
TITLE: BURWELL MASTERPLAN: FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

Committee: Burwell Masterplan Working Party

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[L209]

1.0 ISSUE

- 1.1 To receive feedback from the Burwell Masterplan Focus Groups.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Working Party are requested to:

- a) Note the feedback from the Focus Groups.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following the suggestion from a member of the public, it was agreed at the Burwell Masterplan Working Party meeting held on 28th July 2011 that Focus Group sessions be held as part of the Masterplan consultation process.
- 3.2 People who expressed an interest in participating in the Focus Groups via the issues stage consultation questionnaire were invited to attend one of three sessions, which were held on 2nd November, 9th November and 16th November. A total of 46 people attended the three sessions.
- 3.3 The purpose of the sessions was to discuss the emerging key issues from the issues stage consultation, to get participants views on these issues, to check if there are any that have been missed and to discuss any ideas or solutions participants may have to address some of the issues.

4.0 PROCESS

- 4.1 At each session attendees were split into three small groups to discuss each of the topics in turn. The three discussion topics were 'new housing and business', 'transport and access' and 'facilities and tourism'. Full details of the process and issues discussed can be found in Appendix 1.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Appendix 1 provides detailed feedback from the Focus Group discussions. The key conclusions were:

Key conclusions from New Housing and Business discussions:

- Deciding the appropriate level of growth is the key priority.
- More 'affordable' housing should be provided for Burwell people, of a mix of types.
- Reach Road area identified as preferred location for employment.
- Felt that the style of any new development should be sympathetic with character of Burwell, attractive and low density but not necessarily traditional.

Key conclusions from Transport and Access discussions:

- Traffic management needed on Ness Road/High Street/Swaffham Road.
- Pedestrian crossings needed on the main through route for safety reasons.
- Exning Bridge cycle route needs addressing urgently – any alternative routes to Newmarket?
- Public Transport solutions essential.

Key conclusions from Facilities and Tourism discussions:

- The Primary School is clearly top priority, followed by sports facilities and facilities for young people.
- The emphasis should be on improving existing facilities rather than adding new ones
- Many people thought that improvement of the Lodes and tourism was much less important.
- There was lots of concern about the Burwell Bulletin finishing and the need to receive information about facilities and "what's on" in the village.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Room hire and printing costs were met from existing budgets.

6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) will need to be carried out on the final Burwell Masterplan document.

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1: Focus Groups Feedback Report

Background Documents

Draft Burwell Masterplan
Working Party Meeting
Minutes 28/07/11

Location

Room FF102,
The Grange,
Ely

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Focus Groups Feedback Report

Introduction

Following the suggestion from a member of the public, it was agreed at the Burwell Masterplan Working Party meeting held on 28th July 2011 that Focus Group sessions be held as part of the Masterplan consultation process.

The purpose of the sessions was to discuss the emerging key issues from the issues stage consultation, to get participants views on these issues, to check if there are any that have been have missed and to discuss any ideas or solutions participants may have to address some of the issues.

86 people expressed an interest in participating in the focus groups via the issues stage consultation questionnaire and all were invited to attend one of three identical sessions, which were held on 2nd November (afternoon), 9th November (evening) and 16th November (evening). A total of 46 people attended the three sessions.

The sessions

At each session attendees were split into three small groups to discuss each of the topics in turn. The three discussion topics were 'new housing and business', 'transport and access' and 'facilities and tourism'. These topics, and the issues discussed, were those that emerged as key issues from the issues stage consultation.

The structure of the discussions was:

- To discuss the issues generally and get peoples comments on them
- To ask people if they agreed with the key issues identified and whether there were any they wanted to add
- To identify priorities - which of the issues people felt were most important
- To ask if people had any ideas for possible solutions to the issues discussed

Each group was facilitated by an East Cambridgeshire District Council Officer and each topic discussion lasted approximately half an hour. Key issues for each topic were written on a flip chart to facilitate the discussion. They were as follows:

New Housing and Business – key issues:

- The right level of new housing – infill or new sites
- The right type of new housing – size and type (market/social/equity share)
- Modest increase in business opportunities?
- New development in character with traditional historic style – conservation area only or everywhere?

Transport and Access - key issues:

- Managing traffic on Ness Road/High Street
- Better parking at shops and pedestrian crossings
- Cycle links especially to Exning
- Better public transport – to where?
- Improved signage for cyclists and walkers

Facilities and Tourism – key issues:

- The primary school is at capacity
- Facilities for young people
- Sports facilities – improve existing or additional (which types)
- Potential to bring sports facilities together
- Modest development of visitor facilities i.e. western edge/Lode

Discussion Feedback

New Housing and Business Feedback

Key conclusions:

- Deciding the appropriate level of growth is the key priority.
- More 'affordable' housing should be provided for Burwell people, of a mix of types.
- Reach Road area identified as preferred location for employment.
- Felt that the style of any new development should be sympathetic with character of Burwell, attractive and low density but not necessarily traditional.

Issue 1) The right level of new housing – infill or new sites

Level of growth: Whilst the majority of people agreed that identifying the appropriate level of growth was a key issue, there was a range of suggestions regarding the actual number of houses that should be provided. These ranged from none to enough to support a 3 FE primary school, with the majority supporting low growth. More of an issue was density of development. Concerns were raised about the impact of growth on infrastructure and any resulting increase in traffic.

With regard to location of new development and whether this should be on infill sites or sites on the edge of the village there were comments for and against both.

Infill: People questioned whether there is sufficient space left in Burwell for any more infill. Main concerns with infill development are that it changes the character and feel of the village, that many of the properties are 'crammed in' and they tend to have very small gardens. Myrtle Drive felt to be more like a city street than a village one. Strong feeling against 'garden grabbing'.

New sites: Smaller sites preferred rather than large estates. Concerns about building on farmland were raised. Land off Newmarket Road, the former DS Smith site, the Recreation Ground and between Factory Road and the Lode were suggested as potential locations for new housing. People felt that new housing should not be to west of Burwell, should keep that area green for walking/recreation.

Issue 2) The right types of new housing – size and tenure

Size: Was felt that there have been a lot of larger 'executive' homes built recently and that there is a real need for smaller 2/3 bed homes and starter homes for young people. People with 2/3 beds are converting them to 3-4 beds and thereby taking the property out of the 1st time buyer market. Others felt there should be a mix of all sizes to create a balanced community and also to enable Burwell to provide 'cradle to grave' housing. Market appears to want 4 bed houses but village wants smaller. Support for family homes for Burwell people. Concern that eventually all the young people will have to move out. Felt that if leave it to private developers they will just build more big houses, need some way of ensuring smaller houses will be built at an affordable price.

Tenure: General agreement that there is a need for 'affordable' housing, mixed views on whether this should be social rented or shared equity. Need housing for young people to get on housing ladder. Houses in Burwell aren't cheap enough to buy. Young people are being forced out because they can't get a mortgage so need alternative to buying. Some moving to Soham to take advantage of shared equity schemes there.

Some felt that the village is short of social rented/shared equity properties and that there should be more, others said there should be a mix of housing all scattered about. Whilst the majority supported providing some sort of 'affordable' housing, there were some people who felt that whilst people want to live where their family are, in reality some will have to move to a cheaper area.

Not everyone wants to buy - need more rental properties for those who cannot or do not want to buy.

It was felt that any 'affordable' housing provided should be for Burwell people, that people should have an immediate link/association with the village to keep community spirit. Several people flagged up that wherever you put new housing especially social housing you will get objections.

Issue 3) Modest increase in Business Opportunities

Is support for more businesses and jobs in Burwell, though it was suggested that a survey into demand for business premises is conducted before deciding on the location of sites and type of business.

Location: Needs to be in a sustainable location, on the edge of Burwell is preferable. Reach Road area emerged as most popular location, felt to be most suitable in terms of access, land availability and the fact that there is existing employment use in the area. It was also

suggested that walking and cycling links to this area should be improved to encourage people who live in Burwell and work there to walk/cycle to work.

There was a lot of discussion regarding the former DS Smith site, the fact that it is an eyesore and needs redeveloping. People asked if owners could be forced to develop the site, or if the District Council would compulsorily purchase it. Uses for the land identified as below. Some debate around if the owners won't develop it for employment whether they should be allowed to build houses on it?

Other sites suggested were off Factory Road and potential for boating business along the Lode.

Type: Support for small business units, low level and nicely screened for the type of business that does not make lots of noise/odour or have many vehicles visiting it. Suggested that businesses could be light industrial, possibly providing things that Burwell residents need. Should provide start-up units for new businesses, preferably serviced. Also support for agriculture. One suggestion for DS Smith site was work units with flats above - artisan workshops. Office development at Quy cited as good example of the type of thing people would like to see in Burwell.

Stronger support for high tech/bio tech businesses than came from the questionnaire. People said they don't just want 'loads of sheds for people to fix things in' – need high growth businesses here also. Popular suggestion was to aim to attract Cambridge science park overspill, by providing premises for technology companies. Burwell has advantage over Cambridge in terms of costs. High number of technology/consultancies/professional businesses already in Burwell. Lots of people from Burwell commute to Cambridge – could provide business opportunities here so they don't have to. But need to invest money to encourage businesses

Good electricity supply – this could attract certain types of companies e.g. aluminium engineering. Could have small wind turbines (50m) to generate enough electricity for village plus if extra sell it back to National Grid.

Number of shops in Burwell felt to be adequate for day to day needs. One thing felt to be missing was a hardware shop, but overall no strong support for more shops. Was felt that shops that sell things that people don't want on a daily basis e.g. a dress shop, wouldn't last in Burwell.

Some discussion had around what Burwell would gain from new business. Can't guarantee that any new businesses would provide employment for Burwell people and would cause increase in noise, traffic etc. Can we force businesses to employ local people only? If employment in Burwell how will people get here – bus times not suitable.

Issue 4) New development in character with traditional historic style

Mixed views regarding historic characteristics - people not necessarily in favour of traditional style housing but used word such as sympathetic, tasteful and attractive when describing what they would like to see. Was generally felt that new development should be sympathetic

with the character of Burwell and tastefully done. Would be good to build some homes from local materials that will last, but don't all need to look like 15th Century cottages. The key thing is to make sure new houses relate to Burwell, are in keeping with the style of the area of the village that the property is in and that new development is considerate to existing residents.

All agreed that there should be a mix of styles and that all housing should be attractive. Was generally felt that this should apply everywhere not just conservation areas. Should possibly be traditional properties on the main route through the village to give the village an identity.

Density was considered just as important as look of building. Some felt that part of the character of a village is big gardens. Myrtle Drive felt to be almost a city street with its 3 story buildings and narrow streets with nowhere to park. Want a less dense, more 'villagey' feel.

Re nature of build: some felt new homes should be eco-homes built to a high environmental standard.

Priorities

4 groups decided as a whole that their priority was issue 1 – the right level of new housing

Where groups were split in their priority:

- 9 people selected issue 1 - The right level of new housing
- 6 people selected issue 2 - The right types of new housing
- 5 people selected issue 3 - Modest increase in Business Opportunities

Transport & Access Feedback

Key Conclusions:

- Traffic management needed on Ness Road/High Street/Swaffham Road
- Pedestrian crossings needed on the main through route for safety reasons
- Exning Bridge cycle route needs addressing urgently – any alternative routes to Newmarket?
- Public Transport solutions essential

Issue 1) Managing traffic on Ness Road/High Street

Volume of traffic is seen as the greatest problem, but only at peak hours (7am- 9am and 4pm – 6pm). It is not problem at other times. Also noted that whilst volumes are high they do not actually result in traffic jams.

Cause of the volume problem widely perceived to be a result of the completion of the Fordham bypass, use of the Burwell route as a rat run to avoid the A14, in particular the A14/A142 junction which is often congested, and to a lesser extent traffic from the Ely area avoiding the A10. Several comments that when there is an accident on the A14 then Burwell

is completely overwhelmed, and that growth elsewhere in the District is putting pressure on Burwell roads.

The problems created were primarily difficulties for pedestrians to cross the roads, particularly the elderly, those with buggies and mobility scooters, safety concerns on pavements and major difficulties in exiting roads such as Parsonage Lane, Newmarket Road, The Causeway onto High Street/Ness Road.

Solutions were widely varied, ranging from provision of mini roundabouts at key junctions (Toyse Lane, Parsonage Lane, The Causeway, Newmarket Road), traffic lights, junction realignments and road markings. Traffic light solutions only needed at peak hours, but some concern that this could simply increase the traffic queues. Virtually all were agreed, however, that traffic calming measures such as those at Quay were not wanted - the Quay measures were unanimously unpopular..

Some comments identified the need for proper traffic surveys to be carried out to identify origin of traffic and extent of problem, concern that traffic management measure should not 'clutter' the roads creating an urban landscape, and that no new housing should be built until road problems had been addressed.

Speeding was identified as a problem at the entrances to the village only, including on the Newmarket Road. This is a problem at off peak hours rather than during the rush hour. Suggested solutions included moving the flashing speed light on Swaffham Road further out. Entrance gates were discussed with mixed views on their effectiveness. One suggested solution was a technique used in France – planting of trees along village entrance road, narrowing as they approach the village to narrow the drivers perspective and slow them down.

Lorries were considered to be a problem in the North part of the village, in particular along Toyse Lane and North Street, with suggestions for the introduction of weight restrictions. However, lorries were not a major issue for the majority of people in other parts of the village. Manchetts were identified as the main source of lorry vehicles, but there were few calls for them to move – they are considered a long established village firm that has done well and should be accommodated. Instead most solution suggestions centred on developing an alternative route to their site that avoids Toyse Lane and North Street. Deliveries at the Co-op were identified as an occasional problem.

Little support for a link road from Newmarket Road to Ness Road – primarily because of the pressures this would put on Isaacson Road, which is primarily a residential road. There are only problems at peak times of the day from commuters and it is this which needs addressing.

Issue 2) Car Parking at the Shopping Clusters

Most participants agreed that car parking was a problem in the shopping clusters, but considered that there were sufficient parking facilities nearby - the problem is that people do not use them. Delivery vehicles were also identified as a problem at the Co-op. The Post Office and Lloyds Chemist were highlighted as a particular problem area, particularly for the more elderly users.

Parking at the Church was a problem on Sundays, for funerals and weddings and at Christmas. Parking at Budgens was also mentioned several times as an issue, particularly when petrol deliveries taking place.

Parking is needed, as this is rural area where people are reliant on cars and not practical for people to walk from one end of village to the other. Solutions focused on better signage, enforcement of double yellow lines, educating people to use car parks, and special provision of parking for disabled. Suggestions also included using the Co-op and pub car parks as public car parks, flagging up availability of Myrtle Drive layby for parking, barriers at post office to prevent illegal parking. At the bakers suggestions included the need for time limit restrictions on the layby to discourage use by local residents.

Pedestrian Crossings: Widespread support for more pedestrian crossings, highlighting the problems that the elderly, children, those with buggies and mobility scooters experience. Suggested locations included: Outside the bank, near the post office, near the Chemists, near Budgens, near the Church, near the Five Bells pub, near Margarets Field which is used by children from new housing development.

A problem was identified with confusion about the speed humps in the village, which are being used as pedestrian crossings.

Issue 3 &5) Cycleways and Pedestrian Routes

Virtually unanimous agreement that the most pressing issue is the bridge on the Exning Road, which is dangerous, with references to numerous near misses and serious accidents. The PC and CCC are understood to have investigated the issue, so far without success. The problem is fast approach roads, blind summit, and lack of pedestrian and cycle paths.

Solutions investigated included alternative cycle/pedestrian routes alongside bridge, but problems of land owner agreement; demolition of bridge but issues of flooding and services running underneath bridge. Suggestion of traffic lights.

Problems were also widely identified with the narrow width of footpaths, particularly in High Street and North Street, which makes use difficult for those with disabilities, buggies and mobility scooters.

Footpaths into the Wicken Fen considered good, but require signage, interpretation, and seating. Suggestion for public slipway at Lode for small boats. Concern about the use of the name 'Earthworks' instead of Devils Dyke – felt to be confusing.

Limited cycle/pedestrian routes to east of village towards Newmarket. Cycle links are also needed to employment areas and through to Soham for school children.

Burwell – Swaffham Prior cycle route is too uneven for cyclists to use? Also concerns about the section of the cycle link between Quy and Anglesey which is impacted by traffic calming system. Disused railway should be converted to cycleway.

Issue 4) Better Public Transport

Public transport services agreed to be very poor, with no evening or Sunday services, or links to Ely. Lack of services was an issue for children travelling to 6th form colleges in Cambridge, for travel to Addenbrookes Hospital and Science Park in particular. Also a problem for employees travelling to work in Burwell.

Many people referred to the previous half hourly service, which was felt to be good. Several people commented that when they moved to the village services were good, but now had deteriorated significantly. Recognition that the problem was commercial viability of services. Several questioned why double decker buses were used.

Suggested solutions included:

- Dial a ride
- Shuttle services to the park and ride buses in Cambridge (although the last park and ride bus is at 8pm)
- Provision of a guided bus service on disused railway
- Shuttle bus to Newmarket Station, which has links to Cambridge
- Continuation of County Council subsidies for buses
- Car clubs
- Need to restore Half hourly and Sunday services

Some considered that there were no viable solutions

Priorities

Priorities	Number of Votes (NB some people voted for 2 rather than 1 priority as they considered them of equal priority)
Ness Road/High Street traffic management	24
Car parking at shopping clusters	5
Pedestrian Crossings	2
Cycle and pedestrian routes	2
Public Transport	18

Facilities and Tourism Feedback

Key conclusions:

- There was solid agreement on the issues picked out.
- The Primary School is clearly top priority, followed by sports facilities and facilities for young people.
- The emphasis should be on improving existing facilities rather than adding new ones.
- Many people thought that improvement of the Lodes and tourism was much less important.

- There was lots of concern about the Burwell Bulletin finishing and the need to receive information about facilities and “what’s on” in the village.

Issue 1) The Primary School

School very full, don’t want to expand and lose outdoor space and pitches.

Current school a good central location. Lots of other facilities on site e.g. sports centre, library

Don’t want a huge school. Teaching becomes diluted.

Classes at maximum capacity. Would be better with smaller classes. Need to avoid mixed age groups.

Catchment remains a big issue. All parents do not have choice despite the official LEA position. Children living further from school but within village are at a disadvantage re the catchment. Some parents choose to send to Swaffham Prior. Suits some children.

This is not just a temporary problem – needs a proper long term solution.

Options

Move sports centre, swimming pool, cadet force building and library to another location and expand the school on the current site.

Extend Swaffham Schools to accommodate Burwell Children or close Swaffham Prior School to further help the need for a second school or third form of entry at Burwell.

Move school to larger site and expand current site for sports hub.

Move school to new larger site and sell site for houses – issue is other buildings on site.

Review school catchments for primary and secondary.

Issue 2) Facilities for young people

Need to speak to the young people.

Mandeville hall offers opportunity – although young people need to feel it is their own place.

Plenty of uniform groups although waiting lists.

Cambridgeshire County Council cuts a big issue. Parsih Council has to pick up tab e.g. youth bus.

Public transport in evenings and home from Bottisham and Soham Village College’s a big issue

Children's Play area at Jubilee Way is very good.

Options:

The Parish Council is developing a Youth Plan

Gym/fitness suite at sports centre – it is 15/16 year olds plus that need facilities.

It's not easy to cater for young people, as they like to make spur of the moment decisions.

A drop-in Internet café facilities is preferred facility.

Bring youth bus back.

Better transport options for young people in evenings, to allow them to stay late at the Village Colleges.

Issues 3 &4) Sports Facilities

Lots of younger people use the new facilities at Newmarket. Need own transport.

Recreation ground is not a nice place for children. It is not overlooked and too out of the way. Parents don't feel it is safe or clean. Many don't let their children use it.

Recreation ground pitches are unplayable. Adult football teams play in Newmarket. The pavilion is terrible.

Lots of support for a fitness suite. Great for younger people. Is it too ambitious?

£15,000 spent on improvements to the recreation ground. The pavilion has been on back burner due to Mandeville hall project - next on Parish Council list.

Margaret's Field has no facilities.

Mandeville Hall has taken most of the Parish Council's money.

Cricket facilities very good – although pitch is small. Drainage is good.

Swimming pool is in a poor condition and struggles to get Trustees/volunteers each year. Its long term future is in doubt.

Sports centre and pool are both valued but need investment. Both are used by the school during the day.

Which body owns which facility and who is accountable?

Options:

Re-locate recreation ground to County Council land. Needs a proper pavilion with a bar/social facility.

Provide facilities at Margaret's Field.

Encourage a private gym facility.

Move the sports centre and pool as part of a new larger Village College project – to County Council land. Partnership with ECDC and Parish Council.

Don't waste more money on improving the recreation ground. It is in the wrong place.

Better promotion of facilities.

Issue 5) Modest development of visitor facilities

Lode area is a bit "hillbilly". Not welcoming. Needs to be cleaned up. Lots of rubbish and poorly maintained.

Wicken Fen seen as having a positive impact.

Woods neglected – poor pathways and walkways.

No-one knows who owns what.

Concern about pubs shutting.

Options:

Improve cycle route to Wicken.

Tea shop for young mums and walkers to meet at. One that encourages children.

Improve Lodes and pathways to allow for push chairs. Clean up areas to make less intimidating.

Better signs for walking and more benches.

Public slipway for small craft/canoes.