



# CHIPPENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Chippenham Town Council

## Access for Disabled People and those with Reduced Mobility & Waymarking Signage on the Footpath Network Topic Paper

### Appendix 18



## POLICY OBJECTIVES

- Make the Town Centre a more pedestrian-friendly environment
- Improve current walking and cycling networks and infrastructure throughout the town and into the surrounding countryside
- Promote sustainable transport by improving infrastructure and making modal shift easier in favour of public transport, walking and cycling

## A. INTRODUCTION

1. Equalities legislation and policies in the NPPF demand that all sectors of the Chippenham community have equal access to public facilities and opportunities. Unfortunately, there are many instances of poor highways design, including design of footways, footpaths, car parks and public spaces that do not properly address access. This has resulted in exclusionary development that disadvantages certain sectors of the Chippenham population.
2. This Topic Paper examines evidence using photographic examples of poor design outcomes and makes recommendations on how future development should take account of all pedestrians, including those who are disabled or who have reduced mobility. All photographs, and much of the text within this Paper, was provided by Sue McGill, a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Transport Topic Group, in Autumn 2019. We would like to thank her for her contribution on this topic.
3. This Paper supports Neighbourhood Plan Policies T4 and T5 and should be consulted by planning applicants for relevant schemes, particularly any schemes that seek to provide for sustainable transport or that make changes to the road network.

## B. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4. The Development Plan for Chippenham is:
  - The Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)
  - Chippenham Site Allocations Plan (2017)
  - North Wiltshire Local Plan Saved Policies (2006)
  - Minerals Core Strategy (2009)
  - Waste Core Strategy (2009)

## National Planning Policy Framework

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires schemes to consider transport issues from the earliest stages of plan making and development proposals.<sup>1</sup> Opportunities to promote walking and designing appropriate patterns of movement on streets, including parking, contributes to making high quality places.<sup>2</sup> Planning policies should provide for attractive and well-designed walking networks<sup>3</sup> and town centre car parking should be safe and secure with measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians.<sup>4</sup>
6. Within the context of the NPPF, development should give priority first to pedestrians and address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport.<sup>5</sup>

## Wiltshire Core Strategy

7. Core Policy 60 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy sets out the Council's objective to use its planning and transport powers to support safe and efficient movement of people, and mitigate the impact of developments on transport users, local communities and the environment.
8. Core Policy 61 requires new development proposals accompanied by a transport assessment to consider 'the needs of all transport users, where relevant, according to the following hierarchy: (a) visually impaired and other disabled people, (b) pedestrians...(g) private cars.' Where appropriate, contributions will be sought towards sustainable transport improvements.
9. Core Policy 63 sets out the Council's intentions to delivery integrated transport measures in Chippenham that will consider, inter alia, new and improved networks of routes for pedestrians and selective road improvements.

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<sup>1</sup> NPPF, MHCLG, 2021, para. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, para. 106

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, para. 108

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, para. 112

## C. REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

### Exclusionary design

10. Exclusionary design<sup>6</sup> is characterised by barriers that create undue effort and separation. It prevents people from participating equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities. The concept of ‘exclusionary design’ which will be used here can be defined as:

‘Exclusionary highways design prevents walking travellers from moving round public spaces in Chippenham equally independently. In the worst case, it puts them in danger.’

11. Wiltshire Council as the Highways Authority has tended to prioritise individual owners of motor vehicles (not including motorbike riders, who inhabit an uneasy limbo) over pedestrians in the design of major transport schemes.
12. Walking is active travel. By walking, people move from place to place, irrespective of the duration of their journey, and with as much purpose as anyone in a motor vehicle. The failure in many circumstances to take account of walking children, adults, adults pushing buggies or pulling trolleys, mobility scooter and wheelchair users, people with service dogs or with symbol-, guide-, long-, or red and white banded canes, or with walking aids amounts to exclusionary road and pavement design (especially in the centre of Chippenham), which puts walking travellers in danger.
13. The Transport Topic Group has assessed all town centre routes on foot and has identified the locations where design decisions have resulted in poor outcomes for some pedestrians, resulting in exclusionary development. **Figure 1** shows the locations of areas where pavements are in need of repair, where shared space is poorly designed, where pedestrian crossings do not accommodate the blind, and where car parks do not properly segregate wheeled traffic from foot traffic. These issues will be discussed in detail in this Paper.

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<sup>6</sup> A full definition of the concept of ‘exclusionary design’ can be found in: Schindler, Sarah, ‘Architectural Exclusion: Discrimination and Segregation Through Physical Design of the Built Environment’, The Yale Law Journal, 124: 1934-2015. The article uses examples from the United States but the basic conclusions are relevant in England.





14. As well as exhibiting intrinsic and serious flaws of design, the condition of many of Chippenham pavements is poor. Examples in **Figure 2** illustrate the current state of some of Chippenham's pavements which are, for those with mobility challenges, difficult or sometimes unsafe to use. These photographs illustrate the severely uneven footways that pose danger to those who may be visually impaired or unsteady on their feet.

**Figure 2: Examples of pavements in disrepair in Chippenham**





15. Many footways are obstructed by poor management, and lack of maintenance of adjacent planting, as illustrated in **Figure 3**.

**Figure 3: Examples of overgrowth making footways impassable or partially blocked**



16. Inconsiderate parking on pavements also causes blockages of the footways in Chippenham, impeding access and highway safety for pedestrians, particularly those with visual and mobility impairments. This is illustrated in **Figure 4** which shows that in



some instances, where car drivers park inconsiderately, access for some pedestrians is unsafe and difficult.

**Figure 4: Examples of inconsiderate parking which blocks footways**



### Pavement spaces, footways and pedestrians

17. Exclusionary design outcomes herd cyclists, scooter riders, wheelchair users and walking travellers into pavement spaces designed early in the 20th century to separate pedestrians from wheeled transport.
18. Children heading to, or from, primary school in Chippenham, are unlikely to be walking alone. They may be riding a kick scooter or bicycle, possibly accompanied by siblings or friends who are also riding scooters and bikes. An adult, possibly wheeling a single or double buggy, is also likely to walk alongside (and may need to carry the kick scooter/bicycle home and back again for the end of the school day). Adults and children may walk in groups. Dog(s) may form part of the group.
19. Adults may be using mobility scooters or wheelchairs, or they may be riding bicycles with trailers, with child seats or with cargo compartments.
20. At the same time in the morning, people are heading to work or to appointments, possibly in the same direction as the schoolchildren, but more likely, in the opposite



direction, given that Chippenham's schools tend to be located away from the town centre. Everyone is under pressure of time. Commuters comprise the mix of pavement users described above except, possibly, with individual cyclists who may or may not dismount at crossings, and who cross the roads together with the non-cyclists.

21. Users of shared spaces, as noted above, include cyclists, scooter riders, wheelchair users and walking travellers.
22. The underlying assumption with existing pavement and footway design is that all users are equal. In fact, children and disabled people are far from equal in their ability to assess and handle road danger. As a result, current footway and roadway design inherently excludes a sub-set of Chippenham's population. Some people in Chippenham simply cannot compete safely for road space, particularly at busy times where many modes and users may conflict.
23. Poor signage is another matter of concern and some signage may not be fit for purpose to aid safe travel by some pedestrians, or existing signage has not been maintained and is also no longer fit for purpose. Some examples of this are shown in **Figure 5**. These examples show how trees and plants can grow to hide signs or pavement markings have worn away. In either example, poor long-term maintenance has rendered these safety features ineffective.

**Figure 5: Examples of where signage does not assist in pedestrian safety**



### Traffic signals

24. Traffic signals are particular examples of exclusionary design outcomes in Chippenham and, in a number of places, put users in danger.
25. Wherever walking travellers go in central Chippenham, they must navigate road crossings, many of which do not have audible warnings of a changing traffic signal. Every

through road in central Chippenham is punctuated by complex road layouts, controlled by traffic controls. Although traffic controls may have beg buttons for pedestrians, the interval allowed for crossing a road is based on the average speed of an adult walker, not groups of children, cyclists, adults pushing buggies, wheelchair users, people with service dogs, people with sight impairments, or otherwise mobility impaired. In some places, there are three or more light-controlled pedestrian crossings to navigate in order to get to 'the other side of the road'.

### Avenue La Flèche

26. Drivers heading west often mistake the setting of the pedestrian light at Gladstone Road and start moving while there is still actually a red light against them, while drivers from Gladstone Road, who cannot see the pedestrian light until they are turning, move off when their light turns green.

### Brunel Viaduct / New Road / Marshfield Road

27. Two especially tricky traffic crossings for pedestrians are at the south side of the Brunel viaduct, where the east side of New Road has no line of sight whatsoever to oncoming traffic from its northern section which, equally, is blind to what is on the south side of the viaduct. Additionally, the sequencing of lights for the pedestrian crossing gives priority to traffic, and the time allowed to cross New Road is short, especially given that extra care needs to be taken that traffic is not approaching from the north, blind until the last minute. Traffic approaching the uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on Marshfield Road comes from lower and upper New Road. A pedestrian waiting to cross has no line of sight to the traffic coming from upper New Road, which is equally blind to any waiting pedestrian. **Figure 6** illustrates the poor line of sight at New Road rendering pedestrian access unsafe for the less abled.

**Figure 6: Poor line of sight at New Road**



### Car parks, public toilets and dog stops

28. Most car parks in Chippenham do not have demarcated space for walking travellers. **Figure 7** show how cars are presumed to be the only users of these spaces and that there are no indicated segregated pedestrian areas. Lack of segregation from motor vehicles is exclusionary for carers, parents, people with mobility and visual impairments.

**Figure 7: Lack of demarcated space for walking travellers in Chippenham car parks**



29. Wiltshire Council's Equality Impact Assessment<sup>7</sup> acknowledged that closing public toilets might have:
- 'A restrictive effect upon the willingness of certain groups to access public spaces, socialise and shop. This in turn can lead to isolation and negatively impact upon a person's wellbeing. Disabled people, older people, mothers and fathers of young children and carers and people with chronic health problems all need easy access to toilet facilities.
  - Lack of toilet facilities at the right time and right place contributes to dirty streets that are unsanitary, unpleasant and can spread infection. Public toilets in places like parks help to encourage people who may need regular toilet access to take exercise and stay physically active.
  - Public toilet provision is an important issue for areas relying on tourism income or seeking to develop their profile as a visitor destination. Tourists choose their destinations based on previous experience, looking up feedback on the internet and

<sup>7</sup> Equality Impact Analysis Record Form: transfer or closure of public conveniences, Wiltshire Council, 2015



knowledge of local facilities. Meeting visitor needs is vital to secure repeat trade and build a sustainable economy.'

30. At the point of accessing public spaces, socialising, shopping or exercising, people are using spaces that are exclusionary by design. When, in 2019, Chippenham Folk Festival contracted for a mobile 'Changing Places Toilet', it was acknowledging that Chippenham lacks truly accessible facilities. Additionally, people with severe sight impairments have no way of accessing information about available public toilets. None of Chippenham's publicly accessible toilets has braille signage.
31. Dogs are excluded from Emery Gate shopping centre, but there are no dog stops. Dogs are allowed in Borough Parade, which has two dog stops in a single wing of the precinct. The High Street has one dog stop. The Market Place has one dog stop. Other than these four locations, there is nowhere in central Chippenham for people to safely secure their animals. Examples of dog stop infrastructure is shown in **Figure 8**.

**Figure 8: Examples of dog stops in Chippenham**



### Waymarking and signage of the footpath network

32. Nearly all off-road footpaths within Chippenham are unsigned. As a result, unless walking travellers happen to be familiar with the area where (a) footpath(s) is/are located, or are familiar with ordnance survey map legends, or have access to purpose-designed maps, they will have difficulty in accessing them. **Figure 9** shows an example of where a footpath has no signage to assist in showing the pedestrian where it leads or how it crosses under the railway line, and similarly in **Figure 10**.

**Figure 9: Unsigned public footpath - Spanbourn Avenue to Ivy Lane**



Figure 10: Unsigned public footpath - Lowden Hill to Goldney Avenue



33. More widely, as will be shown in **Figures 11-27**, many of the longer distance footpaths are similarly not marked. In addition, they are not 'owned' and managed, and can become repositories for weeds and flytipping which diminishes their value as transport routes.



Figure 11: Unmarked off-road footpath Donkey Field

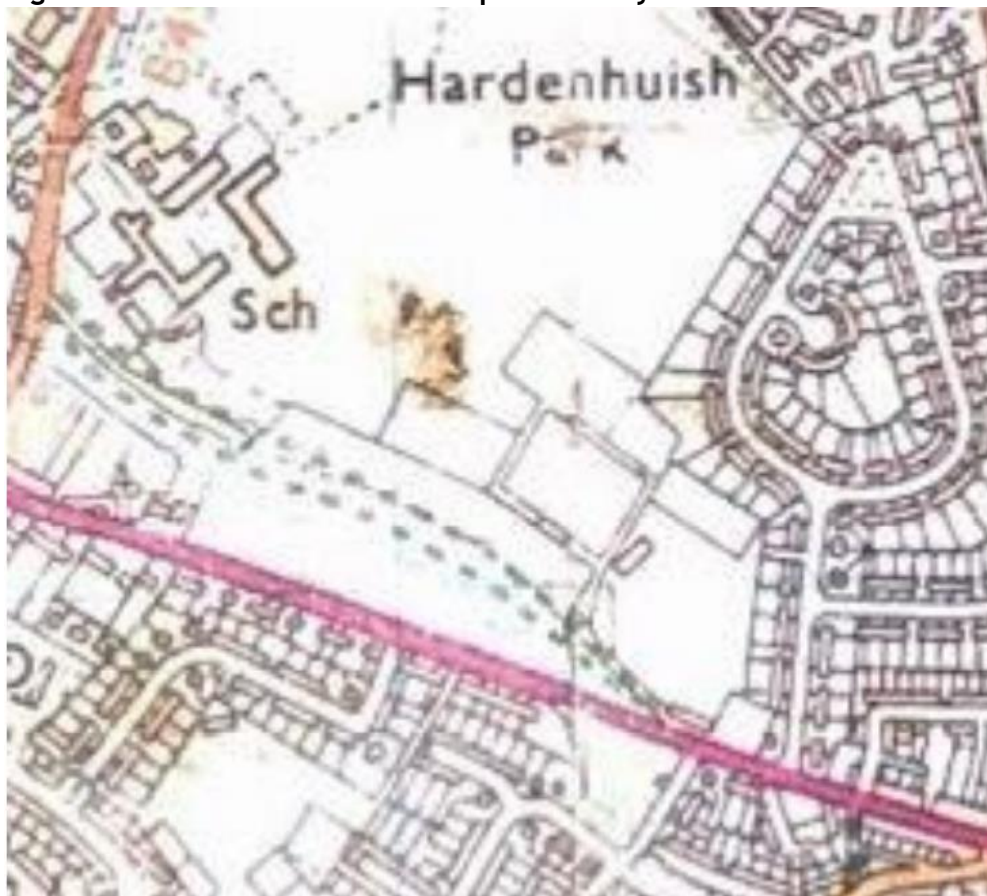


Figure 12: Unmarked off-road footpath Frogwell-Bumpers Farm



Figure 13: Unmarked off-road footpath: Parkfields-Hungerford Rd

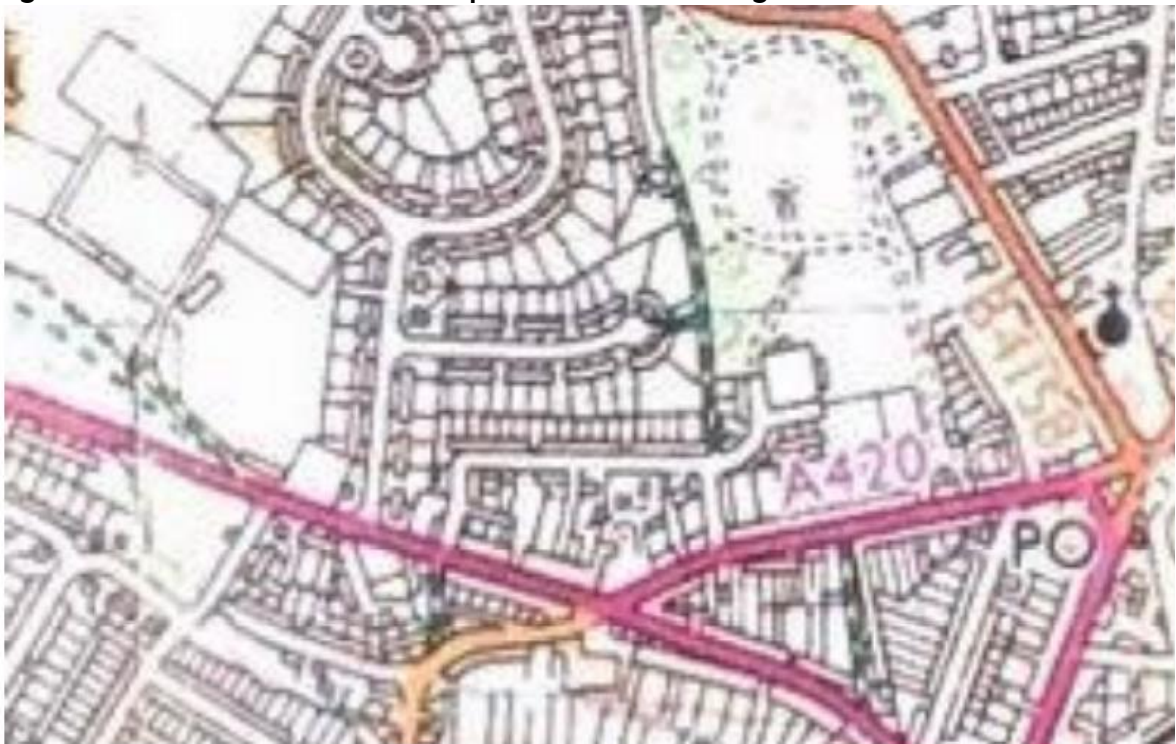


Figure 14: Unmarked off-road footpaths Rowden Hill-Lowden





Figure 15: Flytipping/appropriation of public land, Rowden Hill footpath



Figure 16: Unmarked off-road footpath Vincients Wood

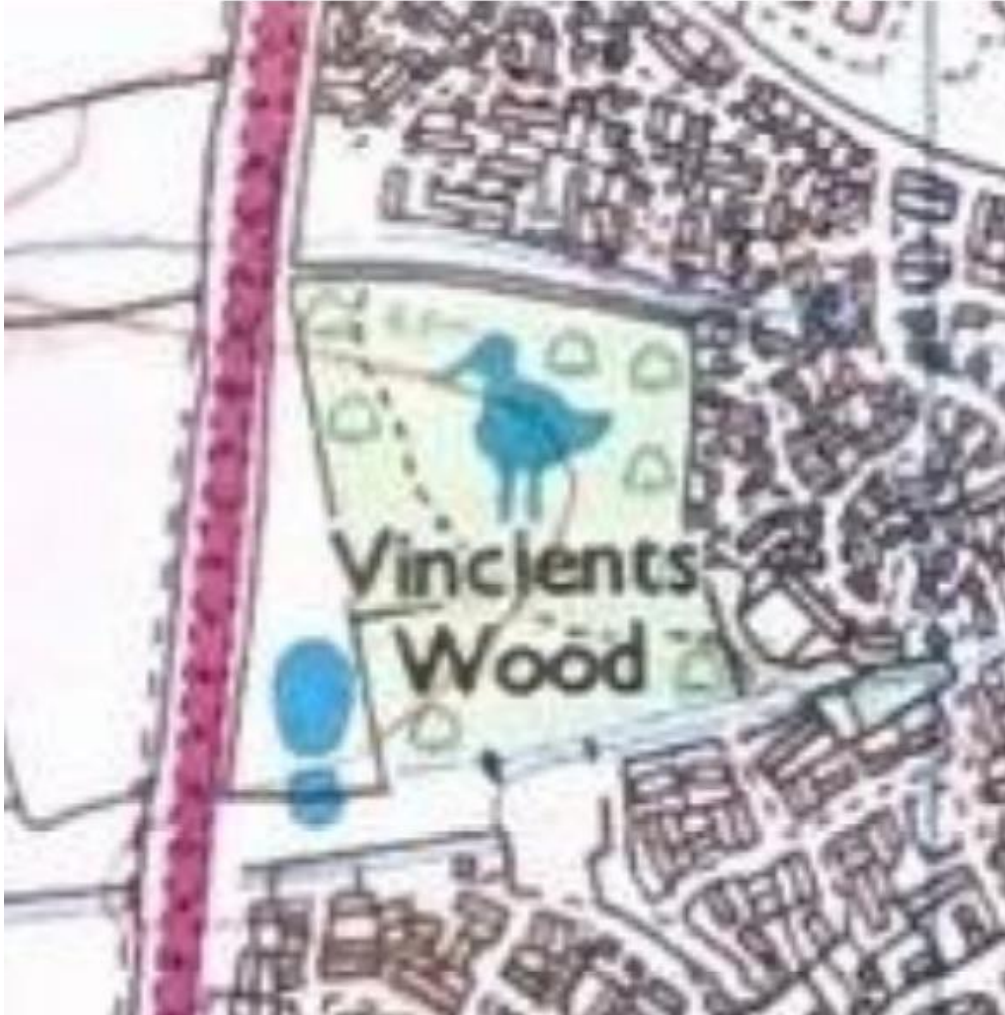




Figure 17: Unmarked footpath: Cocklebury Lane-Cowleaze-Cocklebury Road

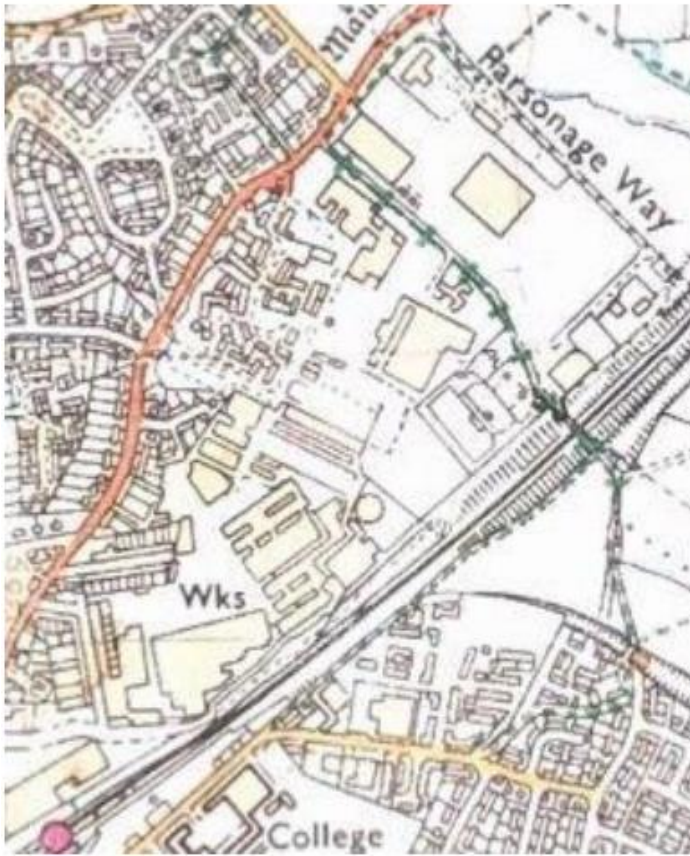


Figure 18: Neglected infrastructure. Overgrowth conceals the gate - Cocklebury Lane





### Derelict infrastructure - Cocklebury Lane



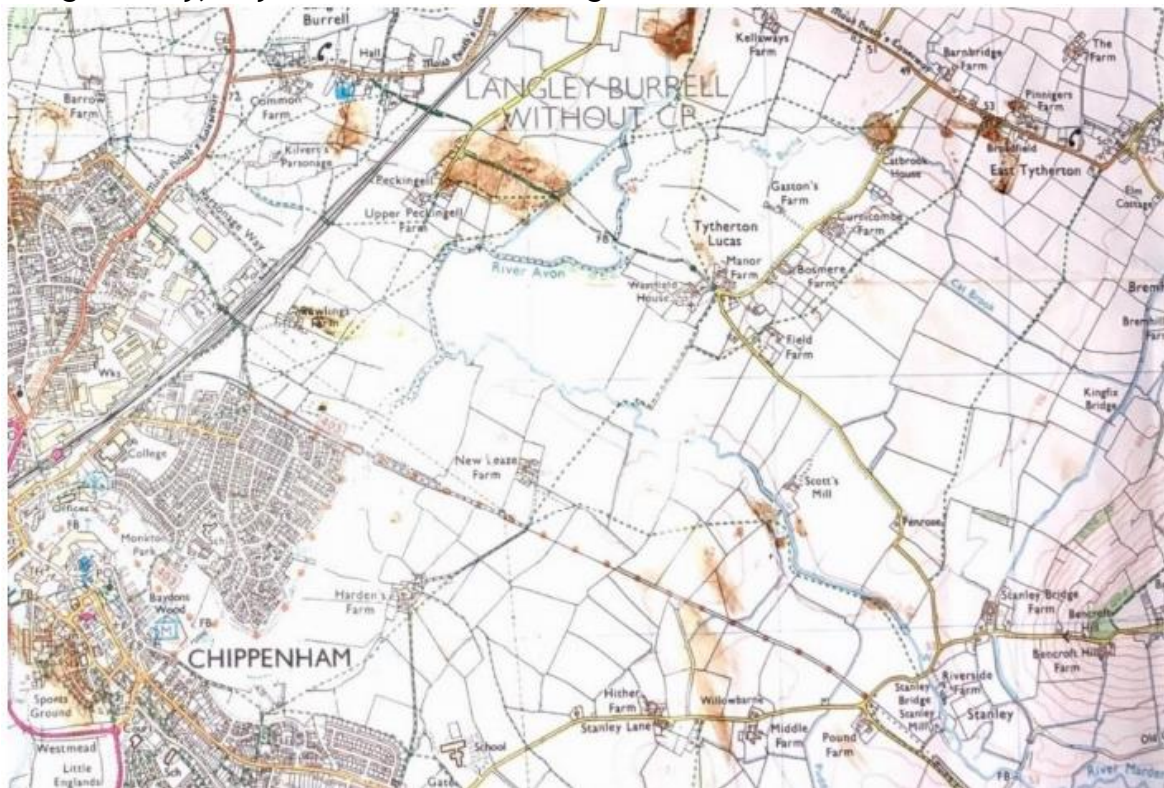
**Figure 19: Unless the walking traveller has an OS map, or has developed a cognitive map, s/he has no waymarks for guidance - Cowleaze-Cocklebury Lane public footpath**







**Figure 20: The start of the Anscombe Way, created and funded in memory of a former Mayor of Chippenham, is inexplicably not waymarked at its start point. Along the Way, waymarks have been damaged or removed**





**Figure 21: It is impossible to identify the start of the Anscombe Way without an OS map**



**Figure 22: Unmarked off-road footpath Bath Road-Westmead**



Figure 23: Unmarked footpaths, Pewsham-Middle Lodge-Wilts & Berks Canal

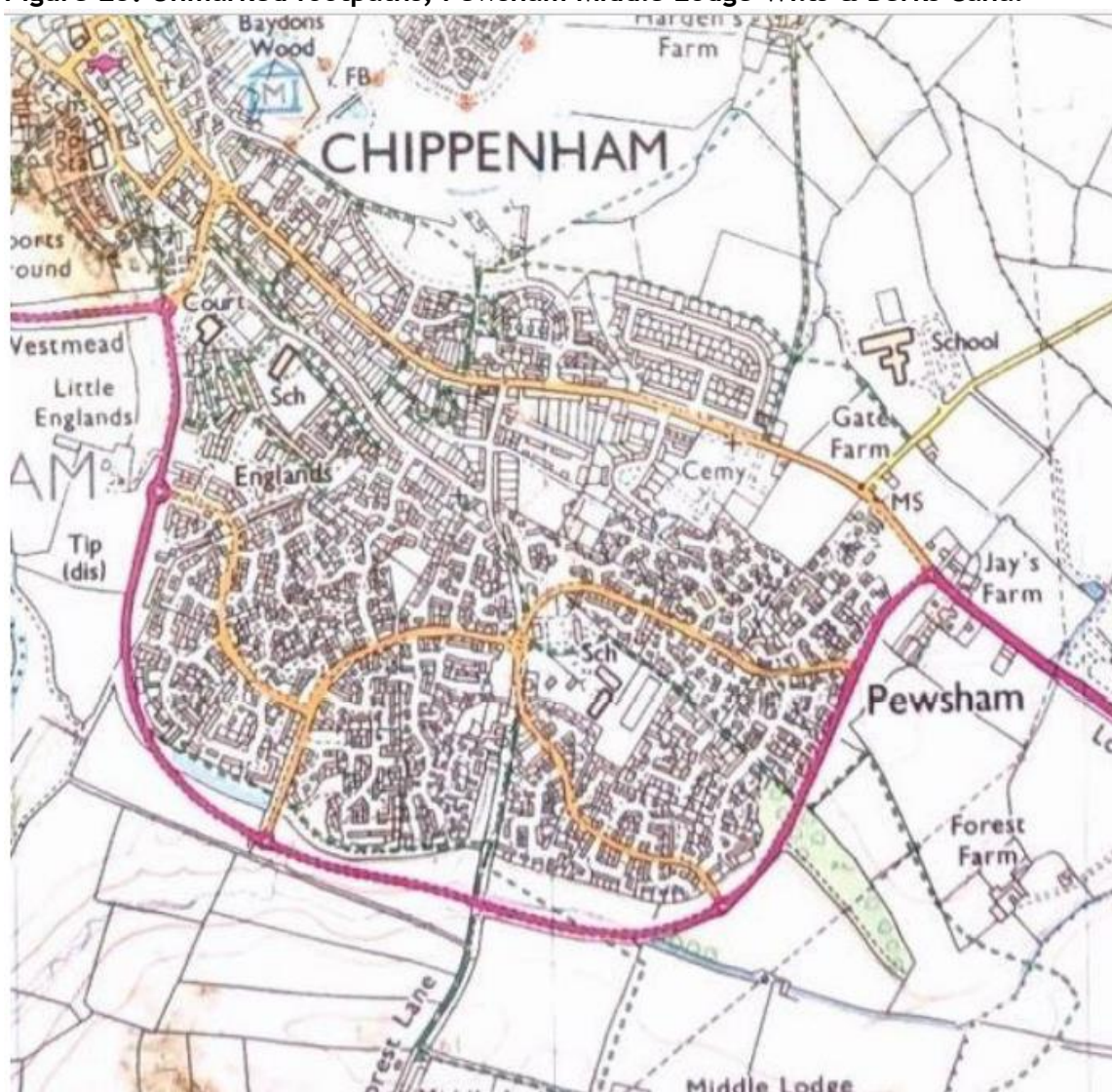


Figure 24: Unmarked footpaths, Chippenham-Notton-Reybridge





Figure 25: Unmarked footpaths, Birds Marsh-Langley Burrell-Peckingell

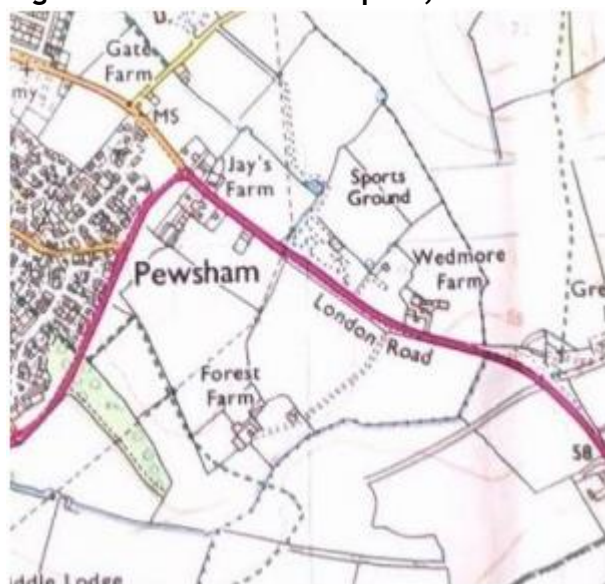


Figure 26: Unmarked footpaths, Chippenham-Allington-Leigh Delamere





Figure 27: Unmarked footpath, Pewsham-Wilts & Berks Canal



## D. COMMUNITY VIEWS

35. The Neighbourhood Plan's Community Survey, conducted in 2020, found that 60% of Chippenham residents who responded to the survey (or 123 responses) said they most frequently accessed the Town Centre on foot, a further 31% travel by car.
36. 62% of respondents said safer pedestrian and cycle routes would encourage them to walk or cycle more frequently into the Town Centre, with an additional 61% who said better routes would encourage them to walk or cycle more often.
37. When asked to 'Name one improvement to Chippenham's 'Green Infrastructure' that you would like to see', the highest number of respondents (40%) referred to improvements to 'cycling, paths, and networks'. Respondents mentioned making improvements to existing footpaths (including river and canal paths) and rights of way to improve signposting, repairing damaged paths/pavements and linking cycling and footpaths together as a network.
38. Please refer to Appendix 7 for the full results from the Community Survey.

## E. DISCUSSION

39. The results from the Neighbourhood Plan's Community Survey evidence the importance the community places on being able to walk or cycle into the town centre from where they live, and the frequency with which they do so. The Survey evidences that safer and better walking and cycling routes are a priority for the community.

### Access for disabled people and those with reduced mobility

40. The NPPF requires development to cater for the needs of pedestrians and specifically to address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport.<sup>8</sup>
41. Evidence gathered, and set out in Section C of this Paper, has proven that in too many instances, the needs of this sector of the Chippenham population has not been properly considered in design decisions. This has led to poor outcomes and development that excludes a significant sector of the Chippenham community. These outcomes can be summarised under the term 'exclusionary design' which prevents pedestrians from moving around in public spaces in Chippenham with equal ease of access. In the worst case, it puts them in danger.

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<sup>8</sup> NPPF, MHCLG, 2021, paras. 104, 106, 108, 112

42. Exclusionary design in Chippenham's transport and parking policies can no longer be accepted. All members of the community require and are entitled<sup>9</sup> to equal access to footways, public spaces and public toilets.
43. Walking is active travel. By walking, people move from place to place, irrespective of the duration of their journey, and with as much purpose as anyone in a motor vehicle. Often the failure to take account of walking children, adults, adults pushing buggies or pulling trolleys, mobility scooter and wheelchair users, people with service dogs or with symbol-, guide-, long-, or red and white banded canes, or with walking aids, amounts to exclusionary road and pavement design (especially in the centre of Chippenham), which can put pedestrians in danger.
44. As well as exhibiting intrinsic and serious flaws of design, the condition of many of Chippenham's pavements is poor. Many pavements are, for those with mobility challenges, difficult or sometimes unsafe to use. Severely uneven footways pose danger to those who may be visually impaired or unsteady on their feet.
45. In future, all development, including that by the Highways Authority, should pay regard to the following principles:
  - Footways and pavements should be constructed of durable materials that are not subject to cracking or splitting.
  - Development must make provision for the long-term maintenance of privately owned footways and pavements and have in place guaranteed mechanisms for their maintenance, upkeep and repair.
  - Where new development that is directly related to the development and is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind, leads to use of public footways, a commuted sum will be required to make provision for their long-term maintenance and to have in place guaranteed mechanisms for their maintenance, upkeep and repair.
  - Tree and foliage planting schemes adjacent to footways, footpaths and other walking routes will either favour planting that is unlikely to cause an obstruction of footways, or a long term maintenance programme will be put in place to manage overgrowth and obstruction.
  - Parking schemes in any kind of development will not result in parking on footways.
  - All road safety signage and markings will be placed in such a manner that they will remain fit for purpose over their lifetimes and will not be obstructed or lost through inadequate maintenance.
  - Traffic signals for pedestrians will have audible warnings and will consider the least able when setting walking intervals.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.



- Any road improvements affecting Avenue La Flèche and Brunel Viaduct/New Road/Marshfield Road will give full consideration to the needs of people with reduced mobility including children.
46. Many of the main car parks and public toilets in Chippenham do not take proper account of the needs of pedestrians, people with reduced mobility or disabled people. There is evidence that car park scheme designs have failed to properly segregate foot from motorised traffic creating dangerous spatial conflicts that particularly affect those who are visually impaired, not able to move quickly out of the way of faster moving traffic (for instance the conflict between pedestrians and cyclists/cars), nor are routes clearly marked. None of the publicly accessible toilets have braille signage.
  47. Many people in the community have dogs and bring them on walks. This is beneficial because it promotes wellbeing and combats loneliness. For the blind, dogs can be a necessity. However, though dog ownership is beneficial, it is not well catered for in Chippenham's built environment. Dogs are excluded from Emery Gate shopping centre, but there are no dog stops. Dogs are allowed in Borough Parade, which has two dog stops in a single wing of the precinct. The High Street has one dog stop. The Market Place has one dog stop. Other than these four locations, there is nowhere in central Chippenham for people to safely secure their animals.

### Waymarking and signage of the footpath network

48. Evidence gathered, and set out in Section C of this Topic Paper, shows that waymarking in Chippenham is poor. For pedestrians who do not have access to an OS map or a satnav, finding a way from one part of the town to another can be problematic since there are few signs along any routes. Many examples have been provided which demonstrates that poor signage is an impediment to easy access within the town. It also demonstrates that signage along the wider footpath network, including that linking the town to the countryside, is poor to non-existent.
49. New development that relies upon the wider footpath network should make a contribution to route signage for walkers and cyclists. This should be a requirement of all development that seeks to promote sustainable transport mode instead of continued use of private cars.

## F. MATTERS EXCLUDED FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

50. Some of the matters discussed in this Topic Paper fall under the control of Wiltshire Council as the Highways Authority. The Topic Paper has demonstrated that some design decisions by the Highway Authority have led to poor outcomes for Chippenham's pedestrians, particularly those who are mobility challenged.
51. Policies on these matters will be included in the Neighbourhood Plan in order to influence future design decisions by the Highways Authority both as a planning applicant and as a statutory consultee to the planning system.

## G. CONCLUSION

52. Equalities legislation and policies in the NPPF demand that all sectors of the Chippenham community have equal access to public facilities and opportunities.
53. Despite the community placing its importance on walking and cycling as the preferred mode of transport to access the town centre, and suggesting prioritisation of safer and better walking and cycling routes in Chippenham, this Paper has evidenced many instances of poor highways design - including design of footways, footpaths, car parks and public spaces that do not properly address access. This has resulted in exclusionary development that disadvantages certain sectors of the Chippenham population.
54. Neighbourhood Plan Policies T4 and T5 translate the findings of this Paper into: a) criteria which requires that changes to the highway, necessary as part of new development, are designed so that they can be fully accessed by disabled people and those with reduced mobility; and b) that major development schemes, that are located adjacent to, or within 200m of public footpaths, provides waymarking signage to a specified standard.