Shapingwhere you live 2035



Community Plan

Covering the parishes of Ampthill, Steppingley, Flitwick

Community Area 7

Final: July 2017





Foreword

Central Bedfordshire Council's aim is to maintain and enhance the quality of the area for communities, businesses and visitors to ensure we have a vibrant area that is able to grow sustainably. Community planning is a new approach which will engage local people including residents, Town and Parish Councils and interest groups to build a picture of how everyone lives, works and travels today.

In the future we want to create communities with schools, jobs, health provision and good transport links. That means we need to plan for infrastructure and services to ensure that Central Bedfordshire continues to be a great place to live and work. This is why we are working with the local community to understand what you value about where you live, where the opportunities are and where there might be current issues that need to be addressed.

Community Planning is about identifying all of these elements and giving you the opportunity to help shape the future of your community, while adding valuable local knowledge and information to future development decisions.

Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Regeneration



Community Planning in Central Bedfordshire

Our vision is to start a proactive, ongoing dialogue with the local community about local needs and opportunities through community planning. By understanding the opinions of local people as to what needs improvement, along with what they love and want to keep, we can produce Community Plans which we can refer to in decisions about development in the future. These Plans will be used in a number of ways, including influencing the Local Plan which deals with the overall approach to sustainable growth for the area. Consultation and engagement are requirements of the process of developing the Local Plan. Community planning goes well beyond those requirements and in addition, we very much see that the "life" and use of community plans will extend beyond the Local Plan.

In order to structure our plans clearly, we have developed six growth themes, Local Character, Environment, Transport, Jobs & Business, Growth & Infrastructure and Homes.

BEDFORD

Community Planning in Central Bedfordshire Community Area	7	Introduction and background to Community Planning and the Community Area itself
Local Character Transport	9- ²	AMPTHILL
Jobs & Business	13	Analysis of feedback from the Community Event
Environment	15	
Homes Growth & Infrastructure	17 19	
Future Opportunities	21	A summary of potential opportunities for the Community Area
Appendix	23	Supporting information - Feedback form - Data received from the event

A Community Plan will capture what local people believe are the key issues or opportunities under each of the themes and identify where local people want investment to be spent to improve their Community Area. Central Bedfordshire Council believe that Community Planning will build an understanding of local needs and pressures on a particular area and to ensure that existing and new communities benefit from high quality development and targeted improvements.

Community Plans will be used as evidence base for the Local Plan, but will also be used to assist Central Bedfordshire with making future planning decisions. Community Plans can also be used to feed into Neighbourhood, Parish or Town Plans.



The 6 Growth Themes

Local character



BUS

What we have we love. Our history, countryside and communities. We need to build, with care to enhance what we have.

How do we look after what you value about where you live? We need to balance development with protecting our villages, market towns and beautiful countryside. We want to use local character to inform development to ensure that we achieve the best we can.

Our environment is important. It influences how & what we create. We need quality development.

How do we balance the need for growth with protecting our environment? By having quality developments that are sensitive to the environment, to climate change and to ensure growth is dealt with responsibly for the next generation.

How do we get around? With more of us on our cycleways, roads, rail. How do we improve & maintain our transport links?

We need to plan growth that has good connections, not only to jobs and facilities, but also to recreation services and the countryside. We need to look at improving our existing transport networks and make the most of opportunities for new links.

Where will everyone work? Supporting local businesses to grow & attracting new business. We need to create jobs for all.

How do we support the economy of your community and proposed growth in your area?

We need to invest and attract business. Regenerating areas can help to attract new investment to improve job prospects.

Where to place homes & services. Supporting market towns, villages & new settlements. We need to plan places to grow communities.

Where can this growth go and how do we get the best opportunities for you and your community? We need to consider not only the locations for growth, but also what other facilities, services and infrastructure these areas will need for the next generation.

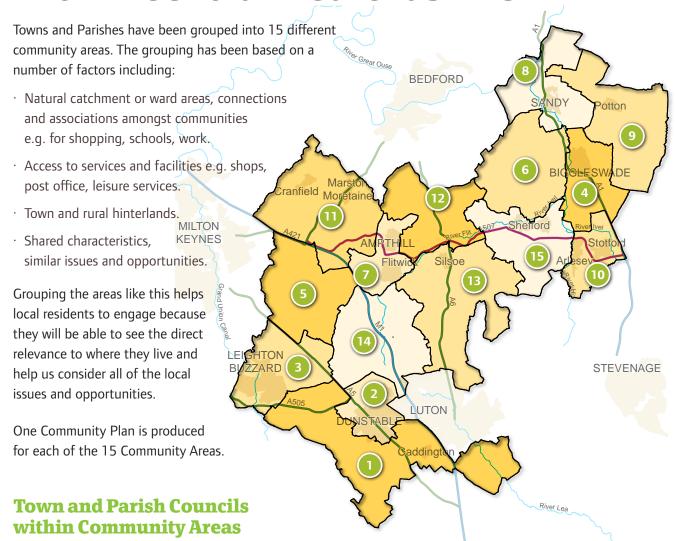
101

Homes for every stage of life. A house is not a home until it's lived in. We all need a home we're proud of.

What type of housing does your community need? Looking at the local population, from young to old, we need to ensure that the area can accommodate changes in lifestyle, affluence or choice. Quality homes for all, for now and tomorrow.

Community Areas

within Central Bedfordshire



Community Area	Town and Parish Councils
1	Billington, Caddington, Eaton Bray, Hyde, Kensworth, Slip End, Stanbridge, Studham, Tilsworth, Totternhoe, Whipsnade
2	Dunstable, Houghton Regis
3	Battlesden, Eggington, Heath & Reach, Hockliffe, Leighton Buzzard
4	Biggleswade, Edworth, Langford
5	Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Bryan, Eversholt, Husborne Crawley, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Woburn
6	Northill, Old Warden, Southill
7	Flitwick, Ampthill, Steppingly
8	Moggerhanger, Blunham, Tempsford, Sandy
9	Dunton, Everton, Eyeworth, Potton, Sutton, Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley
10	Arlesey, Astwick, Fairfield, Stotfold
11	Marston Moretaine, Cranfield, Ridgmont, Brogborough, Lidlington, Millbrook, Hulcote & Salford
12	Clophill, Haynes, Houghton Conquest, Maulden
13	Barton-Le-Clay, Flitton & Greenfield, Gravenhurst, Pulloxhill, Shillington, Silsoe, Streatley
14	Chalgrave, Chalton, Harlington, Sundon, Tingrith, Toddington, Westoning
15	Clifton, Campton & Chicksands, Henlow, Meppershall, Shefford, Stondon

Community Planning Events within Central Bedfordshire

The first stage in community planning was to hold an event with residents in their local area to find out what they wanted to raise with us. For each Community Area, a drop-in event was organised at a local venue for the public to attend. The drop-in event consisted of a number of exhibition boards providing general information on community planning and a map table illustrating an Ordnance Survey plan of the Community Area.

Upon arrival, members of the public were greeted, invited to read the available exhibition boards and given a feedback form to be completed at the map table. Each feedback form was given a unique reference number. The feedback form comprised of two questions under each of the six growth themes (twelve questions in total) and included a coloured sticker for each of the themes (feedback form is in the Appendix). These stickers were numbered with the unique reference for each feedback form. For each theme, the member of the public was asked

to select one category that they felt strongly about, then using the appropriate sticker, to locate this on the map and expand on why they chose this location on the feedback form. This meant that the numbered sticker on the map could be linked to the completed feedback form. Optional questions were also posed to help us understand who attended the event. Collected data from the event is in the Appendix.

Council officers were available at every event to talk to people, discuss local issues, answer questions and listen to concerns and opportunities. At many events, local town, parish and ward councillors were also present to talk to the community.

The following pages of the Community Plan introduce this Community Area and the feedback from its community that attended the engagement event. The methodology opposite indicates how this Community Plan has been prepared.











Our approach

1. Analysis

The feedback for each growth theme has been analysed to understand what the community felt about their area in order to fairly represent individual responses within this Plan, as well as determining whether there was a collective voice on particular issues.

2. Interpretation

Under each theme, there is an information graphic and a plan. The graphic illustrates the percentage of people that had chosen each category based on the number of people who had responded to that particular theme. The plan shows where the community located their stickers on the map table.

These are represented by coloured circles that relate to the category that had been chosen.

3. Hot Spots

Where there were multiple issues

highlighted in one location on the map or lots

of people highlighting the same issue at the
same location these were grouped into a 'hot spot'.

These are illustrated as a larger circle on the plan and
(where relevant) depicted as a pie chart if more
(where relevant) area.

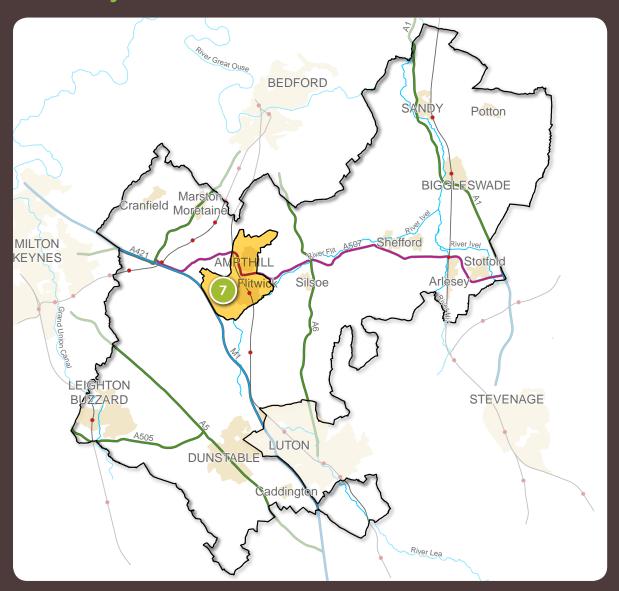
4. Trends

Following analysis of the data from
the feedback forms and the stickers on the
map, pointers regarding the themes are pulled
together based on individual and collective
voices that have arisen from the community. These trends identify
what is important or needs improvement within the Community
Area and therefore what the potential future opportunities
for the area are.

Exceptions to this process occurred which were dealt with as follows:

- Placing stickers on the map without ticking a category. Where this occurred, stickers are recorded as 'Location only'.
- Ticking more than one category. Where this occurred, their choices are divided evenly across the categories within the analysis process.
- No category selection or sticker but a written response provided. Where this occurred, comments were considered at the analysis and interpretation stage.
- Sticker to represent the whole of Community Area. Where this occurred, it has been recorded in a statement box next to the map.

Community Area within Central Bedfordshire



Community Area

This Community Plan relates to Community Area 7, which includes the parishes of Ampthill, Flitwick and Steppingly. This Community Area is located in the centre of Central Bedfordshire being primarily rural in character beyond the two market towns of Ampthill and Flitwick. The A507, A5120 and various local roads provide links between Ampthill, Steppingly and Flitwick. The M1 runs along the western border, providing a link to Milton Keynes and Luton and the Area is also a short distance from Bedford to the north. The Midland Mainline railway line cuts through the Area, with a station in Flitwick. Over half of the Area is designated Green Belt, with the area north of Ampthill excluded.

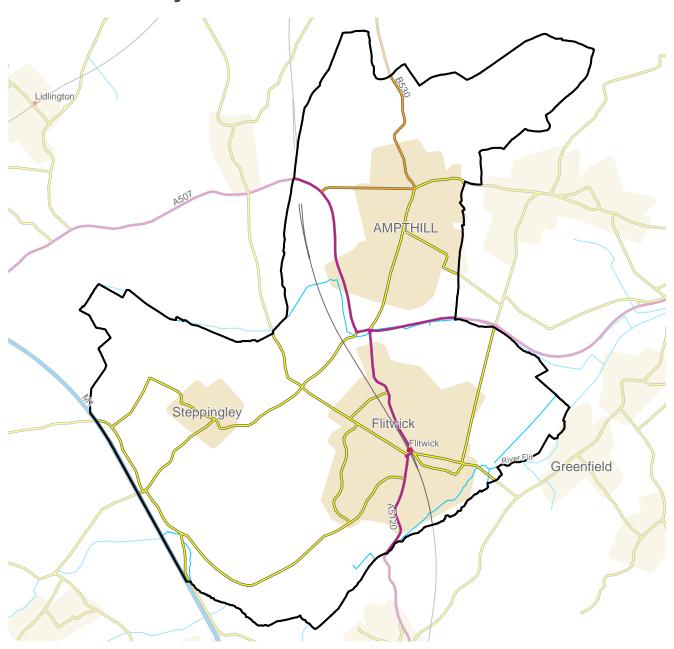
The Area population is approximately 20,500*. This Area has an age demographic that is consistent with the rest of Central Bedfordshire. In terms of dwelling

type, the Area is largely consistent with the rest of Central Bedfordshire.

Ampthill and Flitwick currently have Parish Plans published or in development. None of the Area 7 parishes have a Neighbourhood Plan in development.

In total, 143 people attended the drop-in event on Thursday 16th March 2017 which was held at The Rufus Centre, Flitwick from 2.30pm until 7.30pm. Most parts of the area were represented with the highest number of attendees being from Ampthill and Flitwick. The people who attended also mainly shop in Ampthill or Flitwick and those who were in employment primarily work in the Community Area, London or nearby towns.

Plan of Community Area



Where participants from the area live, work & shop

Dot size represent the amount of people, e.g. the larger the spot, more people.



The people who visited the event lived in the areas shown above.



The people who visited the event mainly worked in the areas shown above, with 5 people working in London and 1 person in each of Barnet, Dordon, Northampton, Oxford and Reading (off the map).



The people who visited the event mainly shopped in the areas shown above, with 1 person shopping in Oxford (off the map).

Local Character

Feedback

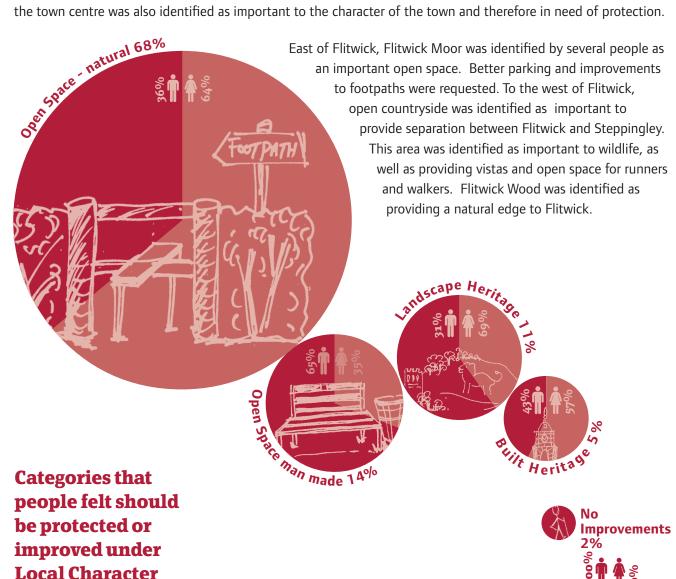
92% of the people who attended the event answered one or both questions on Local Character. Two people answered that they thought there are no improvements to be made to Local Character. Three people answered that they currently have no issues related to Local Character in the Community Area.

From those who responded, the most popular category of Local Character that people would like to see protected or improved was Natural Open Space (at 68%).

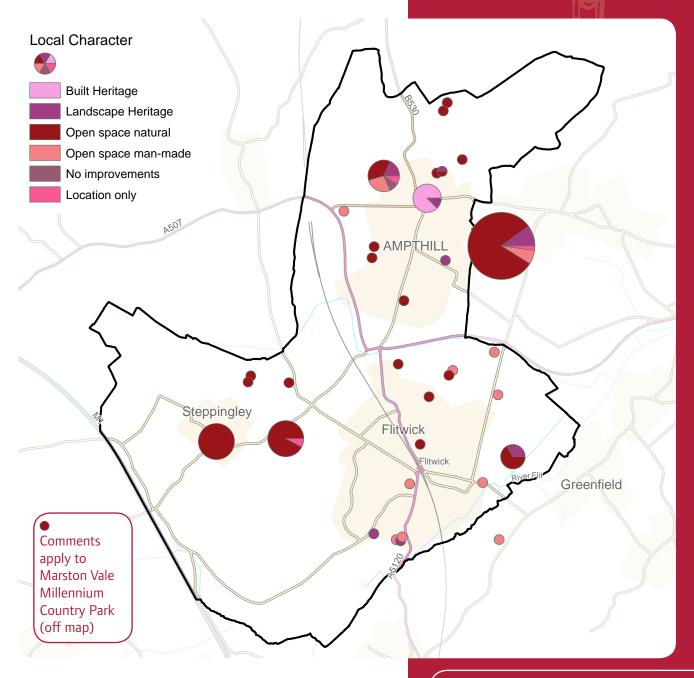
Analysis

There were a number of locations where people felt strongly about Local Character, particularly to the north and east of Ampthill, east and west of Flitwick and around Steppingley.

In relation to Ampthill, a large number of people indicated an area to the east of the town (beyond the edge of the Community Area) should be protected from development, particularly because it is Green Belt. It was felt that this land was important open space/countryside, providing a haven for wildlife and maintaining separation between Ampthill and Maulden. To the north of Ampthill, several people highlighted Ampthill Park as a feature that should be protected, with its current leisure and recreation uses retained and enhanced. The built heritage of the town centre was also identified as important to the character of the town and therefore in need of protection.



Map showing the places where particular protection of, or improvements to, Local Character should take place



In Steppingley, numerous people requested that open countryside around the village should be protected to provide separation between Steppingley and Flitwick, and support wildlife.

Other comments included: maintaining the character and village feel of Ampthill; protection of rare grassland at Flitwick church; protection of wildlife at Cooper's Hill; expanding the footpath network north of Stepplingley; a site on the edge of Flitwick was identified as a potential location for a Country Park; the Greensand Ridge should be protected; more parks in Flitwick and preservation of parkland at Flitwick Manor.

Trends

To protect open spaces and the surrounding countryside within the Area, particularly east of Ampthill and west of Flitwick.

Protect Ampthill Park.

Protect the built heritage of the centre of Ampthill.

Transport

Feedback

90% of the people who attended the event answered one or both questions on Transport. Ten people answered that they currently have no issues related to Transport in the Community Area.

From those who responded, the most popular category of Transport that people would like to see improvements made to was to Vehicular (at 28%), followed by buses and trains (both at 23%).

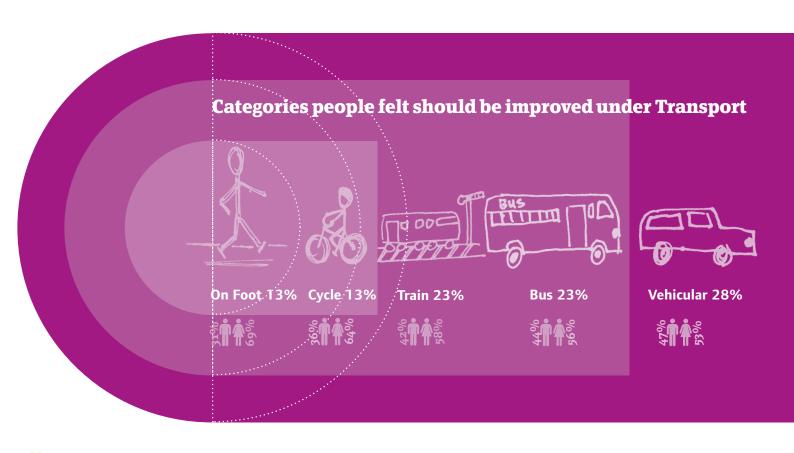
Analysis

The main locations where people felt strongly about Transport were the centre of Ampthill, the centre of Flitwick and to a lesser extent along the railway line west of Ampthill.

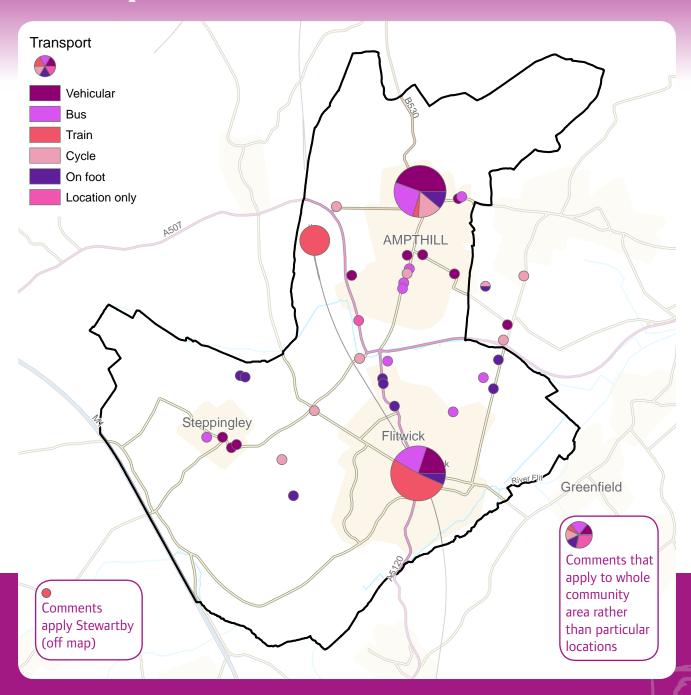
Within Ampthill, several people indicated a need for road improvements through the town centre. It was suggested that parking was a problem and that improvements to other forms of transport could help to reduce congestion. Some form of traffic control was also proposed to assist with traffic flows and address problems caused by the narrowness

of streets. An improved bus service was requested to Bedford and Milton Keynes, alongside ensuring that bus connections to trains are adequate. It was also suggested that safer cycle routes and footpaths were need in the town, as well as improvements for disability access. A new train station for Ampthill was also suggested.

Within Flitwick, congestion in the town centre was raised as an issue, particularly at the roundabout adjacent to the railway bridge. Improvements to bus services to Ampthill, Luton, Milton Keynes and Flitwick station were requested. In relation to Flitwick station, requests were made for improved parking, better wheelchair/pushchair access, and general upgrades to the station.



Map showing the places where particular improvements to Transport should take place



Other comments related to a need to improve road conditions generally, improvements to parking throughout Ampthill, consideration of a one-way road system in parts of Ampthill, improved bus services to villages, creation of a park and ride facility for Flitwick train station, creation of an off-road cycle routes between Ampthill, Flitwick and Steppingley, general repairs to footpaths throughout the area, and creation of a footpath link between Fitwick and Maulden.

Trends

Vehicular – Improvements to reduce congestion in both Ampthill and Flitwick town centres.

Trains - Reopen a train station in Ampthill.

Trains - Improve parking, access and facilities at Flitwick station.

Buses - Improve links between settlements and to Luton, Milton Keynes and Bedford.

Jobs and Business

Feedback

87% of the people who attended the event answered one or both questions on Jobs and Business. Twenty-four people answered that they do not currently have any issues related to Jobs and Business in the Community Area.

From those who responded, the most popular category of Jobs and Business that people would most like to see investment in was High Street Development (at 50%), followed by Small Start-ups (at 21%) and Local Retail Units (at 19%).

Analysis

The main locations where people felt strongly about Jobs and Business were Ampthill, Flitwick and the existing industrial estates at Littlepark Farm, Ampthill and Maulden Road, Flitwick.

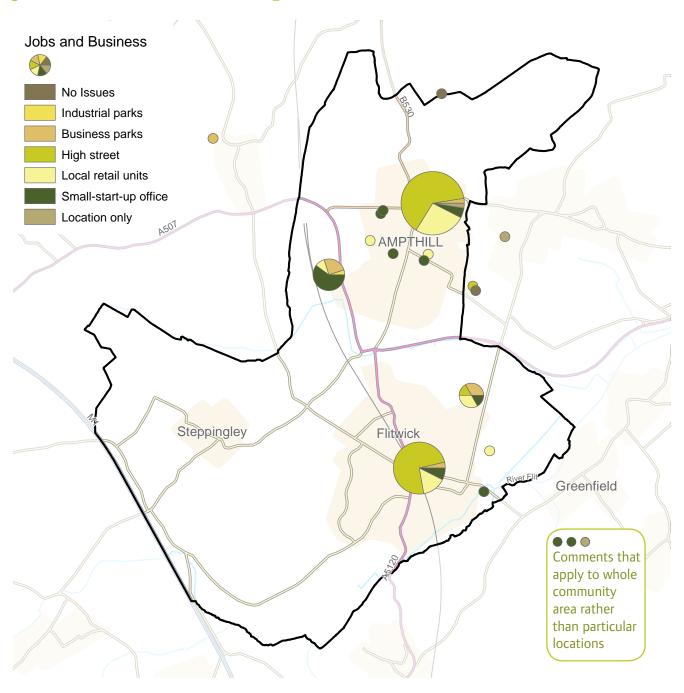
Within Ampthill, the majority of people commented on high street development. Comments related to the need to keep the town centre thriving and varied by encouraging small shops and niche businesses. Financial incentives were suggested by as a means of ensuring all premises are full. A reduction in charity shops was requested, as was the retention of banking facilities. In relation to local retail units, reference was made to improving the Post Office and encouraging a greengrocer.

In Flitwick, improvements to the appearance and cohesiveness of the town centre were suggested, as part of a considered redevelopment of the town centre. The need for a focal point, such as a town square, for Flitwick was identified. Comments indicate that an improved range of shops and facilities, particularly for smaller businesses.

In relation to the existing industrial estates, comments indicted that new development should be small, sympathetic and 'green'. Industrial units in these areas should be improved and increased to provide more jobs. These industrial estates were identified as good locations for small start-up units/innovation parks.



Map showing the places where particular investment to improve Jobs & Business should take place



Other comments included a suggestion that Millbrook Technology Park could include a business park with links to Cranfield University and Flitwick train station. A few people suggested that premises for small start-up businesses were required, including facilities for meeting rooms and networking.

Trends

Increased variety of shops and small start-up businesses in both Ampthill and Flitwick high streets.

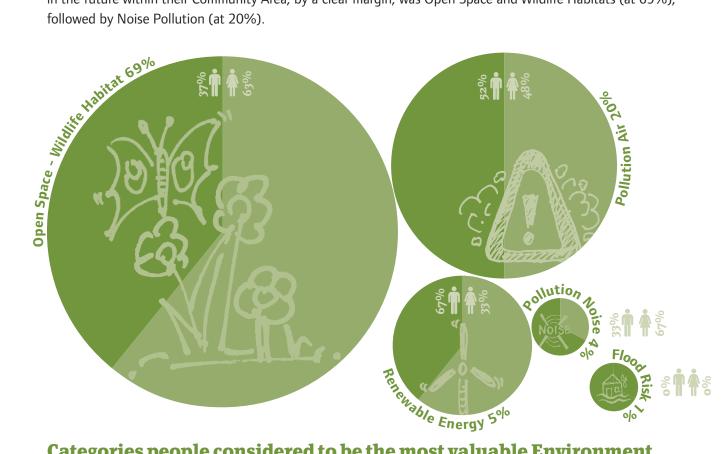
Increased opportunities for small start-up businesses and innovation parks focussed around existing industrial estates.

Environment

Feedback

93% of the people who attended the event answered one or both questions on Environment. Seven people answered that they currently have no issues related to Environment in the Community Area.

From those who responded, the most popular category of Environment that people would like to see improved in the future within their Community Area, by a clear margin, was Open Space and Wildlife Habitats (at 69%), followed by Noise Pollution (at 20%).



Categories people considered to be the most valuable Environment attribute to look after for the future

Analysis

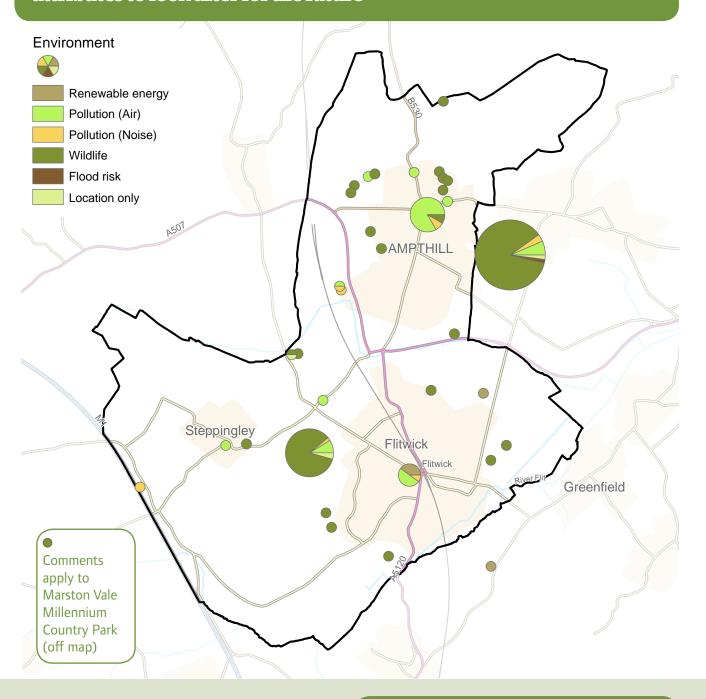
There were a number of locations where people felt strongly about Environment, particularly in the centre of and to the east of Ampthill, and in the centre of and to the west of Flitwick.

To the east of Ampthill, the majority of comments related to maintaining open space and protecting it from development. The wildlife habitats and health benefits of open space were highlighted in particular. Air pollution from traffic congestion and increases in the risk of flooding were also mentioned in this area.

Within Ampthill town centre, most comments related to air pollution and was linked to traffic congestion. In Flitwick town centre, there were similar concerns about air pollution from traffic. There was also a suggestion that all public buildings should have solar panels.

To the west of Flitwick, comments predominantly related to the need to protect open space as a wildlife habitat. Particular mention was made of protecting and potentially expanding Flitwick Wood.

Map showing the places that were considered the most valuable attributes to look after for the future



Other comments included encouraging people to recycle and use renewable energy; air pollution from traffic and scrapyards; concerns about noise pollution from Ampthill industrial area and the M1; protection of Ampthill Park; using renewable energy rather than incineration; protecting the natural habitat corridor along the Greensand Ridge; creating multifunctional green infrastructure between villages; the importance of the Marston Vale as a community forest; and the potential for areas of Ampthill Park to be designated as a SSSI.

Trends

To protect open spaces and wildlife habitats within the Area, particularly east of Ampthill and west of Flitwick.

Address congestion in Ampthill and Flitwick town centres to reduce air pollution.

Homes

Feedback

75% of the people who attended the event answered one or both questions on Homes. Eighteen people answered that they currently have no issues related to Homes in the Community Area.

From those who responded, the most popular categories of Homes that people considered were needed within the Community Area were Older Generation (at 44%), Affordable Homes (at 30%) and New Starter Homes (at 13%).



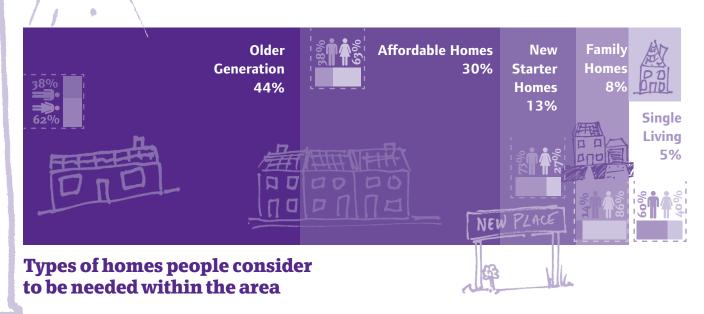
Analysis

The comments relating to Homes were spread throughout much of the Community Area, but with particular concentrations in two locations south of Ampthill.

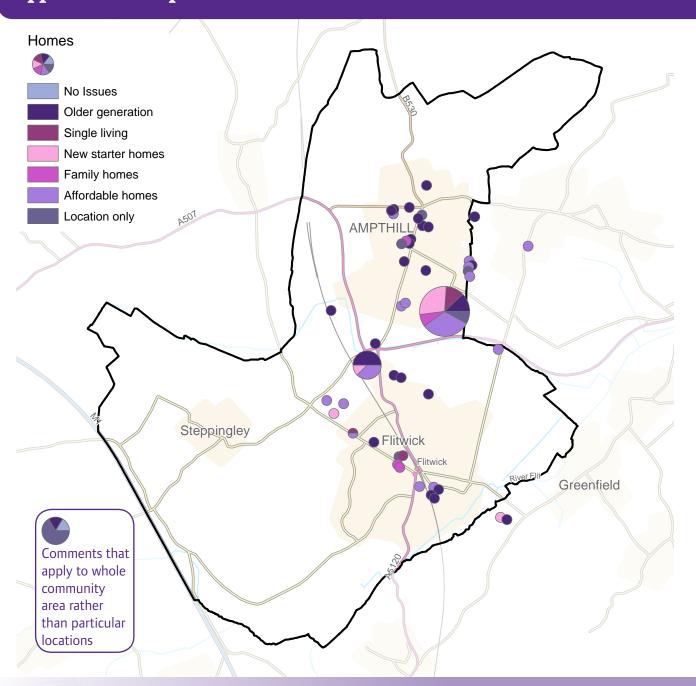
South east of Ampthill, where the Warren Farm development is under construction, many comments requested the inclusion of new starter homes and affordable homes, particularly to provide homes for local young people and families. A few people also suggested that there was a need for the development to include homes for older people looking to downsize, semi-detached housing for families. A few people also commented that there should be no more housing.

Several people also identified land at the 'One-O-One' site between Ampthill and Flitwick as being suitable for housing, including smaller houses for the older generation and affordable homes.

Elsewhere in the Area, other comments included several people indicating that further housing development is not appropriate in this Area; provision of smaller houses for the older generation, with suggestions for locations including St Georges in Ampthill and the old police station in Ampthill; the need for more social housing with realistic rents; and indicated that houses prices in Ampthill and Flitwick are not affordable for local young people and families.



Map showing the places where there were considered to be opportunities to provide new homes



Trends

Providing smaller properties that members of the older generation can downsize to within the Area.

Providing affordable housing so that families and young people can stay in the Area.



Growth & Infrastructure

Feedback

89% of the people who attended the event answered one or both questions on Growth and Infrastructure. Seven people answered that they currently have no issues related to Growth and Infrastructure in the Community Area.

From those who responded, the most popular category of Growth and Infrastructure that people considered is most needed in the Community Area was Healthcare (at 63%), followed by Schools (at 12%).

Analysis

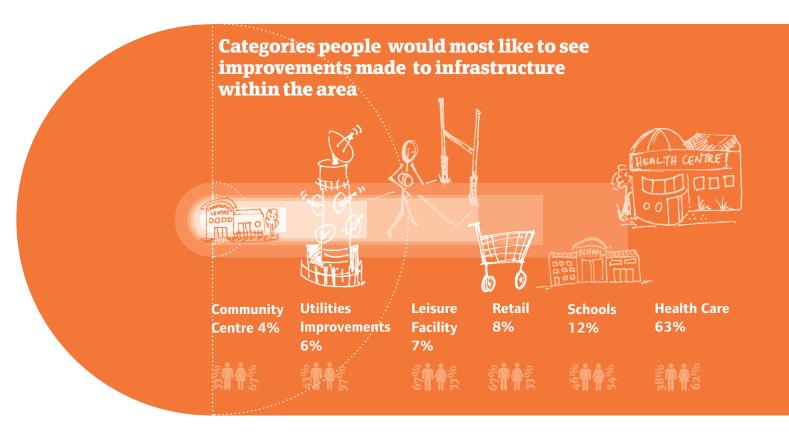
The main locations where people felt strongly about Growth and Infrastructure were in Ampthill, Flitwick and at Steppingley Hospital.

In Ampthill, many of the comments related to healthcare, indicating that doctors and dentists in the town are too busy and there is not enough parking at the existing doctors' surgery. A small number of people also indicated that there was a need for leisure facilities in the town, particularly for young people, and that the electricity system was at breaking point.

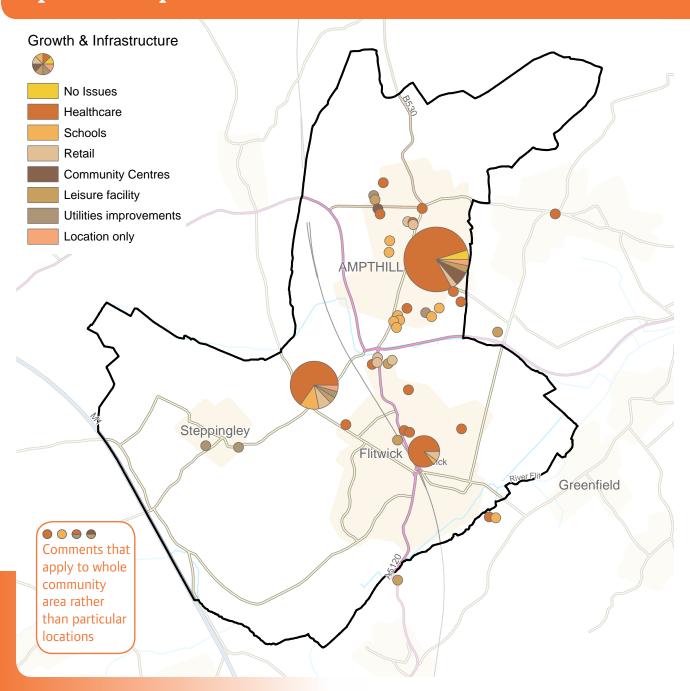
Similar concerns about the over-stretched healthcare provision in Flitwick were also raised.

At Steppingley Hospital, a large number of people thought that expanding facilities would help to relieve pressure on doctors' surgeries in Ampthill and Flitwick. Suggestions included the potential for an additional health centre, day treatment centre or a walk-in centre.

Other comments included a need for more school places to cope with increased housing numbers, especially in Ampthill; increased retail provision on Ampthill High Street and potentially slightly out of town centres as well; increased provision of community centres, with an area west of Ampthill identified as one potential location; further upgrades to Flitwick Leisure Centre; a new leisure centre for Ampthill; the need for a gas supply in Steppingley; improvements to broadband speed; and ensuring all infrastructure is improved to cope with increased housing.



Map showing the areas where there were considered to be opportunities to provide or improve infrastructure facilities



Trends

Improvements to healthcare provision in both Ampthill and Flitwick.

Potential for Steppingley hospital to provide a greater range of healthcare facilities to release pressure on healthcare in Ampthill and Flitwick.

Increase leisure provision, particularly for younger people.

Event: Findings

The people who attended the drop-in event for this Community Area identified the following Future Opportunities to protect or improve their locality under the growth themes:

Local Character

- To protect open spaces and the surrounding countryside within the Area, particularly east of Ampthill and west of Flitwick.
- · Protect Ampthill Park.
- Protect the built heritage of the centre of Ampthill.

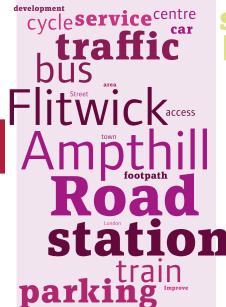
Transport

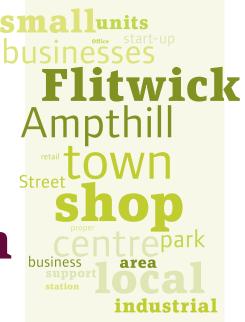
- Improvements to reduce congestion in both Ampthill and Flitwick town centres.
- Reopen a train station in Ampthill.
- Improve parking, access and facilities at Flitwick station.
- Improve bus links between settlements and to Luton, Milton Keynes and Bedford.

Jobs & Business

- Increased variety of shops and small start-up businesses in both Ampthill and Flitwick high streets.
- Increased opportunities for small start-up businesses and innovation parks focussed around existing industrial estates.







The WordCloud diagrams illustrate the top twenty words used by the people who attended the drop-in event within their commentary for each growth theme. The size of the words reflect the number of people who wrote them.

Environment

- To protect open spaces and wildlife habitats within the Area, particularly east of Ampthill and west of Flitwick.
- Address congestion in Ampthill and Flitwick town centres to reduce air pollution.

Homes

- Providing smaller properties that members of the older generation can downsize to within the Area.
- Providing affordable housing so that families and young people can stay in the Area.

Growth and Infrastructure

- Improvements to healthcare provision in both Ampthill and Flitwick.
- Potential for Steppingley hospital to provide a greater range of healthcare facilities to release pressure on healthcare in Ampthill and Flitwick.
- Increase leisure provision, particularly for younger people.



Shapingwhere you live 2035



What happens next?

Community Planning is a continuing process and this Community Plan, which collates all the information gathered at the event, is the first time this type of information has been collected. There will be a series of actions arising from the Community Plan which are likely to influence or shape planning policy in the Local Plan, decisions on planning applications, and decisions on where money arising from development should be spent. These actions are identified in total within the 'Overview Statement of Community Planning' which details how they will be dealt with. Central Bedfordshire Council will seek to work in partnership with organisations including Town and Parish Councils, developers and other agencies to deliver on these actions.

For more info on community planning...

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/community-planning

More information on the Local Plan can be found here...

\delta www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/localplan

Disclaimer Central Bedfordshire Council is the statutory Planning Authority for the area and therefore is bound by legislation and must have regard to government guidance on planning matters.

Community Plan produced in consultation with Central Bedfordshire Council supported by www.lda-design.co.uk

This document contains:

Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2016 Contains Royal Mail data © Royal Mail copyright and Database right 2016 Contains National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

Central Bedfordshire Council:

© Crown Copyright and database right. 2016 Ordnance Survey 100049029

