

Wolston Neighbourhood Development Plan – 2016

Report on 'Mood Cards'

When the Steering Committee was set up last year to look at drafting a Wolston Neighbourhood Development Plan, it was agreed that a useful first step would be to get some feedback from the residents to find out how they felt about the village and how they would like to see it develop. To this end, a short questionnaire ('mood card') was circulated in a local magazine to every household in the village.

Only 42 were returned – there were some problems with the circulation the leaflets were printed on thick shiny paper which sometimes got stuck in the magazine and was extremely difficult to write on. 42 responses may not be representative of the views of the total population of the village but certain quite strong themes emerge which may be significant.

Three questions were asked:

1. What do you most like about Wolston?
2. What are you most worried about for Wolston, now or in the future?
3. What you most like to change within Wolston?

An analysis of the responses is as follows.

1. **What do you most like about Wolston?**

15 responses commented on how **friendly** the village is ('people smile at you and speak to you in the street' and 'I have made lots of friends since I have been here'). 16 commented on the feeling that it is a **thriving community** ('a safe friendly community which cares'). Linked to this, 24 praised the **amenities** in the village, citing shop, post office, library, doctor, pubs, school, churches, community centre, chemist, allotments, the rec and the bus service ('fabulous village amenities'). The many **activities** within the village were also commented on.

Nine mentioned that they liked the **rural setting**, and four others added that they liked the fact that Wolston is within **easy reach** of Coventry, Leamington and Rugby. 10 praised the **picturesque surroundings** with the brook running through.

There were a couple of mildly dissenting voices – 'Not sure any more, no longer a village community' and 'Unfortunately the newcomers know nothing of village life and walk past with no "hello"'.

However, the general feeling from the responses can be summed up with one comment: 'The approach as you cross the river bridge, past the cottages, fields, church and through the village centre.... You know you are home'.

2. **What are you most worried about for Wolston, now and in the future?**

Overwhelmingly, the answer to this reflects very grave concerns about **the effect of any future development**. Any further development would be unwelcome (32 responses) – 'No more unwelcome housing estates'. Of these, 20 were worried about **the loss of the village identity** should there be any more housing ('it will no longer be a village due to the scale of new developments'; 'it may develop too quickly in terms of housing development and thereby lose its village identity').

A couple of comments felt that Wolston would go the way of Stoke and Binley and 'just become an outlying part of Coventry'.

Others were anxious about **the effect on the infrastructure** of the village (12 responses), particularly with reference to the doctors' surgery and the school ('pressure on doctors/roads/schools/sewers!'); two were concerned that we might lose some of these services altogether.

Ten responses reflected concern about **the increase in traffic** coming through the village, which would be exacerbated by any more housing ('traffic still going through too fast and using side roads'). Lorries from the quarry were also mentioned, as was 'antisocial' parking.

Some are unhappy about the **reduction in policing** (3) in the light of recent incidents in the village. Three responses feared for the future of the **allotments**.

3. What would you most like to change within Wolston?

Concerns about **traffic and parking** were most frequently mentioned in answer to this question (each 9 responses). Some traffic calming was requested ('Gloucestershire has 20 mph limits – why not Warwickshire?) and a reduction in heavy traffic through the village. Three responses asked for a **ban on parking on pavements** ('makes it difficult for pedestrians and impossible for mobility scooters'). One requested more dropped kerbs for scooters.

While five responses confirmed that there should be no more housing in the village two requested that there should be **more affordable housing for young people** and three suggested there should be **more bungalows or other suitable housing for older residents** for example on the garages opposite Bennett's Court. One suggested there should be more power to the Parish Council; another wanted a ban on out of keeping extensions and alterations to existing properties.

There were also four comments about the **bus service**. More services up to Bennetts Court were requested, more late night services, and a service to Leamington.

Other comments included:

- Importance of **community policing**, especially in respect of young people in the village (four): 'Youth boredom needs steering'; 'with more children living in the village, more facilities will be needed to provide support'.
- **Litter/dog fouling** (six): 'Less dog mess!'; 'Need more litter tidying – each householder could do own front'. Also 'Tidy up area around the Co-op'.
- **Improvements in amenities** (four); 'Improve access to walks along the River Avon'; improvements to Dyer's Lane play area requested along with a suggestion that the Community Centre playing fields could be more widely used.
- Requests for more **support for small businesses** in the village (3) especially retail; 'could the village hall be developed to provide a facility for businesses as well as community organisations?'
- The re-siting of the Post Office in the Co-op is 'a daft idea'.
- Two felt too much change would be 'undesirable': 'Rather than incorporate too much change, we should maintain the equilibrium of what we have now'.

Sally Beament

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