

6 Transport and accessibility

Key issues

- **Access to private transport.** One in five Wincanton households does not own a car or van. This is higher than the proportion for South Somerset as a whole.
- **Ease of travel to and from the area.** Good East-West road links ensure easy access by car. Road travel on the North-South axis is less good. Wincanton is within close reach of three railway stations offering three rail routes. Apart from a good bus link to London, commercial bus services are poor. Many of the gaps are filled by a Community Accessible Transport (CAT) bus scheme. However, restrictions on who can use the CAT bus mean that the bulk of the Wincanton population has little choice but to be dependent on the car.
- **Ease of access to services.** As noted in Chapter 5, most villages have few services, so travel to Wincanton is important. Access by car is easy. The CAT bus is helping to ensure access from the villages to Wincanton and the other towns nearby. However the CAT bus operates only on weekdays 8am to 6pm.
- **Ease of movement around the town.** Free car parking is viewed as an asset thought to facilitate access to services and to boost the town's trade. However, the District Council would like to introduce parking charges in Wincanton. Pedestrian safety could be enhanced through the provision of additional designated crossings. A very small minority of residents cycle and facilities for them are currently poor – the establishment of dedicated cycle routes might promote greater take-up of cycling.

6.1 Access to private transport

Nearly one Wincanton household in five (18.5 per cent) does not own a car or van. This is slightly higher than the proportion for South Somerset as a whole – see Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Car/van ownership

	Wincanton		South Somerset	
	Number of households	Percentage	Number of households	Percentage
No car	378	18.5%	10,210	16.0%
1 car	1,008	49.4%	29,903	46.9%
2 cars	508	24.9%	18,330	28.7%
3 cars	100	4.9%	3,958	6.2%
4+ cars	46	2.3%	1,368	2.1%

Source: Somerset County Council, 2005, *Somerset Interactive Area Profiles*. Data from National Statistics, *Census 2001*.

6.2 Ease of travel to and from the local area¹

By car

Wincanton is situated on the A303 providing an excellent East-West road link connecting the town to routes to, for example, London, Basingstoke, Salisbury, Yeovil, Exeter and Plymouth.

Road travel on the North-South axis is less good. In particular the northern link to Bristol is particularly bad.

All the villages in the Wincanton hinterland can access the town by car. In general, traffic is light but the roads are often narrow and so must be negotiated with care.

The major retail centre for residents of Wincanton and the surrounding villages is Yeovil. This lies 16 miles away and takes approximately 30 minutes to reach by car.

There are several local taxi firms. Travel over short distance tends to be costly, but taxi fares to airports tend to be reasonably competitive with the cost of, say, rail travel especially if more than one person is travelling.

By bus

Wincanton has the benefit of a fast coach service (the 'Berry's bus') to London (Hammersmith). The bus starts in Taunton and also stops at Yeovil but then runs non-stop from Wincanton to London. The service runs only at limited times and is geared to London commuting and London weekending rather than local travel.

Two commercial bus firms operate in the area: First (part of a national company) and South West Coaches Ltd. The nearest large town to Wincanton is Yeovil (16 miles). A regular commercial bus service operates on this route. Travel time from Wincanton to Yeovil is approximately 60 minutes (compared with 30 minutes by car). Other local

¹ Healthcheck Worksheets, 2005, *Ease of travel to and from the local area and Transport and accessibility*.

destinations reasonably accessible by commercial bus services include: Bayford, Bruton, Castle Cary, Cucklington, Gillingham, Sherborne, Templecombe.

Wincanton has a Community Accessible Transport (CAT) bus scheme. This is a demand-responsive, 'dial-and-ride' minibus service now operating three buses. The main features of the service are²:

- **scope.** Links 43 villages to the three towns of Wincanton, Bruton and Castle Cary. 27 of these have no commercial bus service at all or just one bus per day. The CAT service operates weekdays 8am to 6pm. The service is door-to-door
- **personal access.** The service is open to people within the villages. It is only open to people within the towns who are unable to use commercial services because of disability. Able-bodied people within the towns are expected to use conventional public transport (because the CAT scheme aims not to damage the viability of commercial services) but they may exceptionally be able to use the scheme if they need to travel to somewhere inaccessible by normal means
- **group access.** The service also provides lifts to members of 26 associations including groups from sheltered housing, youth groups, and so on
- **disabled access.** The minibuses are equipped to carry up to two wheelchairs. Drivers are trained to provide help
- **cost.** Normal fares range from £2 to £5.50 for a single journey and £3.00 to £8.00 for a return trip depending on the distance travelled. The service can be booked for out-of-area destinations in which case cost will depend on distance travelled and the length of time the bus is out of its normal operating area. Holders of local authority bus passes pay concessionary rates.

Wincanton also has a dedicated minibus service for elderly and/or disabled user groups, called the Winibus. This is run by a local charity with volunteer drivers. Typical services include taking people to health-related support groups, luncheon club, day centre, church services, and so on.

By rail

Wincanton no longer has its own station but lies reasonably close to three railway stations:

- **Templecombe** (4 miles). South West Train service on the London (Waterloo) to Exeter line. Some trains travel further West to Plymouth. Main stops on the line include Salisbury, Andover, Basingstoke and Woking. There is a bus link to Heathrow from Woking. For more local travel, intermediate stops include

² CAT bus leaflet, 2005, *Ring and ride South Somerset*.

Gillingham, Sherborne and Yeovil Junction. Trains generally every two hours and more frequent at peak times

- **Gillingham** (7 miles). Also on the London (Waterloo) to Exeter line
- **Castle Cary** (7 miles). First Great Western service on the London (Paddington) to Penzance line. Main intermediate stops include Plymouth, Exeter, Taunton, Newbury and Reading. Includes fast trains during peak commuting hours but off-peak may need to change trains. Also Heart of Wessex line linking Bath Spa, Bristol, Yeovil Penn Mill and Weymouth. Frequent trains to Bristol, less frequent direct service to Bath.

The train stations are too far to be reached by foot. Cycling is possible though there is no dedicated cycle route and the roads are fast and reasonably busy so safety is an issue.

Bus services do broadly link with the departure time for trains but return journeys are poorly served. For example:

- weekday, destination Templecombe. Bus arrives at station at 10.23am, train departs at 10.34. On return, train arrives 19.25, bus departs station at 20.50
- weekday, destination Castle Cary. Bus arrives at station 9.39, train departs 10.21. On return, train arrives 18.23 but last bus departed 16.38.

There are no buses to dovetail with early train departures, for example, where commuters wish to get to London before 9am.

Realistically, most rail users will therefore use a car to travel to and from the station. Parking at Templecombe is free. Parking charges are levied at Gillingham and Castle Cary.

6.3 Ease of access to services³

Travel to school

Children living in Wincanton and attending schools in the town are generally within walking distance of their school though some do travel by car. Children from the outlying villages travel either by car or school bus.

Scheduled and/or school bus services are available at convenient times for Wincanton young people attending state schools and sixth form colleges in Gillingham, Bruton, Sherborne, Street and Yeovil.

Travel to work

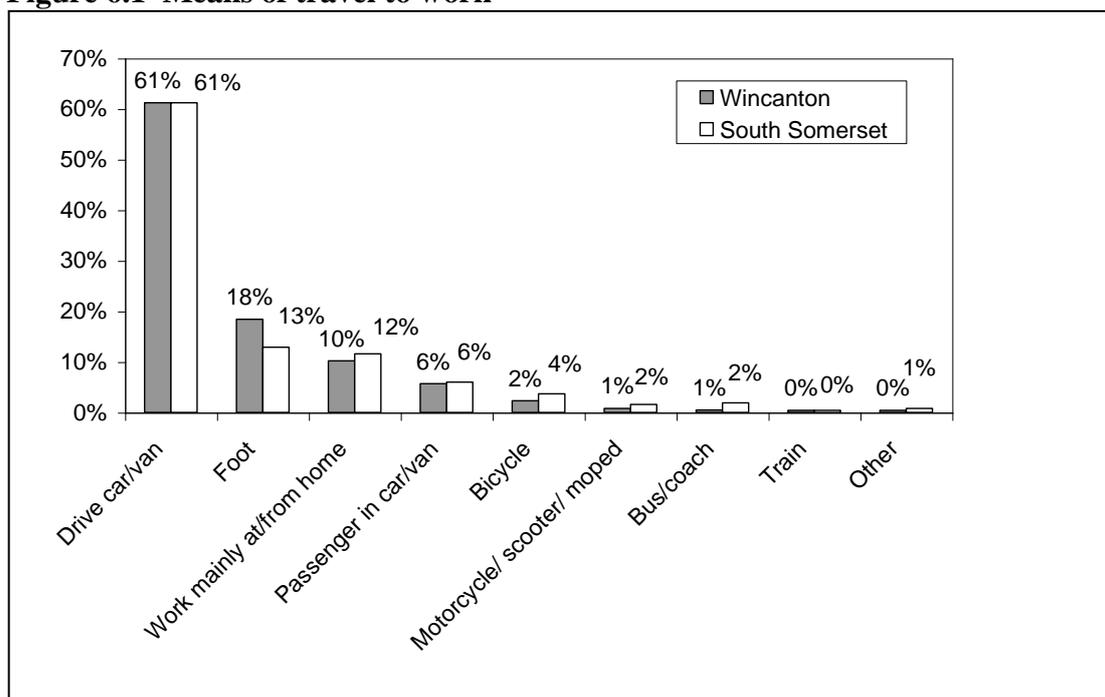
³ Healthcheck Worksheet, 2005, *Ease of access to services*.

Figures from Census 2001 show that more Wincanton residents than the proportion for the District as a whole are able to walk to work. In other respects, the means of travel to work are very similar as shown in Figure 6.1.

With 18 per cent of residents able to walk to work, 2 per cent using a bicycle and 10 per cent working from home, this means nearly a third of Wincanton's working residents are able to access work by an environmentally-friendly means.

Figure 6.1 highlights that public transport plays very little part in getting people to and from work either in Wincanton or South Somerset as a whole. Only 11 of Wincanton's working residents get to work by bus or coach. A further 10 use a train but will also have relied on some other means to get them to the station.

Figure 6.1 Means of travel to work



Source: Somerset County Council, 2005, *Somerset Interactive Area Profiles*. Data from National Statistics, *Census 2001*.

Alternative transport

As discussed above, the CAT bus and the Winibus services are available to people with mobility impairment.

The CAT bus also serves able-bodied people in the outlying villages on weekdays 8am to 6pm.

There are several local taxi firms. However, travel by taxi tends to be costly and it can be difficult to book a taxi at certain hours of the day when the firms have contracts to do 'school runs'.

Access to information about public transport

Information about services and timetabling is available locally from the Tourist Information Centre at the Town Hall, public library, rail stations and bus stops. South West Coaches also has a depot within the town from which information about its own services can be obtained.

Information about First buses, the Berry's bus and the rail network is also available by Internet.

Details of the CAT bus services are available from the Town Hall, the Balsam Centre, the public library or by phone. Although the CAT service only started operating in 2002, by the time of the *Wincanton Survey 2003*, 55 per cent of households had heard of the CAT bus and awareness was even higher among retired households.

Access to services in Wincanton

Most of the key services in Wincanton – for example, post office, health centre, pharmacists, opticians, banks, building society agencies, public library, food shops, Town Hall – and the shops are centrally located.

Commercial bus services coming into town or from stops outside the town centre (for example, on Bayford Hill or Common Road) stop right in the centre of town close to shops and, for an able-bodied person, within 5 minutes walk of the health centre, library and post office. The CAT bus and Winibus are demand-responsive and will stop wherever customers request.

Some buses stop on West Hill which is convenient for the swimming pool and Sports Centre. This is also the closest stop for visitors to the hospital who would have a 10 to 15 minute walk.

There is no bus service to the Sports Ground at Moor Lane which is about 20 minutes walk from the town centre.

Last commercial buses leave Wincanton on Friday and Saturday nights at 11pm enabling visitors, for example, to visit pubs or restaurants in town. There is one night club in Wincanton which stays open considerably later than this and its late visitors would not be able to get home by public transport.

All Wincanton services are readily accessible by car. Residents in most of the local villages can reach Wincanton within 20 minutes or less by car. At the time of the Healthcheck, there was ample free parking in the town centre (see Section 6.4 below).

Relatively few local services are available by Internet but increasingly information about them is. This may reduce the number of physical journeys required.

6.4 Ease of movement around the town⁴

Congestion

In general traffic flows reasonably freely through Wincanton. The main causes of congestion are:

- **race days at Wincanton Racecourse.** When traffic leaves the Racecourse there are considerable hold-ups at the junction of North Street and the Market Place
- **Friday morning refuse collection.** There is a bottleneck in the one-way system at south Street. When the collection lorry reaches this point, traffic is delayed for around a maximum of 10 minutes
- **School drop-off/ pick up times.** The two primary schools are both located in South Street/Tout Hill. Congestion is caused by parents seeking and leaving parking spaces and the operation of the school crossings.

Car parking

Table 6.2 lists the public car parking spaces available in central Wincanton. In addition, one of the local stores (Clementina) has a small customer car park. The main supermarket (Morrison) on the edge of town has an extensive customer car park. Although it is possible for people to walk from the supermarket into the town centre, it is unlikely that many do so.

At the time of the Healthcheck, all the public parking in Wincanton was free. However, there have been suggestions from South Somerset District Council which owns the main car park (at the Memorial Hall) that charges should be introduced. The suggestion met with considerable local opposition with large numbers of residents, town users and traders signing a petition against the move.

⁴ Healthcheck Worksheet, 2005, *Ease of movement around town.*

Table 6.2 Availability of public car parking in Wincanton

Type of parking	Location	Number of spaces
Long stay (car park)	Carrington Way	30
	Churchfields	38
	Memorial Hall	132
Short stay (car park)	Carrington Way	65
Short stay (on street)	High Street	58
	Post Office	4 [1]
Disabled parking	Carrington Way	5
	Churchfields	2
	High Street	1
	Memorial Hall	7
TOTAL SPACES		342

Source: Healthcheck Worksheets, 2005, *Ease of movement around the town and Transport and accessibility*.

[1] Technically there are two parking spaces outside the post office. In practice, cars also park on the small access road as well.

Free parking for coaches is available at the Memorial Hall Car Park.

As table 6.2 shows, there is good provision for disabled parking. However, it is not necessarily optimally distributed. In particular, there is no disabled parking bay close to the post office.

There is no parking at all in the immediate vicinity of the Town Hall.

Despite the ample free car parking in the town centre, many people park temporarily outside the Lloyds TSB and NatWest Banks in order to use the cash machines. This appears to be less of a problem at the HSBC Bank.

Conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and other road users

In Wincanton, between 1 June 2001 and 31 May 2004, there were an average of 17.7 people per year injured in accidents involving cyclists and an average of 44.3 people per year injured in accidents involving pedestrians⁵. This is a higher than the average for wards in South Somerset⁶.

A particular black-spot is Station Road at the point where pedestrians informally cross from the church over to Cemetery Lane.

In the *Wincanton Survey 2003*, 63 per cent of respondents wanted more pedestrian crossings. They identified seven locations where they would ideally like these to be:

- the Market Place – exact location not specified (77 respondents)
- Church Street to Market Place (76 respondents)

⁵ Healthcheck worksheet responses, 2005, *Environment*.

⁶ Healthcheck responses, 2005, headed *Wincanton MCTi – Social and Community*.

- High Street from Memorial Hall Car Park to Uncle Tom's Cabin (45 respondents)
- South Street from NatWest bank to Town Hall side of street (38 respondents)
- High Street from Lloyds TSB Bank to Bear Inn (36 respondents)
- Station Road from church to Cemetery Lane (36 respondents)
- Carrington Way (28 respondents).

However, 80 per cent of respondents in the survey said that traffic did not deter them from using local shops. Some expressed concern about speeding, the volume of traffic and large lorries navigating the town centre. A minority suggested the town centre should be pedestrianised. At present, no areas of the town centre give pedestrians priority.

At the time of the Healthcheck, traffic calming measures were in place in the Memorial Hall Car Park (speed humps), Dancing Lane (speed humps) and South Street/Tout Hill (speed humps and a chicane).

Getting round town on foot

There are a large number of footpaths within Wincanton. It is possible to use them for at least part of the way when going into town, to the supermarket, to the health centre, to schools, and so on.

However, the footpaths are mostly fairly short and in general it is difficult to move between locations in Wincanton without having to cross at least one road, so footpaths do not provide complete protection from traffic for pedestrians.

The footpaths are open to everyone, but in practice a few are steep or have steps which could be a problem for anyone with impaired mobility (either due to a health problem or because, say, they were pushing children in a pushchair).

There are a number of fingerposts in the town centre giving directions to pedestrians but none outside the central area. The fingerposts are not particularly prominent and vandals often swing them round to point the wrong way.

Pavements in Wincanton town centre are generally in reasonable condition. new pavement was laid in the region of the Town Hall during 2004 and there is a proposal to replace paving in the Carrington way entrance as part of a town centre enhancement scheme.

There are dropped kerbs at main crossing points. However, in the past, wheelchair users have had problems with the dropped kerbs in the Memorial Hall Car Park, where narrow pavements mean a sharp turn onto the dropped paving and the location of the dropped kerbs has left users having to negotiate speed humps in the road.

Tactile paving is present at several crossings. There is one pelican crossing in the town. It is equipped with an audible warning to aid users with impaired vision.

Table 6.3 describes typical routes which school children might take if walking to school.

Table 6.3 Walking routes to school

Route	Length	Duration	Description
Bayford – either primary school, South Street	1 ¼ miles	25 minutes	Choice of main road or main road plus footpaths. Footpaths unlit or poorly lit. Cross main roads twice - use pelican crossing and school crossing.
Bayford – King Arthur's, West Hill	1 ½ miles	30 minutes	Choice of main roads or main road plus footpaths. Footpaths unlit. Cross main road once.
West Hill – either primary school, South Street	½ mile	10 minutes	Choice of main road, main road plus footpaths. Footpaths unlit and route through recreation ground may be isolated. Cross main road – no designated crossing.
West Hill – King Arthur's, West Hill	¼ mile	5 minutes	Via main road. may need to cross main road, no designated crossing.

Source: Healthcheck Worksheet, 2005, *Ease of movement around town.*

Getting around town by bicycle

At the time of writing (early 2006), there are no dedicated cycle paths in Wincanton. The police have previously said that, in the interests of the safety of cyclists, they would not enforce no cycling along footpaths. Cyclist under 16 are also allowed to cycle along pavements. Cycle parking racks are located in Carrington Way.

However, a comprehensive analysis of potential cycling routes has been undertaken by local resident, Richard Nicholl, who has experience of establishing cycle routes elsewhere in the UK. A summary of his proposals for routes within Wincanton is given in the Box overleaf.

The *Wincanton Survey 2003* found that only 1 per cent of respondents travelled into town by bicycle. This could be due to the generally hilly terrain of Wincanton. However, Mr Nicholl points out that, in Radstock – a Somerset town which is much hillier than Wincanton – three cycle routes are well used for both transport and recreation. In his view, the provision of dedicated cycle routes would promote greater take-up of cycling in Wincanton.

Proposed cycle routes within Wincantron

- **Route 1:** Bayford - Devenish Lane – Deanesly Way proposed new development - Deanesly Way – Balsam Fields - South Street (cycle lane required) - Primary Schools.
- **Route 2:** New primary school site (New Barns Farm) – recreation ground – Station Road (crossing required and contraflow cycle path) – South Street junction (crossing required) – Moor Lane – Southgate Drive – Deanesly Way.
- **Route 3:** New primary school site – via New Barns Farm proposed development (zig-zag cycle route required to cope with gradient) – King Arthur’s School.
- **Route 4:** New primary school site – via New Barns Farm proposed development – Lawrence Hill (cycle way on verge of A371) – Anchor Hill roundabout – Lattiford.
- **Route 5:** King Arthur’s School - via New Barns Farm proposed development – Lawrence Hill – then as Route 4 to Lattiford.
- **Route 5 (alternative):** King Arthur’s School - via New Barns Farm proposed development to western edge – cross A371 between Anchor Hill and Holbrook roundabouts (using existing agricultural bridge) – Lattiford (cycle way on verge of A371).
- **Route 6:** Recreation ground – Cavalier Way – The Batch (improvement required to existing footpath) – Shadwell Lane – North Street – Verrington Lane – Verrington Hospital (via the very steep existing footpath) – Dancing Lane – King Arthur’s School.
- **Routes 7:** Sports Ground to parts of town via Moor Lane and Common Road (street lighting and shared pedestrian/cycle routes required on both).