

# Future Wolverton - The Vision

This is how people would like Wolverton to be described in 20 years time

*For more than six months during 2002 more than 500 people in Wolverton and the surrounding area discussed how their town should develop in the next twenty years. Working Groups met 31 times, involving 70 people, and there were a number of questionnaires to record people's views*

*What emerged were common and overlapping areas of agreement, of fundamental principles on which Wolverton's future should be built.*

*The Town Council will be working over the next few months to move the vision onto the next stage and want you to get involved in the future of our town.*

## **1. A Town Within the City**

Wolverton has grown in size and attractiveness, offering a distinct contrast to the rest of Milton Keynes. It provides a variety of local jobs, and a vibrant mix of performance, arts and leisure facilities that draws people into the town at night and on weekends. It has its own studio cinema and small theatre. Much of the work performed is locally produced, stimulated by the cluster of creative businesses attracted to the business and studio units housed in the town's centre. Development, including new housing, employment, heritage and leisure facilities, has been concentrated on the west flank of the town and in the redundant railway buildings and land alongside the canal and by the station on the eastern edge of the town. People come to the town for its services, for the growing number and range of jobs available, for the museums and living heritage all around the town, for its rich mix of shopping and, most of all, because it is a pleasant, safe and friendly town to be in.

## **2. A place to bring up a family**

Wolverton is a family friendly town with a strong sense of community and identity. It is a safe place for children to walk and cycle around in. It has high quality health care provision. There are many opportunities for different generations to enjoy their leisure in family groups, from sports facilities that link schools and clubs, to family friendly pubs, and a lively programme of large scale community events.

## **3. A mixed population**

Wolverton has a population that is mixed in terms of age, household size, income and ethnicity. Although it has become an increasingly popular place to live, the town has retained its quirkiness and liveliness with a rich mix of people, cultures and amenities catering for different needs and interests. Local people have not been priced out of the housing market because new developments have catered for different income groups and household sizes and include a proportion of affordable and social housing. There is a nursing home as well as private housing conveniently near the town's main services for older people who want to downsize their accommodation but continue living locally.

## **4. A distinctive Victorian/Edwardian character**

We have a community, from school children to adults, who are aware and proud of Wolverton's history and distinctive built environment. Over the last twenty years,

through enforcement of conservation orders, the original features of properties in whole streets have been repaired and restored. A Wolverton Building Trust has restored many old buildings, and there is new life within the shells of redundant railway buildings. The town has not become fossilised. Whilst all new buildings and developments were closely monitored to ensure that they complemented the distinctive character of Wolverton, positive steps were to link the new with the old, to develop the best of new and environmentally sustainable architecture so that the whole town and its community could benefit from the changes.

## **5. Celebrating its heritage**

Wolverton celebrates its proud railway and canal heritage. 'The Railway Experience' is a major attraction, not a conventional museum but a series of features that are part of the new life in the old rail buildings situated alongside the canal and near to the railway station that complements the town's Milton Keynes Museum. The celebration of Wolverton's heritage is integrated into the town and is an inclusive experience. Visitors come from far and wide to learn about Wolverton's history in an exciting hands-on way that appeals to all the family, and they can watch a modern train being serviced at the present railway works.

## **6. Centre for Tourism**

Wolverton's heritage attractions are nationally recognised. These are echoed throughout the restored town, which - with extensive signage and information - is now a living example of the Victorian transport era. Other visitors come for its sports and conference facilities, for shopping, or for the area's history that goes back to the Bronze Age and the pleasant countryside. Many will come because it offers them all. The town and surrounding area offer good quality places to stay in at a range of prices, and lots of facilities for the whole family. This links in-town attractions with pubs, walks, rides and hiking in the hinterland. It has become a popular destination for people visiting the area and attractions from a radius of 60 miles.

## **7. Exploiting the canal and green spaces**

Our community treasures its green spaces. Recreation grounds are clean and well-maintained. New housing developments are attractively landscaped, with play areas and grassy areas for people to enjoy. The canalside has become a major frontage of the town and has been opened up to offer places to sit and enjoy a drink, play and walk. The canal itself has been brought into a marina in the centre of town just Stratford Road, linked through one of the old railway sheds, now one of the heritage experience sites. There are links across the canal making access easier to the popular Ouse Valley Park.

## **8. Links with surrounding communities**

Greenleys, coming up to its 50th birthday, has grown in importance as a secondary centre for convenience shopping, both for residents and for employees on the Wolverton Mill estate. New developments at the west end of the town have linked Greenleys more closely with the rest of Wolverton. Underpasses and a new road connection have made access safer and easier. Wolverton is once again an important magnet for north Milton Keynes and the surrounding villages with improved public transport, improved schooling and resources such as a good library.

## 9. Sound Economic Base

People like to work in and around Wolverton. It is easy to get to, good to work in, and has all the facilities they need in close reach. The combination of modern railways and the town's heritage attractions has made it a centre of excellence for craft and world class manufacturing skills. It has many new and knowledge-based businesses, attracted by the high quality workspaces and business incubators built since the early 2000s. The Town Council has worked for many years in partnership with local businesses, seeking to make Wolverton as attractive and welcoming as possible to business. Lots of the small firms that started in them have stayed in the town, and want to grow with and within it.

## 10. Education and Training - Basis for the Future

The schools are of a high quality and work in partnership with parents and the community to realise the full potential of the town's children. All have a key place in the community. Radcliffe Campus has strong placement and apprenticeship links with local firms, which themselves are active supporters of the school in financial and other ways. There are many exciting opportunities for lifelong learning that enjoy the most modern of facilities. A university has established an innovative engineering development institute in the town. Local firms operate a thriving training partnership, supported by local consultancy and service companies. Both developments have helped Wolverton to keep at the cutting edge of engineering and manufacturing effectiveness. This continues to attract new firms into the area.

## 11. Great Place to Shop in

The retail centre is now in the enlarged old Glyn Square, redesigned into an attractive piazza, offering a rich mix of shops, and places to eat and drink. There are regular fresh produce markets. Wolverton has a series of shopping areas, mainly pedestrianised, each linking to the others, each with their distinct character reflecting the town's cosmopolitan population. This is concentrated around Church Street and Stratford Road (now attractively linked to the entrance of Tesco) and the alley between them, the Square, and Glyn Square and Radcliffe Street. The Agora has gone and the businesses in it relocated close by to new buildings in character with the rest of the town. This has opened up the Square again and restored the original road pattern. The whole town has become a much more pleasant place to be. Trade for local retailers has significantly increased, with more visitors choosing to shop in the town.

## 12. Station improvements

The railway station is a central feature. It provides an impressive welcome to all who use it, whether they arrive on foot or cycle by train or by car. The services are frequent and regular throughout the day. Local services to London terminate at Wolverton rather than Central Milton Keynes, as 20 years ago. The new buildings, echoing in style Wolverton's Victorian origin, flow from the bridge down and along the length of the platform. They offer a safe, attractive and well-lit environment. Escalators enable easy access to the platform. The station includes a ticket hall manned most hours, shops and a cafe, information about the town, and business office units for rent. The heritage experience sites and conference facilities are all within close walking distance. The station is linked by bus and by footpaths to all directions, including across the canal, with clear signage along each way. Secure parking (24 hours) accommodates rail users coming by car.

## 13. Getting to the Town

Local transport facilities dovetail with rail and bus services to make Wolverton easy to reach. Bus services shuttle around the town's perimeter and hinterland, enabling visitors to enter Wolverton from a number of directions, and to link with longer distance services to other parts of Milton Keynes and the region. There is improved access for cyclists and walkers in and out of town, linking to the Redway system and Sustrans routes. Those who come as day visitors leave their cars at a number of secure car parks around the edge of the town, completing their journey on foot or by the in-town light buses.

## 14. Inviting Gateways to the Town

Entrances to the town from each direction are inviting and distinctive, indicating your arrival in the town. The old car showrooms along Stratford Road have been relocated and replaced with a mix of housing and attractive small business units. McConnell Drive has become a Railway Trail dotted with artefacts that reflect the town's industrial heritage: it links the MK Museum with the new Railway Experience close to the station. The route to the station along the Stratford Road is much more people friendly, with access to the station along streets that feel safe, pleasant and welcoming to pedestrians.

## 15. Public Transport

Within the town a small fleet of clean and quiet light buses regularly move through the streets, linking the town centre with the car parks, the station and the health centre, and enabling those with walking difficulties or heavy loads to go where they want in the town. Wolverton is a working model of transport through the ages. Getting around involves light buses, conventional buses, and the railway. A tram links the station and the heritage attractions to Milton Keynes Museum. Narrow boat services shuttle between New Bradwell and Cosgrove, linking tourists with historic and leisure attractions in the surrounding countryside.

## 16. A Town for Pedestrians

Wolverton is a town that provides a model of urban traffic management to others. In Wolverton's Victorian streets pedestrians and cyclists come first. There are strict controls on cars and parking, making the roads safe, clean and enjoyable to move around and live in. The back alleys and the roads together provide a range of well signed routes for easy movement throughout the town, and to the surrounding countryside. Some are prioritised for pedestrians, others for cyclists, and others for delivery vehicles (with controls).

## 17. Local partnership

Wolverton's success has been achieved by local people, businesses, councils and organisations, working in close partnership with a clear agreed vision and a positive "can do" attitude. That can be seen today in the different broad partnerships that focus on the town's schools, health and community safety. Overarching these is the innovative town partnership that links residents alongside business people and public service professionals, all focused on making sure that the vision becomes a reality.

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