

Chippenham Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid – Report on Public Engagement Feedback

13th January 2020

Summary

- A series of public engagement sessions were held in November and December 2019 to seek residents' views on the future of Chippenham.
- People were asked to complete a survey, with some people also providing separate comments.
- The survey results indicated that respondents viewed highways/transport and traffic issues as being a priority for the town, as well as use of green spaces.
- Respondents also raised concerns about the town centre and said they would improve Chippenham's shopping diversity if given the opportunity.

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Appendix 1: Full Survey Results

Appendix 2: Additional Feedback

Appendix 3: Other Notes and Comments

Appendix 4: Attachments with Surveys

1. Introduction

Cratus Communications was employed by Wiltshire Council to help communicate, raise awareness and engage with residents regarding the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid for Chippenham. In November 2019, Wiltshire's application for HIF money for a relief road to the east and south of Chippenham was granted. This was used as a springboard for a series of public engagement events both to discuss the relief road and residents' views on the future of the town.

2. Methodology

A series of pop-up public engagement events were promoted on the Council's website and social media channels, and via a press release to local media. Residents were asked to drop-in to the events in order to raise awareness of plans for the relief road, as well as seeking feedback on what people liked or wanted to see changed about Chippenham. The events were:

- Enchanted Christmas Event, 23rd November 2019
- Chippenham Library, 25th and 26th November 2019
- Chippenham Train Station, 28th November 2019
- Sainsbury's, Bath Road, Chippenham, 2nd December 2019
- Morrisons, Cepen Park North, Chippenham, 2nd December 2019

The events lasted between two and three hours, and were attended by Council representatives, who answered questions and asked residents to complete a five-question anonymous survey. The survey sought to ascertain residents' views on the priorities for Chippenham and what they would like to see changed.

A total of 76 surveys were completed, with additional feedback from another three respondents and notes made on a further five conversations with residents who did not wish to complete the survey. A collation of all the answers received is included in Appendix 1.

3. Question 1 – Which do you think is most important for Chippenham?

This question was answered by 66 out of 76 respondents (87%). Question 1 provided the opportunity for respondents to rank six pre-selected options, as well as choosing “Other”. Not all the options were ranked by a number of those who did answer this question. In several instances, respondents simply ticked all the options they agreed with, rather than ranking them. In order to capture the data, these instances have all been marked as a first preference, but a breakdown has been included below to show the number of instances this occurred and for which options, in order not to skew the results. On top of this, some respondents left additional comments, including next to some options.

The raw data on responses is presented in Table 1, with Table 2 showing the number of times each option was ticked rather than ranked. Even with the results adjusted to exclude these responses, the outcome of first preferences does not change.

The first and second highest option for each preference were as follows:

	<u>Option most ranked for preference</u>	<u>Option next most ranked for preference</u>
Preference 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easing traffic congestion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better use of green spaces
Preference 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better leisure facilities
Preference 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better use of green spaces (joint with next most ranked) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better leisure facilities (joint with most ranked)
Preference 4:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better leisure facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced arts programme/facilities
Preference 5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced arts programme/facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More diverse living options
Preference 6:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced arts programme/facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More diverse living options
Preference 7:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced arts programme/facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

Options	Rankings						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Easing traffic congestion	30	8	5	2	3	1	0
More parking	11	13	7	3	3	3	0
More diverse living options	5	4	8	5	4	5	0
Enhanced arts programme/facilities	8	1	4	6	7	6	1
Better use of green spaces	23	7	9	4	2	3	0
Better leisure facilities	6	11	9	7	3	3	0
Other	15						

Table 1 - Q.1 “Which do you think is most important for Chippenham?” – Summary of number of selected preferences per option, with top option in each ranking highlighted in green and the second highest response marked in yellow

The results show that most respondents saw easing traffic congestion as being most important for Chippenham, followed not far behind by better use of green spaces.

“Other” was chosen as an option by 15 respondents, who in some cases referenced more than one issue. Six of those respondents referenced addressing a “climate crisis”, reducing carbon emissions and/or more sustainable transport (including cycleways and walking routes). Two respondents referenced better employment and commerce options, while a further respondent talked about a better town centre. Among the other issues raised were secondary schools; Equality Act-based services; a “mature and agreed Neighbourhood Plan”; and replacing the BID, with a need to balance volunteers and paid staff.

Option	Times Chosen Without Preference
Easing traffic congestion	9
More parking	6
More diverse living options	0
Enhanced arts programme/facilities	3
Better use of green spaces	7
Better leisure facilities	2

Table 2 - Q.1 – Number of times options were ticked rather than ranked

4. Question 2 – What do you like most about Chippenham?

This question was completed by 74 out of 76 respondents (97%). A free form entry box was given to answer Question 2. The answers have been categorised into different types, a summary of which can be found in Table 3. The two most frequently referenced types of responses were the transport links into and from Chippenham, and the ease of getting around the town; and Chippenham’s rural location and rural walks.

These responses seem consistent with the trend of the issues raised as most important from Question 1 – namely “easing traffic congestion” and “better use of green spaces”.

The quality of public transport and transport links was a consistent theme among answers relating to transport and travel answers, being raised by 17 respondents. Highlights from the answers relating to transport links/ease of getting around town:

- “Excellent communications and public transport via rail and coach. Most of Chippenham is accessible on foot”
- “Very close access to countryside; railway station for work”
- “Close to other routes - Bath, Swindon. Transport networks”.

Of the 25 respondents who gave answers related to Chippenham’s rural location and rural walks, five mentioned being able to walk along the river and 20 mentioned the town’s proximity and access to the countryside. Highlights from the answers relating to rural location/rural walks:

- “Walks, river, town centre very interesting”
- “Having local country within walking distance of my home”
- “Rural location. Would also like to keep it that way!”
- “Rural location - lovely countryside and villages around e.g. River Valley Lacock Castle Combe”
- “Countryside comes into town - along river. Always close to countryside because of natural geography”.

Answer Type	Number of Times Raised
Transport links/ease of getting around town	25
Rural location/rural walks	25
The town centre/shops and shopping facilities	17
The community, sense of community, and friends and family	12
Green spaces, parks and flowers/wildlife	11
The market and a market-town-feeling	11
Community facilities	7
The river	6
"It's home"/"Feels like home"	4
Schools and school provision	3
Safe feeling/lack of crime	3
Events	3
"Not a lot"/Negative response	2
"I just like Chippenham"	1

Table 3 - Q.2 "What do you like most about Chippenham?" – Number of issues raised in respondents' answers by category

Highlights from other answers:

- “Small market town - wouldn't live anywhere else (since 1964). Community”
- “Still a market town, but traffic congestion already bad without taking into consideration future development”
- “Shopping centre pedestrianised. River walks are nice. Love the cinema (old building). Like quite a few. EV charging points which are free”
- “I live here - not a lot - it's a sad run down town. That needs a lot of love”
- “Environment and the fact that it has not been turned into a sprawling town similar to others in Wiltshire”
- “Town centre and shops - not much else around. Got to keep shops open. Keep events going. Keep shops going”
- “It's my town, I was born here and I love it!”

5. Question 3 – What do you like least about Chippenham?

This question was completed by 71 out of 76 respondents (93%). Question 3 provided respondents with a free form entry box to give their answers. These answers have been grouped and categorised, a summary of which can be found in Table 4.

The top two types of answers given by respondents were: related to the town centre and the shopping offer; and the quality of transport links in and around the town, as well as congestion.

Twenty-five respondents raised issues relating to the town centre and Chippenham's shops. Twenty of these specifically mentioned the lack of diversity in the town's retail offer, frequently citing the need for more independent shops and fewer charity shops and cafes.

Issues with transport links and congestion were raised by 24 respondents, with 14 raising traffic as a specific issue.

Below is a sample of some of the answers given to Question 3:

- "Too many mobile phone shops/hairdressers/diversity of shops"
- "More diversity. Independent shops. Better buses. Later train. Parking at hospital"
- "Congestion is really bad and every time look to put in eastern bypass it was turned down. Happy for relief road proposals"
- "Queueing and concerned about J17 and detrimental effect of traffic movement onto and across motorway"
- "Mucky, worn, old. Olympiad good example"
- "Too many coffee shops and loss of diversity of shops in 14 years I have lived here. Newer incomes don't ever go into the centre"
- "An inactive town council who have no imagination and creativity"
- "It's fairly lethal trying to cycle due to potholes, drains and zero planning for cycling across ALL of the major junctions"

- “Although there is a sense of community, communities are fragmented, partly because of the lack of public transport to connect people who don't drive, partly because of the primacy of private motor transport and haulage contractors, the beautiful countryside is being destroyed”
- “Nothing. Lived here 60yrs”
- “Small town thing. Wouldn't want to grow up here. Not enough for young people to do.”
- “Traffic congestion is a problem. However, this is a small price to pay for retaining Chippenham as it is now”.

Answer Type	Number of Times Raised
The town centre/quality of shops/lack of shopping diversity	25
Quality of transport links/congestion	24
Quality/lack of community facilities and events (leisure, cultural, etc.)	8
Development	7
Parking	5
State of the local (built) environment	4
Lack/no sense of community	3
Lack of things for young people to do	3
Crime/anti-social behaviour	3
Quality and cleanliness of parks, green spaces and river area	3
Pollution	2
Homelessness	1
Lack/cost of housing	1
Employment options	1
Town council	1
“Nothing”	1

Table 4 - Q.3 “What do you like least about Chippenham?” – Number of issues raised in respondents’ answers by category

6. Question 4 – If you were the Ruler of Chippenham for a day, what changes would you make?

Answer Type	Number of Times Raised
Highways and public/sustainable transport improvements, and changes to traffic	26
Improve the town centre and shopping facilities/choices	12
Improve public facilities, infrastructure, green spaces and events	12
Tackle the climate emergency and more environmentally friendly policies	6
Better utilise/improve the river and surrounding area	5
Stop or reduce development	6
More sensible planning and use of Neighbourhood Plan	4
More (affordable) housing and helping the homeless	4
More to do for younger people	4
Improve the cleanliness/tidiness of the local area	2
Relocate the local authority/Government departments	2
Reduce Business Rates and Council Tax	2
Free/more parking	2
No changes	2

Table 5 - Q.4 "If you were the Ruler of Chippenham for a day, what changes would you make?" – Number of issues raised in respondents' answers by category

This question was completed by 70 out of 76 respondents (92%). Question 4 again provided a free-form entry box for respondents to answer. A single type of answer was raised far more frequently than any other – those relating to highways, traffic and transport – a summary of the answers is provided in Table 5.

Of the 26 respondents whose answers were related to highways, traffic and transport: eight specifically raised addressing traffic issues; five indicated that they were in favour of a relief road or an alternative to divert traffic around the town; and three would cancel plans for the relief road or prevent any new roads being built.

Below is a sample of some of the answers given to Question 4:

- “Stop all new building. Build on brown sites”
- “High street traffic from 3.30 (during accidents)”
- “CCTV on crossings, pedestrian/speeding issues”
- “Free for an hour parking - affordable housing. Free parking at leisure centre users.”
- “Clean it up!”
- “Maintain stricter policies on environmental issues, promote awareness of the impact our daily decisions and behaviours on our environment and health. Build an entertainment complex powered by green energy”
- “More undercover shopping, as weather impacts on outdoor events i.e. football. Walks and cafes. Developing river for parkland to link up to West Mead development”
- “None”
- “1. Rewilding, tree planting, and appropriate management of grassy areas and "wildflower meadows" 2. Improve sustainable transport network. 3. Community renewable energy schemes”
- “Creating better facilities for the public - e.g. sport”

- “Ensure affordable/social housing on all new developments - housing is too expensive. More social housing estates”
- “Development of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) appears 'out of synch' with other major planning activities and proposals - i.e. CNP should lead. Else how can a coherent approach be established and agreed”
- “Help the homeless. Reduce business rates. Make sure pavements are clear of rotting leaves + other slip hazards”
- “Reduce the Council Tax!”
- “Build to the East to keep any water run off well away from the River Avon. I would any building adjacent to the river because would/could present difficulties and flooding in Melksham and Bradford on Avon”.

7. Question 5 – Do you have any other comments?

This question was completed by 59 out of 76 respondents (78%). Question 5 provided a free form entry box for respondents to give any further comments that they might have. The types of answers were far more evenly mixed compared to answers to other questions. Given that a number of respondents attended the engagement events in the belief that they were focused on the proposed relief road, it therefore is not surprising that the top two answers relate to this topic. Table 6 sets out how these answers have been categorised.

Comment Type	Number of Times Raised
In favour of relief road	12
Opposed to relief road	10
Other	11
Issues around parking and transport	9
Happy with Chippenham	5
Dissatisfied with how public engagement has been carried out	4
Opposed to further development	4
Issues around the environment and climate change	4
Want to see more/improved infrastructure	3
Issues around the town centre and shops	2
Want to see better engagement with and more to do for families and young people	2

Table 6 - Q.5 “Do you have any other comments?” – Number of issues raised in respondents’ comments by category

Below is a sample of answers given for Question 5:

- “Pedestrian/cycle access on any road put in. Specifically new relief road for running club, dog walkers, school/commute and public access. Don't care where road is just need it”
- “It'd be nice if councils/governments came to chat with my age demographic and find out how to improve things for all, as opposed to the two ends of age spectrum (very young/very old) so that talented, intelligent people don't just leave Chippenham for better prospects”
- “Sustainability (genuine -live within our planetary means) needs to be the top priority for EVERYTHING. This is not about what is popular or politically possible, but what is existentially necessary for the survival of all complex life on our planet. There is not Planet B!!”
- “Wiltshire Council has been nominated as 'greenest' council in the country. Building a new road or bypass through the countryside is hypocritical as this will create more carbon emissions!”
- “The link road is going too far out, but agree with need for houses. Would be a better pitch if it included more details for proposed facilities etc in each development area”
- “Cannot consider Chippenham in isolation - relationship to outlying communities and villages really matter. For example, what would the impact be of a big increase in population be on small villages/already overloaded routes etc in the local area. Many of these cannot be improved”
- “Community events in Monkton Park over the past year show that people will come out to support the town”
- “Need to actually deliver the programmes in a reasonable timescale”.

8. Additional comments left by respondents

In addition to the surveys completed, written feedback was received from three respondents. These responses all objected to the HIF bid and additional housing. The feedback also questioned whether a relief road would alleviate Chippenham's traffic congestion issues and questioned the level of public consultation. These comments are shown at Appendix 2.

A number of residents also spoke to representatives of Wiltshire Council. Notes were made to capture those conversations, as well as a couple of questions left by another resident. These comments variously covered questions regarding the relief road, opposition to the road, opposition to further development, and comments on the state of the town. This feedback is shown at Appendix 3.

9. Conclusions

The results of the engagement surveys indicate that respondents have identified highways and transport issues as a key priority and area for improvement within Chippenham. This is based both around traffic problems, but also the provision of public transport, and cycle and walk routes.

Respondents have also identified the town centre and the shopping offer as an area that they feel requires improvement.

Although better use of green spaces was highlighted as a priority by a large number of respondents, it was much less likely to be raised as an area that respondents would improve if they had the ability. However, it did appear consistently across things that respondents liked about Chippenham and wanted to do more with.

Some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the idea of more development in and around Chippenham, with a similar number of respondents stating that they felt that more housing, particularly if it was affordable, was necessary.