and recreational spaces to ensure all spaces are inclusive of gender, age and disability*
19. *Audit mapping of all town views and vistas*

To comment on the draft Plan Projects, please go to www.cirencesternp.org and complete the survey

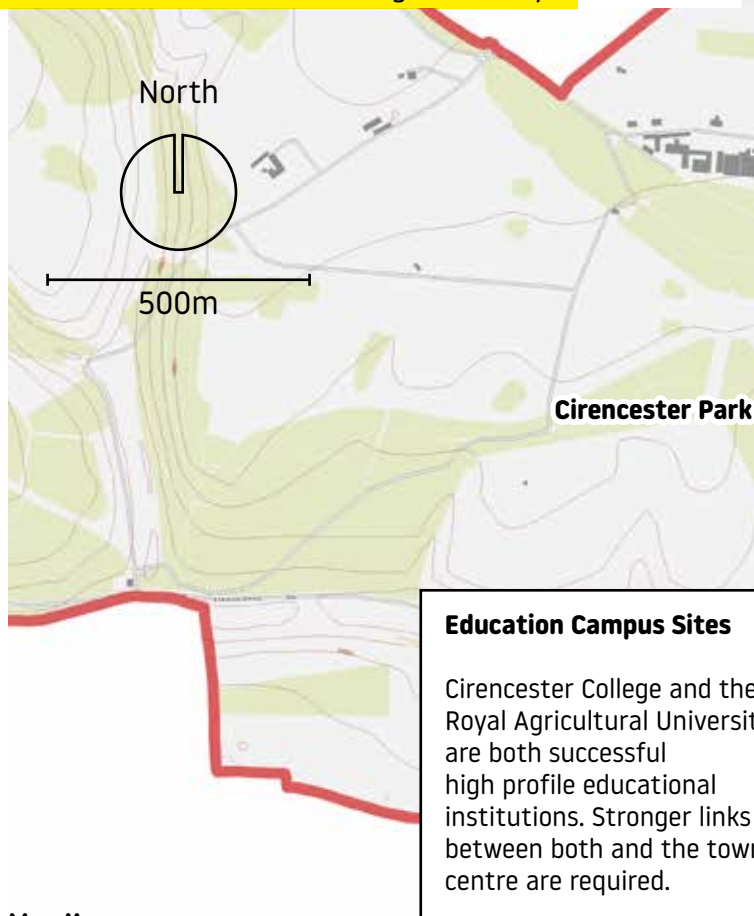


Potential Interventions Map

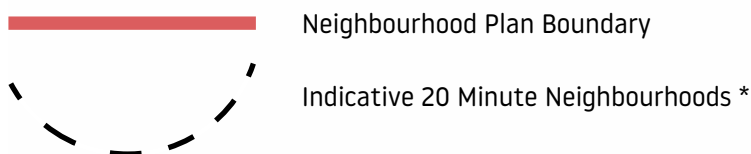
The final Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan will contain a map showing to which areas policies will apply and where projects could be delivered.

This is a draft version of the type of map that will appear in the final version of the plan.

Which areas would you wish to highlight? Which places would you want to see protected and why? And which areas could change and why?



Map Key



** The 20 Minute Neighbourhood is another way of describing a complete, compact and connected neighbourhood, where people can meet their daily or weekly needs within a short walk or bike ride, no more than 20 minutes from their front door. This urban planning model offer multiple benefits including boosting local economies, improving people's health and wellbeing, increasing social connections in communities, and tackling climate change. It is a model that the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan wishes to embrace. Do you agree?*

To comment on this draft Policies & Projects map, please go to www.cirencesternp.org and complete the survey

The 21st Century Town Centre

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, towns centres across the UK were struggling with the decline of bricks n' mortar retail. Post-pandemic, many town centres may be geared more around leisure, culture and outdoor social spaces and less about retail or employment. Could this be true for Cirencester too? With these trends in mind, the neighbourhood plan:

- Seeks to revitalise streets and spaces (especially Cricklade Street) as places to spend time and enjoy not just pass through
- Protect ground floor spaces not just for retail but for innovative social, commercial and entrepreneurial activity
- Encourage more people to live in the town centre, especially on upper floors above shops or other ground floor uses

Roman Amphitheatre

One of the greatest surviving examples in the country yet this is cut off from the town centre by wide, fast roads. Can it be better connected to the town centre to become a more integrated part of the tourist offer?

Education Campus Sites

Cirencester College and the Royal Agricultural University are both successful high profile educational institutions. Stronger links between both and the town centre are required.

University

College

Love Lane Industrial Estate

This area accommodates a vital range of employment uses. It is proposed that the plan contains policies to maintain this economic role but also allow it to adapt and flex to new types of working and new industries.



For more information and to
to complete the survey go to

www.cirencesternp.org

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