

Flitwick Town Centre Development



Public Consultation Report (January 2008)

Introduction

An informal partnership including Mid Beds District Council, Bedfordshire County Council, Flitwick Town Council, developers, landowners and rail interests have developed new proposals to regenerate Flitwick Town Centre. These are set out in the Draft Planning Framework and Masterplan and were the subject of a public consultation.

The consultation took place over a six week period from 5th November to 14th December 2007. During this time, the questionnaire was available to take away at Flitwick Library, the Ampthill POP and the Mid Beds offices at Priory House. It was also available for completion on-line on the Mid Beds website at www.midbeds.gov.uk and was advertised on Flitwick Town Council's website www.flitwick.gov.uk.

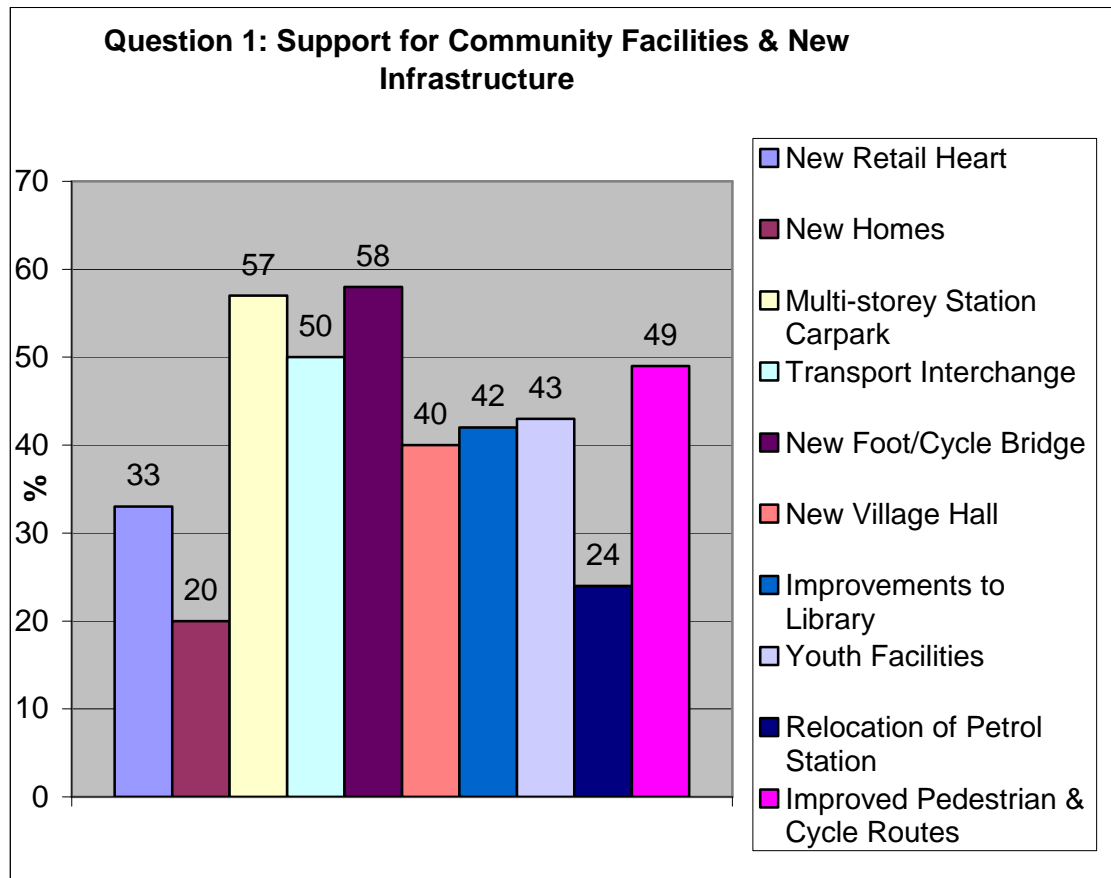
A public exhibition was held in Flitwick Library on the 8th, 10th, 16th and 17th November to further publicise this consultation; and staff were available to answer questions. Questionnaires were also available for completion. The exhibition was available to view unstaffed during library opening hours until Friday 7th December when it was moved to the Mid Beds District Council offices at Priory House for the final week of the public consultation.

A total of **236** responses to the questionnaire were received with 7% of these received online. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

This report forms part of the review process following the close of the public consultation period. The information summarised in this report will be used to inform amendments made to the Planning Framework and Masterplan. It is envisaged that the revised document will be reported to the Council's Overview Committee, followed by the Council's Executive in spring 2008 for final approval; prior to being formally adopted as Technical Planning Guidance.

Question 1

To ensure this is a sustainable town centre and to help pay for new community facilities and infrastructure a high density development is needed. The main benefits that this would bring are listed below. Please indicate your support for inclusion in the town centre.

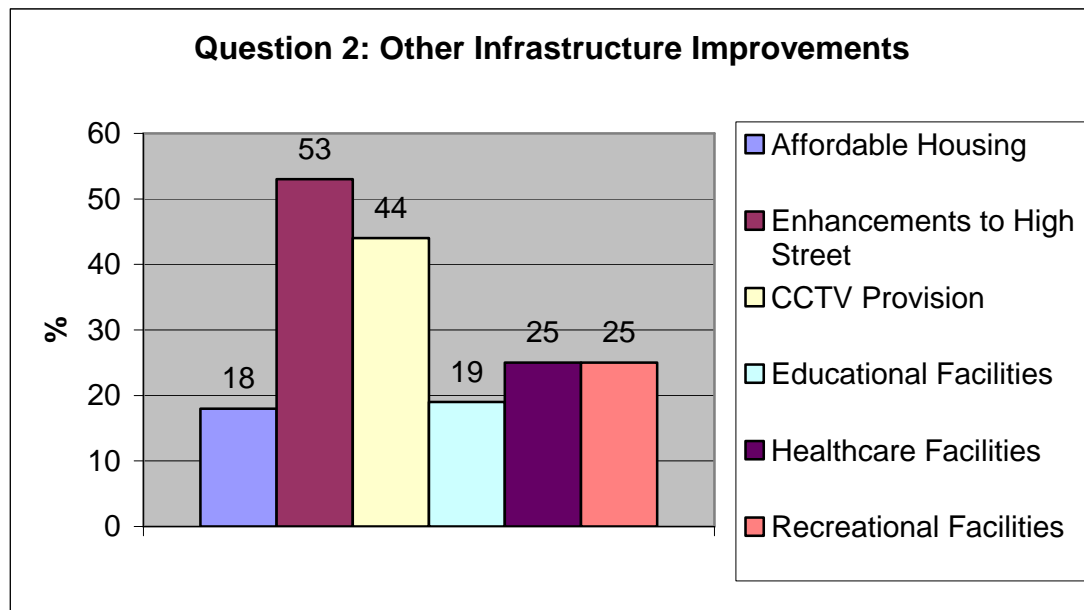


Summary of Comments

- Rail station related improvements (the multi-storey car park, the transport interchange and new bridge) rated most highly
- The importance of improved pedestrian and cycle routes was the second most supported
- Community facilities were the next most popular
- A number of respondents commented that these elements of the scheme should be pursued separately
- 'New retail heart' scored lowly as a significant number of respondents felt that an enlarged Tesco was neither necessary nor desirable
- The relocated petrol station was unpopular due to concerns about increased traffic, visual detriment and safety
- The low percentage of respondents that supported new homes, did so with the proviso that they be affordable
- A number of respondents questioned the need for any significant development in the town

Question 2

There are a number of other improvements that could be included in the town centre scheme. Please indicate which of these you support.

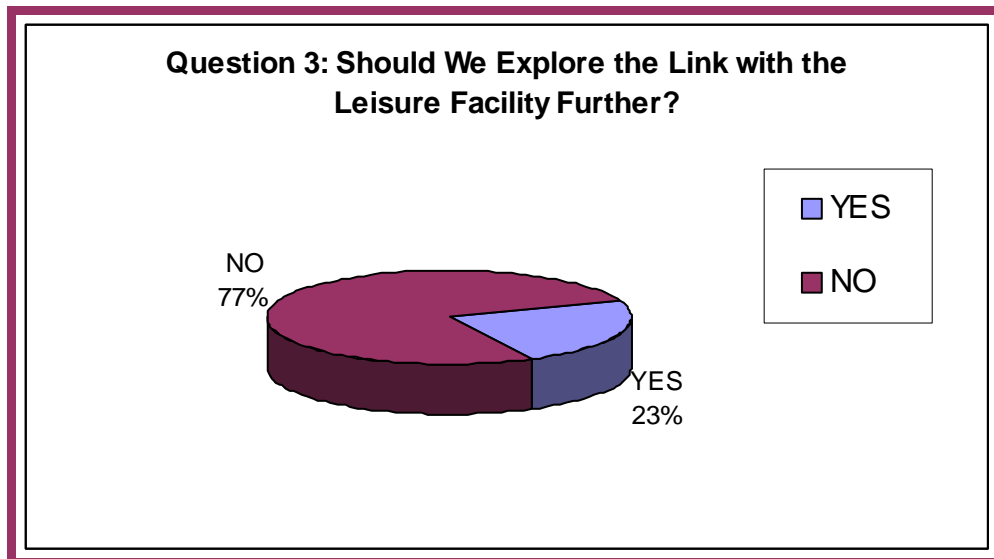


Summary of Comments

- Enhancements to the High Street were rated highly as respondents felt that this area should not have been excluded from the masterplan.
- Healthcare, Educational and Recreational facilities scored relatively lowly as a number of respondents commented that they should be provided as a matter of course
- Affordable Housing scored lowly due to a general feeling that Flitwick cannot accommodate any more new homes
- Concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour were expressed as reasons for the need for CCTV provision

Question 3

It is planned to redevelop the Flitwick Leisure Centre as a new leisure facility on the Millennium Park. To ensure the leisure facility is integrated into the town centre development there could be a new direct pedestrian link to the library and new village hall. Should we explore this link further?

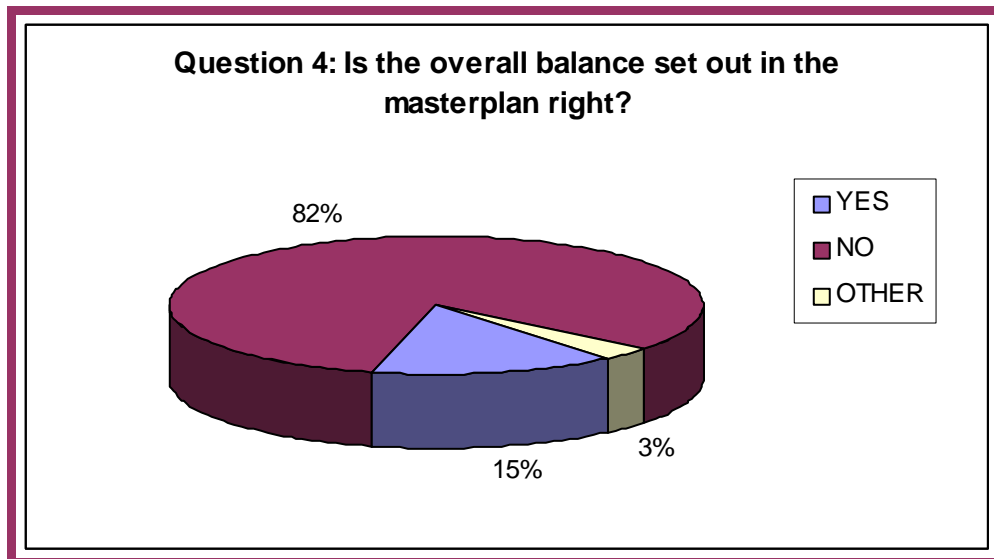


Summary of Comments

- Vast majority used the question to voice their opposition to plans to relocate the leisure centre due to the loss of greenspace at the Millennium Park and increased traffic flow through the town centre
- Those in support felt that it should be integrated with the other community facilities and should also have good pedestrian access to/from the rest of the town

Question 4

A range of uses are proposed in the new development including in the region of 320 new homes, around 9000 sq metres of retail floorspace as well as new car parking, improvements to the railway station, and new community facilities. Do you think the overall balance set out in the masterplan is right?

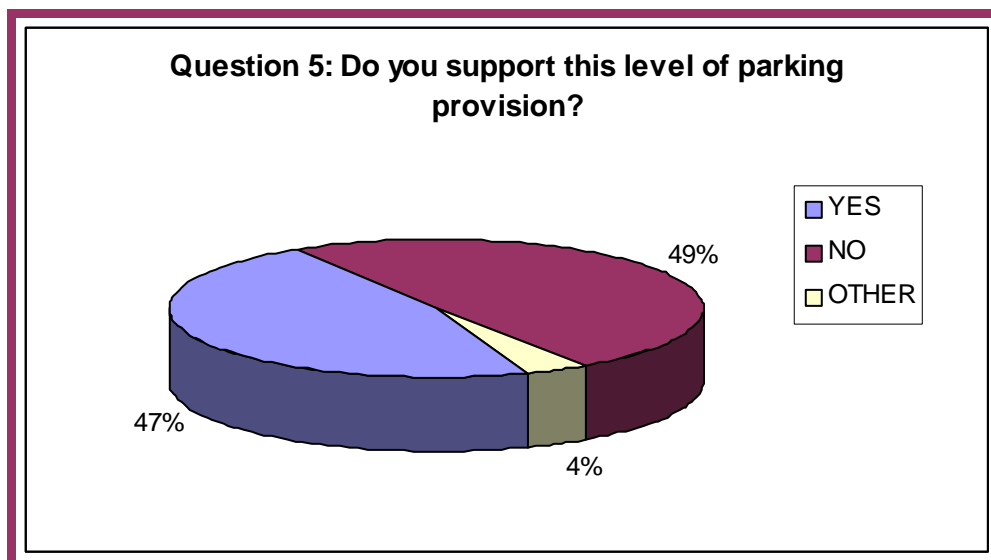


Summary of Comments

- Many felt that the enlarged Tesco store dominates the masterplan and may compromise the viability of the other proposed retail outlets
- Concern that overall proposed parking may not be sufficient
- View expressed that community facilities should be prioritised above other elements
- Level of housing considered to be too high as houses are not needed and will generate increased traffic
- Proposed development overall felt to be too high density

Question 5

A new multi-storey long-stay commuter car park is proposed at the station with a minimum of 550 spaces, and a new 500 space short-stay shoppers car park as part of the new Tesco store. Do you support this level of parking provision?



Summary of Comments

- The community was almost equally divided over this issue
- General support for encouraging off-street parking for commuters
- Concern over levels of car park charging for local residents
- Concern that even the proposed level of parking will be insufficient for future demand
- A feeling that increased parking provision should not compromise the push towards public transport
- Concern about height of the proposed multi-storey car park
- Concern that increased parking will generate too much traffic

Question 6A

Whilst we cannot guarantee which businesses might open in the new commercial units in the town centre apart from Tesco, are there any particular uses you would like to see?

| | % |
|--|-----------|
| Restaurants and Cafes | 24 |
| Food Related (Greengrocers, butchers, bakery and delicatessens) | 13 |
| Another Bank | 12 |
| Shoe Shop/ Clothing Stores | 10 |
| Non-committal - A good general variety | 8 |
| Bookshop/Toys/Gifts | 7 |
| No Additional Units Needed | 7 |
| Additional Units Would Not Compete | 6 |
| Wine Bars/Pubs | 5 |
| Hardware/General Convenience Store | 4 |
| Other (Where only one request) Larger Post Office, Mobility Shop, Healthfood Shop, Creche, Internet Café, Pet Shop, Cinema | 3 |
| Another Supermarket | 2 |

Summary of Comments

- Business types that are lacking in Flitwick were selected
- Aspirations towards a 'café culture'
- A desire for choice and for independent shops offering different/alternative goods to Tesco expressed
- Anti-supermarket feeling expressed in the desire for individual food purveyors
- 'Another bank' scored highly as it was felt that Barclays also had a monopoly in the town
- Some negative responses from those happy with the status quo/ those who did not wish to make a selection, arguing that any new business would be stifled by Tesco.
- A desire not to have to travel elsewhere to purchase non-essential items like books, clothing and gifts was prominent

Question 6B

Are there any particular commercial uses that you would not like to see?

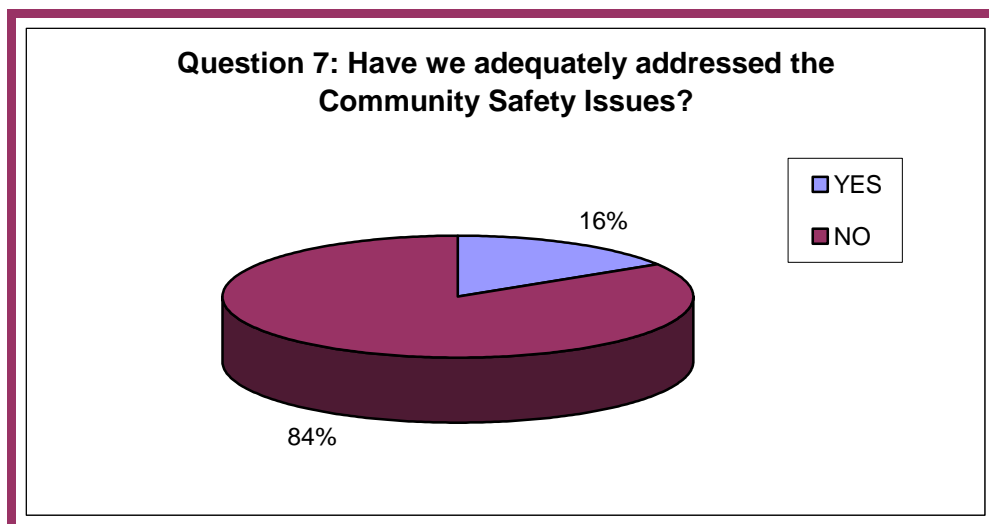
| | % |
|--|-----------|
| Estate Agents/Solicitors | 39 |
| Hot Food Takeaways | 23 |
| Pubs/Wine Bars/Night Clubs | 13 |
| Tesco | 8 |
| Hairdressers | 6 |
| Banks | 5 |
| Charity Shops | 3 |
| Betting Shops /Amusement Arcades | 2 |
| Other (Where only one request) Adult Shops, Youth Facilities, Clothing Shops, Antique Shops | 2 |

Summary of Comments

- An overwhelming majority felt that estate agents and other A2 uses were over-represented in the town
- This has led to a lack of active frontages as they were not services that were required on a regular basis
- Hot food takeaways were considered to attract groups of youths and increase litter
- Pubs/bars and businesses associated with gambling were felt to fuel increased anti-social behaviour and crime in the town
- Hairdressers, like estate agents were felt to dominate the retail offer in the town centre
- Banks featured in these results, but the results of the previous question where desire for an alternative bank scored highly, seem to contradict this
- Charity shops featured, as respondents felt they give the town a 'down-market' appearance.

Question 7

The proposals aim to ensure that with a mix of land uses and street level activity there is good natural surveillance in the new town centre. CCTV is also proposed for the town centre. Have we adequately addressed community safety issues?



Summary of Comments

- A majority felt that a greater police presence was required in Flitwick
- Many commented that even good CCTV coverage could not replace 'bobbies on the beat'
- Concern that with a higher density development, good natural surveillance would be lacking
- Concerns raised over the proximity of the relocated petrol station to the park and residential areas
- The need for good lighting was frequently referred to
- Road safety concerns were cited in view of the increased volume of traffic the scheme would generate

Question 8

Do you have any other comments about the proposals as set out in the Flitwick Town Centre Planning Framework and Masterplan? In particular what do you like about and what don't you like? Please give your reasons for these.

| | % |
|--|------|
| Traffic problems Need for new road bridge, general concern about congestion, and need for a bypass for Flitwick | 16 |
| General support for scheme Concession that improvement is needed | 12 |
| Domination of Tesco Scale of building, lack of competition, threat to new retail units proposed | 12 |
| Design Issues Overbearing scale, modernist architectural style, high density, loss of 'rural town' identity because of this | 11.5 |
| Opposition to Relocation of Leisure Centre Many felt had to be addressed as part of this consultation | 9 |
| Specific Support for Station Improvements (Including new pedestrian bridge and multi-storey car park) | 8 |
| Opposition to Relocation of Petrol Station (Visual, safety and traffic concerns) | 7.5 |
| Lack of consideration of area to the East of Railway Line (Particularly the High Street) | 5.5 |
| Support for the status quo | 5 |
| Financial Concerns (Source of funding, developer profits as motivation for scheme, too expensive – a waste of money) | 5 |
| Homes Not Required Concerns over traffic generation and lack of facilities/infrastructure to support increased population | 5 |
| Development proposals a 'Fait Accompli' (Consultation mere lip service to local residents) | 2.5 |
| Other No significant Youth Facilities Use of Green Technologies not mentioned Tesco and the Leisure Centre should swap sites | 1.5 |

Appendix A: The Questionnaire Form

BE INVOLVED – Let us know your views FLITWICK TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions about the Flitwick Town Centre Planning Framework and Masterplan. Your views are important to us and will be used to help develop these proposals.

1. To ensure this is a sustainable town centre and to help to pay for new community facilities and infrastructure a high density development is needed. **The main benefits which this would bring are listed below. Please indicate which you support for inclusion in the town centre (tick box):**
- new heart to the town centre, including a new enlarged Tesco store and car park, and other new retail units
 - new homes
 - a new multi-storey station car park
 - a transport interchange (bus, taxi and car pickup and set down) and Station Square
 - a new foot/cycle bridge linking Steppingley Road to the High Street and giving lift access to the station platforms
 - a new village hall
 - improvements to the library
 - new youth facilities
 - retention of the petrol filling station, relocated to Dunstable Rd
 - improved pedestrian/cycle crossings and routes

Please give any additional comments here:

2. There are a number of other improvements that could be included in the town centre scheme. **Please indicate which of these you support (tick box):**
- new affordable housing
 - enhancements to the High Street
 - provision and maintenance of CCTV in the town centre
 - A contribution towards improving educational facilities in the town (linked to the new housing)
 - A contribution to existing health care facilities in the town (linked to the new housing)
 - A contribution to off-site recreation/sporting facilities in the town

Are there any other benefits which you feel this development should support - these should be linked in some way to the new development (i.e. new homes mean more children for local schools).

3. It is planned to redevelop Flitwick Leisure Centre as a new leisure facility on the Millennium Park to the south of the Town Centre Development, adjacent to the Community and Civic Quarter (A separate consultation is taking place about this proposal). To ensure the leisure facility is integrated into the town centre development there could be a new direct pedestrian link to the library and new village hall.
- Should we explore this link further? Please give your reasons.**
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4. A range of uses are proposed in the new development, including in the region of 320 new homes, around 9,000 sq metres (net) of retail floorspace, as well as new car parking, improvements to the railway station, and new community facilities. **Do you think the overall balance set out in the Masterplan is right? Please give your reasons.**

5. A new multi-storey long-stay commuter car park is proposed at the station, with a minimum of 550 spaces, and a new 500 space short stay shoppers' car park as part of the new Tesco store. **Do you support this level of parking provision? Please give your reasons.**

- 6a. Whilst we cannot guarantee which businesses might open in the new commercial units in the town centre, apart from Tesco, are there any particular uses which you would like to see ie. shops, financial and business services (eg banks, estate agents), pubs/wine bars, restaurants and cafes, hot food take-aways?

- 6b. **Are there any you would not like to see? Please give your reasons.**

7. The proposals aim to ensure that with a mix of land uses (eg. homes above shops), and street level activity (shop frontages) there is good natural surveillance in the new town centre, including in the Station Square and on the main proposed pedestrian routes. CCTV is also proposed for the town centre. **Have we adequately addressed community safety issues? Please give your reasons**

8. Do you have any other comments about the proposals as set out in the Flitwick Town Centre Planning Framework and Masterplan? **In particular what do you like about it and what don't you like? Please give your reasons for these.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your views are important to us. The deadline for your comments is Friday 14 December 2007. Once we have received all the comments we will review these and consider how we need to amend the Planning Framework and Masterplan. We aim seek approval to the final document in March 2008.