

## Proposals for Improved Rural Transport

### Consultation Response from Fritwell Parish Council for Service A: Cherwell Valley

Fritwell Parish Council and village residents are pleased to see new consideration for public transport in this area but are unsure about numbers and usage for sustainability. It has been difficult to properly consult widely with local residents and other villages and our views are still somewhat speculative.

FYI I have attached an excerpt from a detailed report made in 2017 for Fritwell Parish Council's campaign when we were trying to keep the last bus service (no.81) before OCC cut all bus subsidies. The information is obviously out-of-date but does show that around 20 people used this service every week to go to Bicester on Fridays (market day) and may be an indication of numbers likely from the different villages.

Prior to this, buses had run on more days a week and some went between Banbury and Bicester, going through the villages on the way.

**We are puzzled about who the key target groups are for the service you suggest.**

**Older, more vulnerable residents and those with mobility issues and special needs.** Currently this group are using the Ability Bus to go to Bicester on Fridays for the market and other shopping. They are very happy with the service they get from this which can include pickup and return to their door and help with carrying shopping in etc. They also enjoy the local trips on offer with this scheme. ***This group are very keen to keep the Ability Bus.***

Your service bus timetable has good flexibility for return journeys in the afternoon but 9.27am start of journey is a bit early for some in this group to manage. 10am start would be much better.

**Off-peak usage by residents for shopping, health appointments etc.** Timetable useful for return journeys but probably not enough choice for getting into Bicester for timed appointments.

**Bus travel for working people.** This category of residents need persuading to use public transport thereby reducing our carbon footprint, improving air quality, reducing pollution and the number of vehicles using narrow unsuitable rural and village roads.

Pick up at 8.27am and 9.27am could be useful for workers in Bicester but return at 17.05pm does not give much flexibility and would probably need to have an additional bus later. The important issues for this group are going to be reliability and punctuality.

For commuters there would need to be more service times offered earlier and later and possible drop off at railway stations etc.

**Young people.** This group is not covered by your suggested timetable and there are no options for evenings. Young people growing up in villages have little opportunity for independence and those able to afford it will get private motorised transport as soon as legally allowed - causing parking issues in the village, more cars on the local roads etc.

School buses may run in the area and there may be opportunities to allow some use by adults.

**Destinations.** Neither Bicester or Banbury are ideal these days unless people can combine town business and shopping and with out-of-town destinations (Gateway in Banbury, Bicester Avenue and Kingsmere shops in Bicester). Oxford would be a welcome addition to possible destinations.

Brackley is used by some and a significant number of secondary school children living in Fritwell go to Magdalen School in Brackley.

#### **AN ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTION**

**Have you considered Heyford Park as a possible location for a Transport Hub with a shuttle bus bringing residents from local villages and linking up with other bus services to Bicester, Banbury and Oxford?** Somerton Parish Council has indicated its support for this idea and Heyford Park Parish Council discussed it and agreed support at a recent PC meeting. (There has not been an opportunity to speak to other villages).

Heyford Park is a growing community with good social and recreation opportunities, bar and café, local supermarket, pharmacy, dentists (private) and plans for NHS doctor outreach from Alchester Health Centre in Bicester.

**This could be a more viable alternative.**

Fritwell Parish Council September 2023