

THE WOOBURNS

FUTURE OF OUR VILLAGE

JUNE 2014



Introduction

Welcome to the summary version of Wooburn's Community Led Plan. This highlights the main results of the questionnaire issued in September 2013 and the recommended actions. It is being delivered to 2000 homes across the Wooburn area. The full report is being sent to local Councils and other agencies with which we will need to partner in order to deliver the actions. Both the full and summary reports are also available online at www.wooburnresidents.org.

Registered Charity No.288430

Key Facts

The Wooburns consist of Wooburn Town, Wooburn Green, Wooburn Common and Wooburn Moor. It has a population of almost 5,300, an increase of nearly 9% since 2001. The 2011 census results for The Wooburns, Bourne End and Hedsor Electoral Division show a population density of 10.5 people per hectare which is an increase of 5.3% since 2001 and 3.3 times the average density for Buckinghamshire.

The area benefits from a range of shops and other services, pubs, restaurants, churches and primary schools. The leisure facilities include open spaces, such as Wooburn Park and Farm Wood, as well as various sports and social clubs. The River Wye runs through the village to join the River Thames at Bourne End.



View of Wooburn Park and the River Wye

About the Community Led Plan

A Community Led Plan is produced by and for the community, resulting in a vision for the local area that can benefit everyone and includes an action plan to achieve it. It highlights those aspects which residents like and also those where they have concerns and feel improvements can be made.

Thousands of communities across the country have created Community Led Plans, but the one for the Wooburns is largely influenced by the Community Plan recently produced by our neighbouring area of Bourne End. Whilst both the Wooburns and Bourne End have unique characteristics, it is also clear that we share many concerns.

Wooburn Residents' Association (WRA) officially launched the Community Led Plan in March 2013 when an open afternoon was held at the Wooburn Club for local residents to come and discuss their concerns. Many of the issues raised by residents at the open afternoon and at regular WRA meetings were incorporated into the questionnaire (The Wooburns – Future of our Village) which was delivered to 2000 households in the area at the end of September 2013 and also made available on-line.

Over 400 responses were received and these have been analysed to produce the Community Led Plan. The success of the Plan will ultimately depend on support from the local community. A sub-committee will need to be formed to implement the action plan. If you would like to be involved, please get in touch with Wooburn Residents' Association via the website (www.wooburnresidents.org) or Facebook page or telephone 01628 522806.

Transport and Parking

Over 73% of respondents called for improvements to be made to the reliability of the bus service between Wycombe, Wooburn and Bourne End, and better access for wheelchairs, pushchairs and the elderly. There was also strong support for a shuttle bus between Wooburn Green and Beaconsfield.

There was a general desire to reduce the overall traffic volumes throughout the Wooburns, with over 83% ranking this as important or very important. Local road surfaces are considered poor, and over 75% of respondents called for urgent repairs and regular maintenance. Major concerns were raised about the need to improve safety around the junction of Whitepit Lane and The Green, and also the pedestrian crossings at Wooburn Park, Stratford Drive and The Green. Respondents noted that the amount of illegal parking and the infringement of speed limits are the main contributing factors, with 79% rating it as important or very important to enforce no parking on pavements, bus stops or pedestrian crossings.

Recommendations:

- Discuss improvements to the local bus service with the bus company and review the possibility of having a shuttle bus service to Beaconsfield.
- Make representation to Bucks County Council for improved maintenance of road surfaces and a review of road safety around the Green and all pedestrian crossings.
- Contact the relevant authorities to enforce parking restrictions and speed limits throughout the area.
- Continue the dialogue with local schools as to how parking can be improved.

Community

In relation to the provision of facilities for the young and the elderly, the responses were almost equal (at approximately 70%) in wanting to see more facilities provided in the community. There was similar support for more community events on The Green or in Wooburn Park, although some commented that there should be fewer fairs on The Green and that the fairs should not be allowed to use The Green as a place to stay between venues. The proposal to set up a Good Neighbours' Group to organise litter picking and to offer help to the elderly and vulnerable members of the community was also rated of high importance.

There were many comments about Wooburn being a nice place to live and that it would be a shame to lose the open spaces.....“The mixture of “village” feel and amazing links to London, Heathrow, Beaconsfield, the Chalfonts and High Wycombe is a very special combination.” Over 90% of respondents gave maintaining village facilities a rating of high importance. In relation to the Wooburn Club, 86% of respondents ranked their support for it as a community club from very important to quite important.

Recommendations:

- Investigate the provision of more facilities for the young and the elderly.
- Set up a Good Neighbours' Group.
- Promote community spirit by supporting local clubs and organisations and arranging community events, such as an annual fête on The Green.
- Open a dialogue with the Wooburn Club to see to what extent its facilities could be used by a wider section of the community.

Economy

Encouraging local/niche shops and introducing a farmers'/local produce market received strong support with 76% and 72% respectively rating it as important or very important. The additional comments showed strong support for local independent shops and a desire to restrict the number of multiple chains in Wooburn. There was strong sentiment to preserve the character of Wooburn Green. It was also recognised that local businesses provided employment and prevented Wooburn becoming a dormant commuter village. It was felt important to support local pubs and restaurants to prevent future loss of amenity, but it was also necessary to control late night trade and loud music.

There is a large amount of empty business space, especially at Glory Mill, and requests were made that no new office development be undertaken until this space is occupied, especially as the roads are struggling to cope with the current levels of traffic and limited amount of parking. Further development should not be allowed unless the infrastructure is there to support it.

Recommendations:

- Keep a watching brief on all planning applications to ensure that existing retail/office space is utilised before further development is considered and also limit multiples taking commercial space.
- Encourage more local businesses and investigate possibility of introducing regular farmers' markets to Wooburn.

Policing

Wooburn has evolved into a large diverse community and this has had an impact on the infrastructure and the way of life across the community. The method of policing has also changed markedly over the years. Nowadays we rely on an “on-line” style of policing from centralised Thames Valley support services. The lack of a visible police presence is still a concern amongst the respondents to our survey, with around 86% ranking it between quite important to very important to have more officers on the beat.

Our questionnaire suggested a few priorities for the police. 79% of respondents ranked the need to focus on anti-social behaviour as important or very important, with particular complaints about the areas around some of the pubs on The Green and Tesco. Calls were made for a greater police presence at certain times of the day and at weekends to combat this issue. 71% of the respondents thought it important or very important for the police to focus on burglary, with 65% giving a similar rating to tackling vandalism.

Recommendations:

- Talk to the local police about residents’ concerns relating to anti-social behaviour and the enforcement of speed limits throughout the area.
- Review load restrictions around Wooburn Green and the requirements of local businesses for heavy load vehicles, and discuss with the local authorities the possibility of re-routing some of the heavy goods vehicles away from The Green.

Housing and Development

All levels of government are under pressure to provide more housing and this issue has implications for the future shape of the Wooburns. The top priority of respondents was that any development should recognise that the area around The Green is a Conservation Area with 92% rating it as important or very important. Wooburn Green is considered a village and respondents felt strongly that it should not form part of the urban sprawl with 85% rating as important or very important to maintain Slate Meadow as an open area between Bourne End and Wooburn.

Over 70% thought it was important or very important to discourage further development because of the impact on already heavily congested roads. Road congestion, limited parking and the speed of traffic in the area were repeatedly highlighted as areas of concern. Respondents also felt that further development would put additional pressure on the already busy doctors' surgery and local schools.

Recommendations:

- Work with the Parish and District Councils to ensure that they:
 - use existing housing stock before developing new housing and provide housing which fits the needs of local people;
 - preserve open spaces to prevent urban sprawl, allowing communities such as Bourne End and Wooburn to keep their individual identities;
 - consider impact on already congested roads and local services such as doctors' surgeries and schools.

Access and Environment

The top priority for respondents was to keep our existing green spaces and to improve the maintenance of the pavements and public footpaths. 94% of respondents felt that it was important or very important for the Wooburns to keep their own identity and not be swallowed up by Wycombe. Wooburn Park is particularly valued by residents and visitors alike and there was strong support for fencing off the play area in Wooburn Park, both to keep the dogs out and to prevent the children from running off into the river or the road.

The need to encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets and people to take their litter home received huge support from respondents, with over 90% of respondents ranking it as important or very important. The proposed cycle path along the old railway line between Wooburn Green and Bourne End was generally welcomed, especially since residents feel it is quite dangerous to cycle on the main road.

Recommendations:

- Support Bourne End Residents' Association and work with the Parish Council to preserve Slate Meadow as a nature reserve or public open space.
- Support the local group working on the implementation of the cycle path.
- Liaise with Bucks County Council Highways Department to improve the frequency and quality of grass and hedge cutting.
- Promote further anti-dog fouling campaigns and liaise with the Parish Council regarding the provision of more litter bins.

- Initiate a local anti-litter campaign and set up a group of volunteers to litter-pick.
- Investigate the feasibility of fencing off the play area in Wooburn Park.
- Liaise with the schools to promote walking to school and anti-litter campaigns.
- Work with local conservation groups and the Parish Council regarding any improvements to the provisions for wildlife and maintenance of the riverbanks.



Picture of Slate Meadow looking towards Stratford Drive

Wooburn Residents' Association meets at 8pm
on the second Monday of alternate months
(January, March, May, July, September and November).

All are welcome!

See website for more details.

www.wooburnresidents.org