

WALTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

LOCAL ISSUES STATEMENT

Background

In May 2013 Walton Community Council (WCC) commissioned a feasibility study to establish the potential to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish Area. The study was carried out by Martin M. Small and completed in September 2013, the conclusion of WCC was that there was enough evidence to warrant the commencement of the process. Subsequently the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG) was formed, led by an independent resident as Chairperson. The NPWG has continued to meet monthly, with the minutes publicised on the WCC website and regular updates promoted via Facebook.

Walton Neighbourhood Area

Walton parish is located on the southern edge of the Milton Keynes urban area, within the development boundary of the city as defined in the adopted Milton Keynes Local Plan.

The parish comprises the predominantly residential city grid squares of Browns Wood, Caldecotte, Old Farm Park, Walnut Tree, Walton, Walton Park, and Wavendon Gate, and the Tillbrook grid square which is wholly industrial containing some high profile businesses including T Mobile and Red Bull Racing.

On the western side of the parish are the two areas of Caldecotte Lake, home to the sailing, rowing and canoeing and site of the Premier Inn and Caldecotte Arms, and on the north-western side is another area of employment and the Open University campus at Walton Hall.

On the eastern side the parish boundary runs through the office complex at Wavendon Gate (formerly the headquarters of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation), and in the north-eastern tip of the parish is Towergate and undeveloped area zoned for employment purposes.

In the south the parish boundary runs along the Bletchley to Bedford railway line. Adjoining parishes include Bow Brickhill (south), Wavendon (east), Woburn Sands (south east), Kents Hill and Monkston (north), and the parishes of Old Woughton, Simpson, and Bletchley and Fenny Stratford to the west.

The area has a long history, the two settlements of Walton and Caldecotte have medieval roots with elements remaining either as features such as the site of the medieval village in a large open space at Caldecotte and the Manor House and chapel at Walton incorporated into the Open University campus, or as place-names such as Walnut Tree named after the farm where the estate was built. Much of the

modern development was undertaken in the 1990s and the parish is now home to nearly 12,000 people.

Key Considerations

Much of the built fabric in the parish is the result of recent 'new town' development, whilst there are relatively few areas of unallocated land within the parish, it is believed that a plan could shape development on some of the un-developed land in the parish, and to help channel development on allocated sites to meet locally identified needs.

Understanding the extent and availability of space within the parish is highly important, there are substantial areas of open space, much of which is managed by Milton Keynes Council and the Milton Keynes Parks Trust.

The process of Community Asset Transfer where land, buildings and other assets have the potential of being offered for transfer from Milton Keynes Council to Walton Community Council and other community bodies, could also be an important factor in addressing some of the locally identified issues.

Consultation

Stage 1 Survey

The first stage consultation process took place between April and June 2014, with an initial high level questionnaire designed to determine what was important to residents in terms of infrastructure, services etc alongside how they felt the parish was performing against each heading.

The survey was hand delivered to every household in the Parish, totalling 4,976 , with reply-paid envelopes enclosed. Publicity also took place through Facebook, the WCC website and posters on noticeboards and in key community locations. A prize draw was also held to encourage returns.

A total of 710 responses were received, equating to a 14.27% response rate.

Analysis showed that there had been a fair representation from across the parish areas and similarly across age groups, excepting young people.

The following points summarise the findings at the first stage

The following subjects should be maintained:

- Level of Crime
- Parks, Open Spaces and Access to Nature
- Level of Pollution
- Education Provision
- Traffic

The following subjects need work:

- Roads, Redways and Pavements

- Cleanliness of the Area
- Health Services
- Local Job Prospects

The following are potential quick wins

- Local area upkeep

Ongoing community engagement 2014/15

Feedback of the stage one survey and ongoing preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan were publicised at numerous community events throughout the year including:

- Trim Trail Launch June 2104
- Wavendon gate School Fete 2014
- Summer Play activities 2014

In addition to articles in the quarterly Walton Matters newsletter, circulated to all households within the parish.

Stage Two Survey

The NPWG drew on analysis of the first survey to develop the detailed Neighbourhood Plan Survey, continuing the themes highlighted and designed to gain more detailed feedback.

In addition to the hard copy version it was also created on SurveyMonkey with the link promoted on Facebook, via the printed survey, the WCC website and through the Walton High School website. In addition a Young People's version was developed which was circulated in the Walton High School Intranet.

The survey was carried out in February and March 2015, with a prize draw again held to encourage returns.

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

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.

A total of 1259 responses were received, including 308 from the Young People's version. This equates to an increase of 25.3% of households or 10.50% of total population.

Facilitated Workshops

The NPWG commissioned an external consultant to facilitate two workshops in April and May 2015, to review the results of the survey and determine the key issues to be carried forward into the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and/or issues to be taken forward by WCC.

The first workshop took place on 23rd April 2015, with members of the NPWG and the Planning Support Officer appointed by Milton Keynes Council.

The subsequent workshop was broadened out to include all the Councillors from WCC, held on 27th May 2015.

The workshops involved key activities which were designed to test, review and refine the outcomes from the consultation.

Parks, Open Spaces & Access

- Maintain ratio of open space
- Improve maintenance of play areas
- Maintain standard of open space
- Diversify opportunities/types of open space

Getting Around – Roads, Redways, Pavements and Traffic

- Maintain grid road system
- Need for safe crossing of V10 Brickhill Street from Walton Park to Walnut Tree
- Potholes
- Maintenance of redways & pavements
- Congestion around schools
- Lack of parking around schools
- Road system at capacity, concern re impact of new development
- Poor bus service

Health

- GP's at capacity
- Dentist at capacity
- Concern re lack of health facilities to account for future development

Local Job Prospects

- Need for more small business units
- Need for more jobs for young people
- Need for more part-time opportunities

Housing

- No more private rented properties
- Need for more affordable
- Issue regarding understanding of "affordable" homes

- Need for more retirement/sheltered housing
- Concern re future development in area
- Keep current design and mix of housing in keeping with area
- Concern re impact of development on current infrastructure and services

Crime & Community Safety

- Low crime area and generally safe
- Maintain landscaping to ensure safety on redways
- Maintain lighting on redways and underpasses
- Concern re burglary
- Concern re vehicle crime
- Concern re ASB in key locations
- Maintain “Secure by design” principles in all new development areas

Level of Pollution

- Not an issue
- Maintain current traffic noise barriers eg landscaping

noise through use of landscaping, tree lined roads etc

Cleanliness of Area

- Need more litter and dog poo bins
- Continue WCC Warden Service

Future Needs

- Need for more specialist facilities eg sports related, local coffee shop
- Protect and maintain existing community facilities
- Ensure to capacity to expand community infrastructure in line with new development/population growth

Key Local Themes & Issues for Neighbourhood Plan

In summary, the consultation has shown a view that people are happy living in the area. It is generally safe with good local facilities and access. There is a view that the original design and density of housing should be maintained and that new development should be in keeping with the existing look and feel of the area. There is a definite concern that community infrastructure is at capacity, in particular relating to Health Services, Community facilities and Schools. Therefore future development must provide for an increase in these supporting infrastructural needs.

Parks, Open Spaces & Access

- Maintain current ratio of open space to housing
- Protect against building on current public open space
- Ensure play provision in new development
- Regulate landscaping design and layout in new development
- Provision of increased and diverse POS facilities/infrastructure

Getting Around – Roads, Redways, Pavements and Traffic

- Maintain grid road system
- Ensure parking provision adequate in new development
- Maintain current system of redways and pavements in all future development

- Consider traffic calming measures in areas of high congestion/traffic flow
- Influence bus routes in future development
- Maintain design principles/distances of properties from roads to minimise noise/traffic pollution

Health

- Need for additional GP provision
- Need for additional Dentist provision
- Consider identification of site for health facilities

Local Job Prospects

- Influence employment types in allocated sites
- Introduction of small business units

Housing

- More retirement/sheltered housing
- Future development in keeping with current design and density
- Seek to influence what the design / mix & location of affordable housing
- Avoid creating “ghettos of affordable housing”
- Affordable housing should be of comparable standard to the rest of housing and a good mix of house types
- Ensure only low rise development

Crime & Community Safety

- Maintain high emphasis on principles of “Secure by Design”

Future Needs

- Identify potential sites for expansion of community facilities
- Register potential needs for future planning gain