

DRAFT Report on Neighbourhood Plan Research Workshops held on 23 April & 27 May 2015

This report has been prepared by Local Council Support Associates Limited on behalf of Walton Community Council to inform the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. It outlines work undertaken by the Council's Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to review results of community consultation at two workshops held on 23 April and 27 May 2015. The events were facilitated by Helen Fudge of Local Council Support Associates Limited.



Information about Local Council Support Associates Ltd

Local Council Support Associates Ltd (or LCSA Ltd) is a small, values-driven business now based in Olney, Buckinghamshire which was set up in 2006 by Helen Fudge & Charmaine Bassindale. The company specialises in working with town & parish councils, addressing the barrier issues which hold local councils back & recognising the wider context of change (opportunities & challenges) for this tier of local government.

Local Council Support Associates also provide interim management & consultancy services for public, private & voluntary sector bodies involved in different types of community & stakeholder engagement, organisational development & strategic change.

In December 2014, ownership of the business transferred to Helen Fudge who is currently the sole director. Whilst this change marks the start of a new and exciting phase in the company's development, it also provides continuity of focus on the evolving role of towns and parishes.

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Section 1 - Introduction & Background

- 1.1 In April 2015, Walton Community Council commissioned Local Council Support Associates Limited to facilitate two workshops held on 23 April and 27 May 2015 to consider the detailed results of community consultation undertaken in connection with the area's Neighbourhood Plan. The Council's Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, which involved four local residents and four Walton Community Councillors, prepared the consultation material and managed the consultation process.
- 1.2 The research involved a Neighbourhood Plan Survey, which was delivered to every household in the Community Council's area (together with an online version using Survey Monkey), and a follow up study which gathered the views of young people. This was facilitated online by Walton High School.
- 1.3 A total of 1,100 responses were received including more than 350 from young people. Need to add information about the total number issued and the response rates and show how this relates to the latest population figures i.e. how representative is the research.
- 1.4 The household survey asked a total of 58 questions designed to research a broad range of quality of life issues and was divided into nine thematic areas:
- Parks, Open Spaces & Access
 - Getting Around - Roads, Redways, Pavements & Traffic
 - Health
 - Local Job Prospects
 - Housing
 - Crime & Community Safety
 - Level of Pollution
 - Cleanliness of the Area
 - Future Needs
- 1.5 The questionnaire designed for young people asked a condensed set of 20 questions so that the views of younger residents could be gathered in relation to the key issues.
- 1.6 Both types of research generated detailed quantitative and qualitative results. Local Council Support Associates were invited to facilitate two workshops with the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to help the group explore the findings. This involved consideration of statistical data and detailed comments from the main household survey, in addition to the results of the research undertaken with young people.

Section 2 - Overview of Workshop held on 23 April 2015

2.1 The Workshop involved four main activities:

- Identifying what was special and distinctive about Walton
- Identifying the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group's preliminary vision for the area in 2026 - what would be different?
- Reviewing the statistical evidence received in relation to the 58 questions in the household survey - by assessing whether, based on percentage figures, the data suggested that there was a key issue for the area. An initial assessment was provided by the facilitator and two groups were invited to agree or challenge the assessment and provide reasons. The groups were asked to indicate whether the data was an issue by classifying it as a "yes" / a "maybe" / or a "no". Each of the groups appointed a champion for young people who fed in the views of young people on each issue for which data was available.
- Reviewing the comments received in connection with the 58 questions to understand community views on items that were identified as a key issue (indicated as either a "yes" or a "maybe"). The volume of comments received on each issue had already been analysed into key headings so that the groups could see how many comments had been received expressing the same or similar views on each topic.

2.2 In addition to the four main activities, the workshop included a facilitated discussion which identified some of the emerging conclusions and implications for the Neighbourhood Plan. This drew on technical expertise provided by Sam Dix who is a Planning Officer at Milton Keynes Council.

2.3 What is special and distinctive about Walton?

The results of this activity are set out in the slide below.

So what's special & distinctive about Walton?



2.4 The key point that emerged from this exercise is that whilst people like many aspects about living in Walton, this is not because of a thriving social / community life. No one mentioned social events, local cultural activities as factors making the area special and distinctive. This is quite an unusual finding following this type of activity and it reflects the fact that Walton is still a fairly new area of Milton Keynes and that people can travel to access social activities and amenities in nearby Central Milton Keynes.

2.5 Additional points of interest in relation to the development of the Neighbourhood Plan are that there are some potential tensions suggested by the responses e.g. "it's quiet yet there are lots of individual "uses" in the area", "it's an established area but still growing".

2.6 The Group's Preliminary Vision for the area by 2026

The result of this activity is captured in the slide set out below:

The Steering Group's initial Vision for Walton to 2026

Protect

- Quiet & green environment
- Open space

Maintain

- Good planning / quality of infrastructure / building
- Roads, redways, landscaping
- Good accessibility to MK & its facilities
- Cleanliness of area

Concerns: roads will be busier
.... what does this imply re. measures?

Develop

- "Legacy" community infrastructure (GP / community centres / play)
- Community identity
- Community use of open space & buildings
- **Community involvement / action**
- Pub
- Low density development in keeping with existing
- Benefits from adjacent development

2.7 Whilst this is an initial vision narrowly based on the views of Steering Group members, it shows that there is already a strong sense of aspiration for the area and a clear role for the Neighbourhood Plan. It particularly identifies local interest in developing physical community infrastructure to support social activity and participation.

2.8 Neighbourhood planning is driven by the views of local people and this slide provides a useful and simple point of reference as local thinking develops.

2.9 Reviewing the statistical data & comments

The table set out at **Appendix A** shows the results of the activities undertaken to examine the consultation findings.

- The first column on the left shows the questions that were included in the household survey.
- The second column on the left sets out statistical data.
- The third column on the left shows whether the preliminary assessment undertaken by Local Council Support Associates identified it as a key issue for the community. This assessment was based purely on the percentages and provided a starting point for discussions. The LCSA assessment is indicated in purple text as Y (yes) / maybe or N (no).
- The third column on the left also shows (in red text) the conclusions of the group discussions. Where the conclusion is prefixed with (2), this shows that the conclusion originated from the group on table 2. An attendance list and a note of who was part of the group on table 1 and table 2 is set out at **Appendix B**.
- The fourth column shows (in red text) the conclusions by the groups about whether the issues were also concerns for young people. These conclusions are based on the results of the survey undertaken through Walton High School.
- The final column indicates (also in red text) any conclusions reached by the groups following consideration of the detailed comments received in relation to each question.

2.10 When the groups had worked their way through the 58 research questions and completed the third, fourth and fifth columns it was possible to extract the questions which the groups had indicated were key issues i.e. those items marked “yes” or “maybe”. This information was used to compile a work sheet (see **Appendix C**) for discussion at the workshop held on 27 May 2015.

2.11 Facilitated discussion on emerging conclusions and implications for the Neighbourhood Plan

The facilitated discussion generated valuable insights into the way in which a number of the key issues could be addressed. For example, Sam Dix provided a useful breakdown of the meaning of “affordable housing” in planning terms. These insights were recorded, written up in note form and integrated with material that was prepared for the second workshop held on 27 May 2015. The insights are set out in the text boxes included in the work sheet attached at **Appendix C**. The document also incorporates (in purple text) relevant facts from 2011 Census data.

Section 3 - Overview of Workshop held on 27 May 2015

3.1 The workshop involved three key activities which were designed to test, review and refine the outcomes from the first session and identify any amendments. The activities also helped new Walton Community Councillors understand the process being followed to assess the results of community consultation.

3.2 The activities included:

- A review of a worksheet which set out the key issues as identified during the previous session, including those categorised as “yes” and also “maybe” together with any associated comments and relevant facts from the 2011 Census. The groups were invited to consider and resolve a difference of opinion which had emerged in the previous session about rented accommodation (no. 32, as indicated in red text - see **Appendix C**). Participants were also requested to review and decide upon all the items identified as “maybes” with reference to the detailed verbatim data received from the community. The “maybes” were no. s 7, 12, 25, 26, 39 and 52, as indicated in pink text - see **Appendix C**).
- An assessment of each of the items identified as key issues to establish whether they could / should be addressed by the Neighbourhood Plan or by a Community Council Strategy. This assessment was undertaken using the worksheet set out at **Appendix C**. The purpose of the exercise was to help members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Walton Community Councillors separate those key issues which would need to form the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- A short facilitated discussion which provided an opportunity for the groups to identify any conclusions and next steps in the Neighbourhood Planning process.

3.4 Drawing together the conclusions

The results of the above activities have been drawn together into an updated version of Appendix C. This is set out at **Appendix D**, entitled “The Key Issues - Updated Version”. Essentially, this document provides the most important output from the two workshops. It reflects conclusions about any issues which were unresolved at the end of the first workshop (i.e. where there were differences in opinion, or “maybes”). It provides a list of the key issues for the Neighbourhood Plan and a list of the key issues which are more appropriately addressed through Community Council Strategy. Appendix D does not include Census data because it was taken into account by the groups when reaching their conclusions.

Section 4 - Conclusions and Next Steps

- 4.1 The next step in the neighbourhood planning process will involve sharing the group's conclusions about the content of the Neighbourhood Plan with other Community Councillors and Ward Councillors. A meeting will be held on 11 June 2015 for an initial discussion.
- 4.2 The workshops were useful because they helped the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to identify what residents want from the Neighbourhood Plan. The discussions also generated further questions that need to be explored.
- 4.3 The group recognised that cuts are being made by Milton Keynes Council. The implication of this is that parish councils will need to fund more services locally. One potential response is to develop the Community Council's ability to undertake surveys; so that data gathered annually from residents can guide future choices. The results will be needed by the early autumn to feed into the budget setting cycle.
- 4.4 **A total of 1,400 surveys were received** in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan consultation. This is a good starting point in building a dialogue with residents. The delivery of visible results will help to build confidence in the Community Council and also engagement over time.
- 4.5 A notable conclusion from the Neighbourhood Plan research is that there is not very much difference between the views expressed by young people and those articulated by adults through the household survey. The research indicates that both groups like Walton as a place to live. This is a very positive foundation from which to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and ongoing community engagement.

Helen Fudge

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