

Northleach Parking Strategy

Issues and Options Report



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Report adopted by Northleach with Eastington Town Council

At its meeting on 13 September 2023

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Background and terms of reference

In pursuance of the Town Council's decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, Cotswold District Council designated the Parish of Northleach with Eastington as the relevant area for that purpose in April 2014.

Consultation with the community during the development of the plan identified, amongst other things, a need for improved parking facilities and improvements to the Market Place.

The final draft of the plan proposed specific policy provisions to address these needs with the support of the local community, local landowners and the County and District councils. The plan was then put to a referendum in the Parish in March 2019. Over 90% of votes cast were in favour of the adoption of the plan as part of the District Council's Local Plan.

The plan was formally adopted by the District Council in April 2019 and now forms part of the Cotswold District Council's Local Plan for the Cotswolds.

The relevant plan policy is set out below:

Policy NE1: Public Parking

An indicative location for the development of a public car park, [on the North side of West End close to the telephone exchange building] with access to West End, is shown on the Policies Map. The parking area should be for a maximum of 30 cars with no provision for coaches and with no ancillary buildings.

The development will be brought forward only as part of a comprehensive parking strategy for the town which incorporates a restructuring of existing public parking spaces in Market Place to create a new public space. Other public realm enhancements may include relocation of the public toilet block and reconfiguration of the bus stop.

The need for improvements for both the Market Place and improved parking facilities are inextricably linked. If they are to be realised it is necessary first to develop the parking strategy required by policy NE1, above.

In order progress with the delivery of the various objectives set out in the plan, the Town Council resolved at its meeting on 19 October 2022 to establish a Steering Group to research and develop a comprehensive parking strategy for

the town which incorporates a restructuring of existing public parking spaces in the Market Place to create a new public space.

To begin that process, the Town Council appointed members drawn from the Council, the public and from across the town in order to identify particular issues that may have a bearing on the development of any strategy and provide a springboard for discussion with Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, and other stakeholders on the development of a holistic strategy.

In order to create the parking strategy envisaged by the Neighbourhood Plan and execute this so as to ensure the delivery of both the necessary public realm improvements and the new public parking identified in NE1 considerable input will be required from local authorities and stakeholders as regards data capture, design, and funding.

Steering Group members have now held a number of meetings focussing on different areas of the town. Focus has been on the Market Place, The Green, West End and East End, with input from local businesses and residents. What follows in this preliminary report are the findings of the group in respect of each of those areas which we hope will act as a catalyst for engagement with the County Council, District Council, and others.

Issues Identified

The Market Place

The Group identified a number of significant issues around the Market Place relevant both the improvement of the public realm and organisation of public parking with significant opportunities for improvement.

Parking

In simple terms of parking, there is presently no strategy to manage this. Parking spaces in the Market Place are not only at a premium, but also congested in terms of size and unfit for modern cars. General lack of parking causes vehicles to circulate hunting for spaces and then leaving. Longer-term and long-term parking deny access to local facilities for those wishing to utilise the local businesses.

Those from the satellite hamlets and away from the centre of the town, or in need of a car to access facilities, are not always able to patronise local businesses as there may be nowhere to stop. Those wishing to stop for only a few minutes to shop may need to park sometimes towards the traffic lights in order to access the centre of the town. This has a knock-on effect on the viability and profitability of those businesses as trade is lost.

Local businesses are critical to the success of a market town both economically and socially and employ many local people, provide local services and reduce the need to travel.

Additionally, in terms of green energy, there are no facilities in the town for public EV charging.

Public transport and larger vehicles

There are similar problems posed for public transport providers. Buses now find it difficult or impossible to access the statutory stopping points either because they are too large, or because they are in use by other vehicles, private or commercial for deliveries, for example.

Buses arriving from the East, if they used the stop as designed, would also discharge passengers onto the Market Place rather than onto a pavement. Consequently, they have not done so for many years. Buses sometimes manoeuvre by reversing into position in the Market Place. On occasion, there may be two lined up, blocking the entrance into the Market Place.

It is clear the bus shelter and associated WCs can no longer be used as designed. For example, Stagecoach cannot access the Market Place due to the camber. As a result, they stop on the opposite side of the road going East, at Doctors Lane, and behind the shelter on the road going West making the existing shelter largely redundant and giving no shelter for passengers on the narrow pavements.

The stops in the Market Place are often taken by parked vehicles, either on them or close by, preventing access or manoeuvring. With the recent introduction of double-decker buses and the creation of a new stop (on a double yellow line immediately adjacent to the road

junction with Doctors Lane) they also impinge on privacy as the upper deck windows are approximately 1m from bedroom windows.

Space is inadequate for manoeuvring larger vehicles or making deliveries – consequently many drive over the pavement and struggle to make turns in the Market Place, by the war memorial and around the build-out. They are sometimes forced to reverse in order enter or exit. Bin lorries have been known to leave without collecting due to lack of access. Lorries are also unable to make the turn towards Mill End, a narrow right-angle turn. Pavement parking is also frequent.

Cyclists and pedestrians

There is inadequate provision for the increasing number of cyclists who wish to stop and utilise local facilities. It is noted that Northleach is on many specific cycle routes through the Cotswolds, notably the Sustrans route connecting Northleach via the Windrush valley to Witney.

Although the Market Place is effectively “shared space” and operates as such, there are concerns over safety for pedestrians. There are 5 entry and exit points. Signage is often unseen or ignored and routes through to The Green and Mill End offer no pedestrian refuge of any sort. The route to The Green is often used for parking, which can restrict or prevent traffic flowing. In particular, the route into the Market Place from the East is around a blind corner by a shop entrance with no pavement facility. Additionally, the buildout at the bottom of Doctors Lane does not offer a safe passage across the Market Place, but merely narrows the highway opposite the existing island.

Potential improvements

A number of possibilities have been identified for consideration in order to provide both improvements to the public realm and improve parking facilities.

The introduction of short-term parking arrangements, coupled with a new long term facility would allow easier access to local facilities, provide for residents and provide longer term parking for visitors, walkers, tourists and those who may wish to leave cars in Northleach in order to take buses for example to London or other destinations.

A new bus pull-in and shelter arrangement with a replacement of the existing would provide modern WC and shelter facilities and enable buses to access stops appropriately.

A new safe pavement area at the Eastern entrance to the Market Place would improve pedestrian safety and provide refuge from moving traffic.

Rationalisation of the various entrances and exits would facilitate easier and safer pedestrian movement.

Alternative surfacing of the Market Place and adjoining highway area would improve the public realm and tell drivers they are entering shared space.

An EV point and improvements for cyclists would improve green credentials.

Disability access should be improved.

Provision should be made for large delivery vehicles.

Provision should be made for additional green space in the Market Place.

Space might be more effectively used if the war memorial were relocated.

A series of indicative renditions of how aspects of the Market Place might be improved are appended. They are intended only to encourage discussion. They do not represent any conclusions by the Steering Group as to how any of the issues identified or potential items for improvement should be addressed.

The Green

The Green is a largely residential but includes two business premises. The majority of premises have no off-road parking facility. Access into the Green is one-way on one exit from the main road. Access from the Market Place is a narrow two-way passage. Neither access has any pavement.

Parking is marked out in the centre of The Green for a number of cars but is insufficient for the surrounding local occupiers. Access for large delivery vehicles is difficult. Castles, the butcher, arranges deliveries in small vehicles as a result. This requires off-loading of supplies in Cirencester and transfer to smaller vehicles. Large vehicles seeking to unload on occasion block the entrance from the Market Place. Cars are seen circulating hunting unsuccessfully for spaces.

The Green has no disabled parking and no loading and unloading facility.

Potential improvements

As with the Market Place, the need for better management of the current parking arrangements was identified, with a need to improve facilities for residents by restricting longer term parking by others. Similarly, some facility for disabled access and commercial loading and unloading would assist business.

Given the limited space in The Green, capacity to improve the aesthetics with some re-design or introduction of greenery is limited. This would however be welcomed if the current parking arrangements for residents and businesses can be improved to better afford them access to their homes and businesses.

West End and East End

It was considered that parking in these areas functioned reasonably well though increased parking has increased congestion and reduced traffic flow over the years. As with the centre of the town, there is little facility for off-road parking, the majority of the dwellings being terraced. If parking time is restricted in the Market Place, the knock-on effect of displacing vehicles to West End, East End and their environs will need careful consideration.

At East End, verge parking on the South side erodes the surfaces and is on the edge of an embankment down to the narrow pavement. On occasions parking on Bassett Road can restrict access to the doctor's surgery.

Unrestricted on-street parking also creates visibility problems for access onto East and West End – for example at Cooks Court.

Farmington Road Car Park

This small car parking area functions well, though residents have asked for restrictions to ensure it is available for their sole use indicating the pressure created by visitors to the town.

Parking at the Primary School and Playing Field

The small King George V Playing Field car park is mostly full during the day in term time as it facilitates parking for the school. It is generally empty in the late afternoons and evenings. Access is less than ideal as vehicles need to negotiate the narrow one-way system through the town to enter and leave or utilise the narrow country lanes adjacent to it. Event organisers sometimes direct people to it when parking elsewhere is expected to be inadequate, for example, for weddings, funerals, or other large gatherings.

Parking Elsewhere in Town

Other known parking trouble spots include Fortey Road, Mays Crescent, MacArthur Road, Nostle Road, and Back Lane, which also need to be addressed to ensure that access by emergency vehicles is maintained. Back Lane is also a particular issue as it is an unadopted road yet carries a considerable amount of traffic including waste collection vehicles.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The steering group accepts and understands that the parking issues faced by Northleach are no different to those faced by any Cotswolds town, built in the 1700s long before cars, delivery vans and parking were ever thought of. That said, the Steering Group believes there are things that could be done to improve the current issues outlined within this document and seeks to separate the current issues into three workstreams which although interconnected could be pursued and actioned independently.

It is accepted that there may be unforeseen outcomes of Streams 1 and 2 outlined below that will need to be adequately addressed going forward but they should not necessarily stop change being undertaken swiftly. It is also understood although limits and controls might be introduced by way of signage, the desire and/or ability to police and enforce them is a separate issue. We are aware of other examples (notably in Wiltshire), where such measures have been introduced without being policed which have delivered significant improvements to behaviours on the basis that most people are rule abiding.

Stream One – short term deliverable, less costly actions to improve the current Market Place

Issue	Rationale	Possible Resolution(s)
Design of the current parking layout	We believe the current layout is suboptimal and that potentially a multiple row of herring bone design spaces – such as they have in Winchcombe - would improve traffic flow, make spaces easier to get in and out of, and allow for disabled spaces at either end of each row thus increasing the number and improve the locations of such spaces	Use a computer aided design software package to optimise the current Market Place parking place location design and then liaise with Highways to repaint the lines accordingly – consider in conjunction with the potential for other improvements to the public realm as required by policy NE1
Buses find it difficult to enter and leave the Market Place	Buses trying to enter the marketplace causes problems and either causes obstruction and/or compromises access for other vehicles.	Consider alternative bus stops to ensure safe loading and unloading, ensuring traffic flow can be maintained if multiple buses from each direction are collecting or dropping off at the same time
The need to restrict parking times/stays	The unlimited free parking currently allows for long term parking resulting in cars being left while people go walking for the day, or park to catch a bus to Oxford and London airports for example	Limiting parking to say 2 hours between 9am and 3pm could reduce or stop that behaviour. This could be done using signage and suggesting fines for overstayers. This may also require introduction of residents’ permits
Delivery vehicles causing blockages/obstructions	There is a need for local business to be serviced by supplier delivery vehicles/waste collection/recycling lorries etc and there is currently no dedicated loading or unloading bays, or guidance as to delivery times/routes, vehicle sizes or best access routes for businesses	Include strategically placed loading bays where possible as part of the line remarking task. Ask local businesses to restrict delivery/collection times and request deliveries/collection in smaller vehicles where possible
Pedestrian access across the marketplace is difficult	There are no easy routes for pedestrians to cross the marketplace, which is further complicated by the multiple entrances and exits to the marketplace meaning	Employ marked pedestrian walkways (as you would get in a factory or airport complex) across the marketplace that would encourage foot traffic to follow those designated routes and so

	pedestrians take many different routes through and across the marketplace especially at school drop off and collection times	make drivers aware of where to expect to accommodate or stop for pedestrians. Employ “heritage” surfacing to enhance the area
Residential parking	Many residents of the Market Place, High Street and the Green etc have no off-road parking so must park in one of these locations therefore some preferential treatment is required for residents	Decide to make The Green and Farmington Road car parks ‘Residents only’ or otherwise restrict visitor stay times by use of signage again threatening fines for breach by non-residents
Airbnb/holiday let customers taking residents parking	Visitors to the many Airbnb/holiday properties in the town cause issues with no guidance as to where they should park often meaning residents are unable to park within a reasonable distance of their own homes	Consideration to be given to inviting Airbnb owners direct guests to say the King George VI carpark after unloading to ensure residents can park, re-enforced by The Green and Farmington Road car parks becoming residents only

Stream Two – Events Parking Plans

Issue	Rationale	Possible Resolution(s)
One off ‘events’ need designated parking options	Weddings/funerals/christenings/Charter Fayre etc are all examples of big events taking place for a limited time that would benefit from organisers being advised and required to make use of alternative parking venues throughout the town, and even prohibited from parking in the marketplace.	Create a list of alternative parking facilities and contacts to arrange parking location access via the church or Town Council potentially. Use could be made of Westwards car park, the King George VI field car park by the school, the car park behind the fire station, and in the summer any appropriate locally accessible land/fields where local landowners might consider use for parking for an agreed fee. Limited parking times in the marketplace would also reduce the impact of lengthy event parking requirements.

Stream Three – Longer Term Goals

Issue	Rationale	Possible Resolution(s)
Long term parking provision	There is a need for dedicated long term visitor parking availability in the town to ensure that the marketplace can be better managed to facilitate use of the town's businesses and attractions	Build the long-term car park on the site identified as part of the Town Plan
Provision for EV charging	With the move towards zero emissions, Northleach must be able to attract visitors by enabling EV charging to stay 'alive'	Include EV charging as part of the new long stay car build work
Aesthetic improvements to the marketplace that should be deemed to be in the public good	Given enough time and money, the marketplace could be completely redesigned for future generations to enjoy. This could include green spaces and planting to create more outdoor entertaining/meeting space. The potential redesign/ decoration/re-location of the WCs to a more discreet position. The possible relocation of the war memorial has been also suggested. There is also the wider road safety issue that could be resolving by tackling the multiple entrance/exit routes to and from the marketplace.	A future funded project to fully research, scope and plan the options, restrictions, and costs of a full redesign of the marketplace to include a full understanding of the ramifications of any design proposals on the surrounding streets/residents/businesses before any work is undertaken
Streams 1 and 2 will create unforeseen issues and they will have ramifications	Whenever things change there will be unforeseen consequences and any longer-term parking strategy and public good works undertaken should include the need to include and consider how to resolve such issues	Any future redesign project should also include corrective actions as part of its scope. These should be fully risk assessed as part of that project

Annex of Plans & Photos



Five vans parked on the bus clearway and entrances onto the Market Place.



Delivery van on bus clearway, another on High Street beside stores.



Market day parking



Bus too large to negotiate Market Place. Smaller bus reversed into position in original stop.



Overnight camping in Market Place



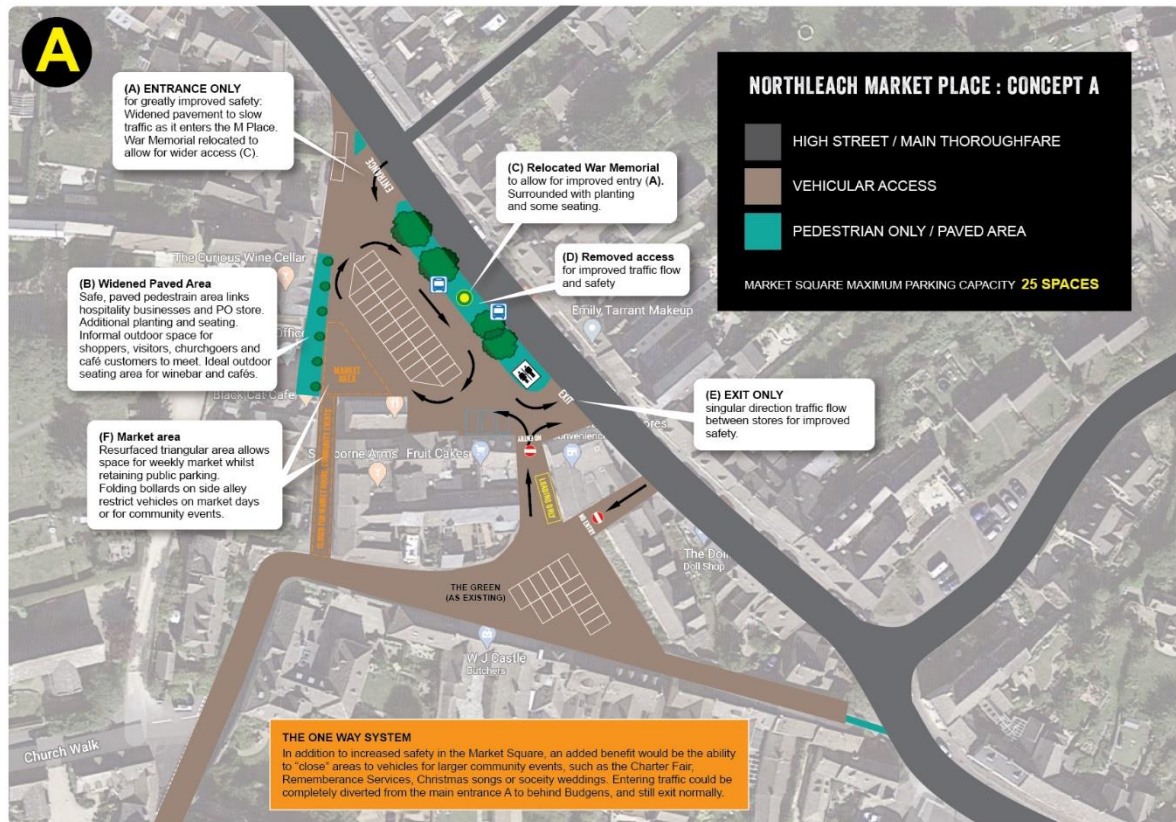
Overnight camping on bus stop in Market Place...and eating breakfast Sunday morning.



Tourist bus temporarily stranded after grounding out attempting to leave Market Place

Note – The war memorial is also prone to damage and has been hit a number of times by vehicles. The addition of bollards has helped to protect it, but it is vulnerable on the side on which vehicles still pass – and was hit again today, 22 August 2023 by a car whose underside went over the low wall, damaging the car but fortunately leaving the memorial intact.

Concept Discussion Plans & Elevations



Concept A



