

FUTURE WOLVERTON

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

The Healthcheck report is in two parts:

1. Answers to the specific questions laid out in the Countryside Agency Healthcheck Guide
2. Further analysis conducted within the Working Groups, specifically those Groups considering Business and the Economy, Access and Transport, and the Hinterland.

This reflects the specific way in which the Healthcheck was conducted in Wolverton. Different issues were handled in different ways, and local people were engaged on a part time basis as Project Assistants to support the process. The following summarises by issue:

Environment, and Social and Community

In both cases the Groups chose to work through the detailed questions as their agendas.

In the case of Social and Community issues, much of the fact gathering was completed (as planned) before the Group met, and this provided the backdrop for Group discussions.

In the case of Environment, the Group (the one with the largest attendance of all five) included many people with detailed and specialist knowledge of the town, its history, its architecture and its wider environment. Many attendees were members of the established Wolverton Arts and Heritage Society. Accordingly this Group engaged simultaneously both in fact gathering and in analysis and future planning.

Business and Economy, and Access and Transport

In these cases the fact gathering to answer specific Healthcheck questions and the more strategic analysis and future planning were separated. The former was started by a project assistant, who also undertook specific surveys of local businesses. Other business and residential surveys were conducted which investigated transport and access issues, and a survey was conducted of 130 users of the railway station on a weekday morning and evening.

The agendas for each of the Working Groups were agreed by the Co-ordinators and the respective Working Group Chairs. In each case those agendas followed the broad sweep of the Healthcheck question groupings, but the discussions centred wholly on strategic issues, not the answering of the specific questions.

Hinterland

Usually there is no separate Working Group for the market town's Healthcheck, but Wolverton is in a unique position.

It started as an industrial town of the Victorian era, not as a conventional market town. It is two miles away from Stony Stratford, a conventional market town with two thirds of the population of Wolverton and Greenleys, and with a recorded history going back a thousand years. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the city of Milton Keynes was created, with its large and modern city centre three miles away from Wolverton in the opposite direction to Stony Stratford.

Neither Stony Stratford (having its own hinterland) nor the centre of Milton Keynes could be considered part of Wolverton's hinterland. Some settlements (the Victorian one of New Bradwell, and the new ones of Blue Bridge, Bradwell Abbey and Hodge Lea) clearly are or were, before the centre of the city became established.

There are other settlements, old villages separated from Stony Stratford by the railway and/or river, and further away from the city centre, that might be considered part of Wolverton's hinterland. The topography of the area would make the shape of the hinterland an odd one, distorted by the proximity of Stony Stratford and by the lines of the railway, canal and river.

At the beginning of the exercise, it was unclear to everyone which settlements fitted into Wolverton's hinterland, or whether it had a hinterland at all. Accordingly a special and addition Working Group was established to investigate these questions, and to inform the other Working Groups accordingly.

This Group developed its own agenda by highlighting the Healthcheck questions that referred to hinterland.

Presentation

As a consequence each section of questions is reported in two parts, and in two ways.

The first part provides specific answers to each individual Healthcheck question. For some questions those answers have been informed by surveys and other activities conducted additional to the conventional collection of available facts and figures.

The second part provides the main findings and conclusions from the deliberations of the Working Group concerned. These conclusions have been grouped together in the final section and provide a clear link to the Vision statement overwhelmingly agreed at the third Open Meeting.

CHARACTER AND VITALITY OF THE TOWN

Q1 What are the main landmarks or distinctive buildings in the town?

Identify the key features that are visually or culturally important and whether these are in good condition

ANSWER

This is an extremely difficult question to answer simply. Some of the landmarks and most distinctive buildings in the town are distinctive because their appearance is at odds with the overall character of Wolverton as a Victorian/Edwardian railway town.

The main eyesore landmarks identified were:

- ◆ The Agora - built at odds to the grid system of the town and providing an impasse that divides the town in two. A dominant building in the town centre that all public consultation reveals to be universally disliked.
- ◆ Foundation House, although well used, is an unattractive, inappropriately 1970's building, ex supermarket, which replaced the Victorian Congregational Church at the north end of the Square.
- ◆ The Gables - a 1960's high rise block of flats literally sticks out like a sore thumb. Ironically it is the one building that can be seen from a distance.
- ◆ Glyn Square shops - 1970's system building created with materials that do not fit in with Wolverton's distinctive character.
- ◆ The old Co-op in the Square - left empty for a number of years, its appearance and lack of activity has a profound effect on the vitality and potential of the Square.



The Agora, Church Street side

The subsequent list is divided into different categories and includes those buildings which the Working Group believes are visually or culturally important to the town rated in order of importance. Most of them reflect the distinctive character of Wolverton as a railway town.

SHOPS

1. Candy Box, Stratford Road (but needs attention)
2. The Funeral Company, Stratford Road
3. Stratford Road Garage, Stratford Road
4. Valentine's Stratford Road
5. New City Graphics Stratford Road
6. Maisies (ex Co-op art deco shop Church Street)
7. Parade of single storey shops Stratford Road (balustrade needs replacing and coordinated shop improvements scheme needed)
8. A number of small shops in the Square which have been partially restored with help from the Shopfronts Scheme.
9. Tesco's - large brick built supermarket with some decoration reflecting the railway site on which it was built - more a curse than a blessing to the town shopkeepers, but well used by local residents and by people from far afield - unfortunately the site largely isolates the supermarket shoppers from the rest of Wolverton.
10. Inside Out - housed in the old Railway Building - hard to find behind Glyn Square.



The Funeral Company premises

FARMHOUSES/MUSEUMS/WINDMILLS

1. MK Museum (Stacey Hill) + barn
2. Manor Farm (now MK Parks Trust)
3. Windmill (new Bradwell, hinterland)
4. Watermill (Old Wolverton)



Wyvern School, Aylesbury Street

SCHOOLS

1. Wyvern School and Nursery
2. Parts of Bushfield School and grounds
3. Old Wolverton School and Schoolhouse

SPORTS FACILITIES AND RECS

1. Wolverton Park Recreation Ground has an early cycle track, the lodge house and early wooden Grandstand 1899, believed to be earliest surviving in country - it is badly in need of restoration)
2. Scout Hut, Cambridge Street

RAILWAY STRUCTURES

1. ALL RAILWAY BUILDINGS INCLUDING:
 - ◆ Former Royal train shed (listed, derelict)
 - ◆ The Triangle (listed, derelict)
 - ◆ Former Rail building now Flex Appeal
 - ◆ Old Saw Mill and other Works buildings alongside canal (need to be listed, derelict)
 - ◆ The Railway Works Wall
 - ◆ Viaduct – Stephenson’s structure (listed)
 - ◆ The Bathhouse
 - ◆ LNWR Fire Station next to Bath House
 - ◆ Small Railway building McConnell Drive/Church Street (in need of restoration)
 - ◆ Blue Bridge (listed but in need of restoration)
 - ◆ Skew Bridge (listed)



Former Royal Train shed

HOUSES AND BACKWAYS

VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN HOUSES AND STRUCTURES SET IN GRID SQUARE PATTERN particularly:

- ◆ Oxford Street
- ◆ Stratford Road
- ◆ The Backways
- ◆ Horse stableblock /garages
- ◆ The Elms, Green Lane - architect Swinfen Harris
- ◆ Individual houses:
 - Former Methodist Manse in Church St, double fronted with ornate brickwork
 - The Town Council offices Church St.– similar to above
 - Double fronted house corner of Moon Street former Congregational Manse
 - House in Moon Street similar to above
 - Former Vicarage Holy Trinity Church, Old Wolverton
 - The Beeches, Green Lane
- ◆ Water Tower Green Lane



Oxford Street

CHURCHES

1. Holy Trinity Church, Old Wolverton
2. St George’s Church and Vicarage, St George’s Way
3. Wesleyan Methodist Church Church Street (redundant - currently being considered for new use)
4. Former Vicarage Holy Trinity Church, Old Wolverton
5. West End Methodist Church, Church Street
6. St Frances de Sales Catholic Church Radcliffe Street
7. Word of Faith – ex cinema, Stratford Road
8. The Mosque (ex Post Office) Church Street



Holy Trinity Church

PUBLIC HOUSES/HOTELS

1. Zaks (former Queen Vic) Church Street
2. The Crauford Arms, Stratford Road
3. The Galleon Old Wolverton
4. Greek Villager (former Royal Engineer) Stratford Road
5. North Western pub, Stratford Road

CLUBS/INSTITUTES/FORMER CINEMAS/

1. Cinema, Stratford Road (now Word of Faith - see above)
2. Cinema, Church Street (now shop)
3. Madcap (former St George's Institute)
4. Working Men's Club Stratford Road
5. Working Men's Club Western Road
6. Freemasons, The Square



Lanterns in the Square

Q2 What are the focal points of the town?

ANSWER

- ◆ The Town Square is the venue for the annual Music/Arts Festival in July and the Lantern Festival in December. Young people tend to congregate there at nights.
- ◆ Shops are focal points - Tescos, Nettos and the much maligned Agora. Although the Friday market has been virtually destroyed at the Agora site, people come from the hinterland on Friday to shop and visit the few remaining stalls and go to the WI market in the Old Bath House Community Centre.
- ◆ The Library is seen as an important community facility and focal point but the Council has reduced its opening hours.

There are a number of centres where community groups meet:

- The Old Bath House Community Centre - one of the busiest community centres in Milton Keynes that includes the Age Concern drop-in facility
- MADCAP - a young people's arts centre and music studio which houses theatre and dance classes, rehearsals and performances.
- The Scout Hall at the top end of Cambridge Street houses cubs, brownies, scouts and guides as well as other community groups
- The two working mens' clubs in Stratford Road and Western Road
- The Meacham Centre run by the Red Cross provides day care for the elderly

There are a number of eating places, takeaways and pubs:

- On Stratford Road: The Greek Villager Restaurant, Millennium Chinese Takeaway Restaurant, the Regency Diner, the North Western Hotel, Dixie Chicken, the Silver Sea Chinese takeaway, Dom's Fish Bar and the Crauford Arms Hotel
- On Church Street: The Eastern Paradise Indian Restaurant, Eastern Express Chinese takeaway, Gregory's Fish and Chip shop, the Burger Bar, Zaks, Agora Cafés, the Sizzling Wok Mongolian Restaurant and Café Balti
- The Working Lunch in the Square
- The Galleon, Old Wolverton Road



The Working Lunch in the Square

There are facilities for sport and recreation:

- Two Recreation grounds at Stacey Hill and at the top of Western Road
- The Wolverton Sports Club in Osborne Street has tennis, cricket and bowls facilities and 500 members of whom 200 are active members
- Milton Keynes FC and the oldest Bowls' Club in Buckinghamshire are based at Wolverton Park.
- An open air swimming pool at the top of Aylesbury Street West
- A private snooker club above the old Coop in the Square
- A gym in Glyn Square
- A ladies' gym in the Agora



'Flex Appeal' gym in former Railway laundry building

There are 8 Schools within the Wolverton area

- Radcliffe School which is also used extensively for adult education
- Bushfield School which also has an after school club and fields that are used by local sports clubs
- Wyvern School that also has a nursery. Its school hall is the largest fairly central public meeting facility in the town

Greenleys First School in Ardwell Lane, Greenleys
 Greenleys Middle School off Marron Lane Greenleys
 St Mary Magdalene - a Roman Catholic School in Ardwell Lane
 Greenleys
 Slated Row School - a special needs school in Old Wolverton Road



The Word of Faith Ministry building in former cinema

There are a number of buildings used for religious and community activities:

- The Mosque on a Friday has more than 400 worshippers
- St George's Church houses a daily playgroup as well as worship activities
- Foundation House in the Square is a popular venue for community meetings, mothers and toddlers group as well as Foundation Training
- The URC Church in the Square is the venue for church related groups as well as worship
- The West End Methodist Church in Church Street is the venue for church related groups
- The Word of Faith Ministry holds very popular church activities (old Cinema in Stratford Road, see above)
- The Covenant Fellowship meets in the former Labour Exchange building in the backway connecting Church Street and Stratford Road near the former Lloyds Bank

Q 3 Is there an historic core to the town? Identify areas with strong historic associations

ANSWER

The railway town of Wolverton is the last of three distinct settlements of widely spaced periods:

- A** the medieval settlement, fronting onto the River Ouse, now a Scheduled Ancient Monument
- B** the post medieval settlement of which a small number of scattered farmhouses, a church and a mill survive
- C** the industrial town, surviving parts of which date mainly from between 1860 and 1910

Most of the Victorian/Edwardian part of Wolverton is now a Conservation area. This area was built within a few decades in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, largely under the aegis of the London & North Western Railway Company. The railway town of Wolverton as an historic area derives from the following attributes:



The skew bridge in Old Wolverton Road

- ◆ A compact area of houses, originally built for railway workers, and integral social and educational facilities. It is a remarkable ensemble of industrial, social and architectural history. As an example of corporate, phased town planning in terms of its layout, it has few parallels outside the industrial areas of the North or Midlands, and is certainly rare in the Southern half of England
- ◆ Its location as a critical component of the world's earliest railway developments.
- ◆ The combination of the surviving carriage Works buildings and structures, mainly within their walled enclosure,
- ◆ The physical survival of some of its earliest built elements, including bridges and viaducts built under Robert Stephenson's direction
- ◆ The survival of the pattern of development and range of buildings from its zenith of growth and production
- ◆ The portrayal of technological and social history represented in the buildings and layout of the town
- ◆ The concentration of a number of industrial, public and religious buildings of special architectural and historic interest
- ◆ The interest of a collection of building forms, functions and spaces which are unique in the region
- ◆ The relationship of the town to part of the Grand Union Canal which runs through it
- ◆ The archaeological potential to recover further evidence of Robert Stephenson's and other early important works
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- ◆ The archaeological potential to receive further evidence of Robert Stephenson's and other early important work

Q4 Are there any individual and/or groups of buildings which display design, detailing or materials which give the town distinctive character? Identify where these buildings are and their key distinguishing features

ANSWER This question has been answered in Question 1. In addition a characterisation study has been carried out in parallel with the Healthcheck process, the results of which give a much more detailed answer to the question.

Q5 Are there are unattractive areas in the town? Identify specific buildings or areas that are in need of attention and find out from the District Council whether there are any specific proposals to revitalise/develop them

ANSWER There are a number of unattractive buildings and areas in the town:

- ◆ The Agora Centre in Church Street - an inappropriate building whose location splits the town in two and interrupts traffic flow north to south. The building is poorly maintained, graffiti; litter; faulty lighting - creating a threatening and dirty environment, particularly in the evening. The central pedestrian link between the north and south of Town is avoided by many residents. *As part of the Town Centre improvements a new linkway between Church St and the Square is being installed with improved lighting and fencing*
- ◆ The Agora car park and bus station. Poorly maintained landscaping, litter and graffiti make this an unsightly area. The footpath to the Church and thence to the rest of the town is overgrown and threatening. Parked buses emit fumes, block the street and are hazardous to pedestrians. *As part of the Town Centre improvements the car park and bus waiting areas are being redesigned and overhauled.*
- ◆ Station area . The historic Victorian railway building was demolished, wall gap bodged, no building to replace, ugly footbridges and car park. Needs to be considered as an important gateway to the town and large investment made in it.
- ◆ The Old Co-op in the Square – mostly empty and unlet. *There are plans to have a coordinated design approach and maybe reinstate original features with HERS money.*
(It should be noted that the above buildings/areas are owned or controlled by the same group of companies)
- ◆ The Library is in a building of poor design that is a poor condition. Plans to relocate it to the old Coop were thwarted. The house on Church Street (see *distinctive houses, Question 1*) is now occupied by the Town Council. *Plans to renovate the exterior of the building under the HERS scheme.*
- ◆ Glyn Square – 70's style shops in industrial style building. Lots of graffiti, looks run down and another key building at entrance to the town.
- ◆ Many of the service roads/ backways are desperately in need of updating and maintaining. Many back walls of houses are in a poor state of repair. *MK Council has spent a little money on improving some of the backways in an on-going programme. NB Backways are classified as roads.*
- ◆ Stratford Road - the road that runs along the edge of the town and is the view that most casual visitors and passers by get of the town is in need of attention
 - The brick walls on Stratford Road at the eastern gateway to the town are ugly and uninviting. The grey metal bridge over McConnell Drive should be opened up to give a view across to the north.
 - Former electricity showroom in Stratford Road - former shop allowed to be turned into a residential property and the owner has done it badly - in prime site in town's 'front window' in Stratford Road.
 - Empty shops on Stratford Road - the town's front window. It does give an impression of the town



The former Co-op building in the Square



Glyn Square shopping development

- being run down to the passer by.
- Car showrooms along the Stratford Road - an unfortunate planning decision - form an inappropriate gateway to the town from the west. Cars are parked on grass verges and on landscaping, garish promotional materials. They really need to be relocated or subject to more stringent planning control.
 - Some of the houses in Stratford Road need tidying up and their frontages could possibly be restored i.e. wrought iron fences and gates
 - Tescos entrance from the Stratford Road, newly completed and already looking very grubby, uninviting and full of litter
 - Bus shelters on Stratford Road need painting
 - Metal shutters on Grafton cycles needs painting and a new sign
 - Former Cinema on Stratford Road - now the Word of Faith Ministries church needs renovation perhaps reinstating the original entrance.
 - The Candy Box, an interesting shop building with an oriel window, needs considerable renovation
 - Houses on Stratford Road - recently and inappropriately painted bright blue and yellow. .
- ◆ All old rail buildings are in a dangerously poor state - but it is hoped that they may be renovated sympathetically and found new uses in the future.
 - ◆ Gables - late 1960's tower block that is at odds architecturally with the rest of the town
 - ◆ Football Grandstand, (see distinctive sports building) needs restoration.
 - ◆ McCorquodales, the good facade with original railing could be restored to its original state
 - ◆ Wesleyan Church on Church St next to Madcap. A fine building that has been left empty for some time. *There are plans to give it a new life, possibly in a link up with Madcap next door.*
 - ◆ Back of Madcap on Church Street - *see comment above*
 - ◆ Cemetery area, particularly walls, need restoration.



The former Electricity Board showroom, Stratford Road

Q6 Are there any distinctive features which define the limits of the town, such as historic walls, a river or a bypass? Identify whether the boundary of the town is clearly defined.

ANSWER

There are inner and outer boundaries to the town, but they are not distinctive or clearly defined. The A5 bridge over the Wolverton Road to the west; the River Ouse to the north; Miller's Way (H2 Milton Keynes Grid Road) to the south; Stonebridge Farm to the east, mark the outer boundaries. The distinctive housing of the Victorian town defines much of the inner boundary

Q7 Are the buildings, streets and furniture in the town centre in good condition? Are there opportunities to enhance these? Identify both areas and aspects which are in need of action.

ANSWER

AREAS IN NEED OF ACTION IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Buildings/Streets

- ◆ Some of the Square shop fronts need restoration, renovation. These shops are adversely affected by the position of the Agora (see Q5)
- ◆ The Agora and car park (see above)
- ◆ Church Street badley affected by the Agora (see Q5)
- ◆ Former electricity showrooms in Stratford Road and a number of shops are in poor condition and/or empty (see Q5)
- ◆ Stratford Road requires improvement and design co-ordination. English Heritage have expressed desire to integrate/renovate the area between the Greek Villager and Valentine's shop at the corner of Radcliffe Street as part of HERS scheme.



Car showrooms in Stratford Road

- ◆ Wesleyan Methodist Church left empty – derelict – requires maintenance
- ◆ Service roads (backways) require urgent attention
- ◆ Street furniture
- ◆ All street signage needs to be surveyed and largely replaced with well designed signs, both giving directions and information.



A gateway to the town that needs improvement, the Stratford Road leading from the station

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

- ◆ Glyn Square and particularly back area - health and safety issues with dumping of rubbish etc.
- ◆ There are opportunities in place to enhance shop fronts with a grant from Wolverton SRB that is administered by the Wolverton Society (30 out of 65 shops have received grants)
- ◆ SRB money will be used to make a walkway linking Church Street to Buckingham Street and the Square and to improve the Agora car park and bus stopping facilities.
- ◆ The Town Council is to provide more litter/dog dirt bins and have employed someone to tackle graffiti
- ◆ English Heritage have given £75,000 HERS funding for 3 years (matched by local funds) to enhance local buildings/streetscape to improve economic regeneration

Q8 Are the 'main gateways' to the town centre attractive and well maintained (including trains and bus stations) Are there opportunities to enhance these? Identify particular routes and locations in need of improvement

ANSWER

The town has no maintained, identifying 'Gateways'. All town entrances need attention to make them Gateways:

- ◆ The railway station needs to be reassessed and designed both as an accessible facility and as an important town gateway. The grey wall and grey bridge between the Station and Tesco's needs attention. As a gateway it is a disaster.
- ◆ The Secret Garden crossing and entrance/viewing platform in Stratford Road should be an important gateway in association with the Railway Station
- ◆ Car showroom end of Stratford Road (see Q5). Could be improved by landscaping, if impossible to relocate. Continual parking of cars on grass verges, garish promotional materials could be improved by better landscaping.
- ◆ McConnell Drive south side is particularly drab and ugly, this could be improved by current owners, perhaps incorporating theme of Railway history.
- ◆ McConnell Drive/Church St junction is desolate – needs new landscaping design and renovation of old railway building
- ◆ Gloucester Road is regarded as a 'backdoor' entry for residents - not ideal to encourage more vehicles through back roads.



Carter & Lucas the butchers' shopfront before and after improvement with the help of SRB money

Q9 Are the main pedestrian routes between car parks and the town centre attractive, well maintained and safe to use during the day and night? Identify areas for improvement

ANSWER

See Answers to Q5.

- ◆ The Agora building, car park, associated areas and footpaths urgently need assessment, redesign and maintenance.
- ◆ There are pockets of darkness on the streets because the old street lighting is inadequate
- ◆ The shops' side of Church Street requires lighting to work in conjunction with the CCTV cameras
- ◆ Although lighting was recently installed in backways, some people consider lighting inadequate, however complaints have also been made about light pollution. Backways are in urgent need of renovation to surfaces, drainage, walls.

- ◆ The area beside the cemetery and allotments is very dark and additional lighting is required.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q10 Are there any townscape or heritage initiatives underway in the town? Identify the areas which are to be improved

ANSWER

SRB funding for:

- Shop fronts in town centre Wolverton
- Improved walkway proposed from Church Street linking Buckingham Street and The Square
- Improvements to Church Street/Stratford Road

New Opportunities Fund (via Countryside Agency) for:

- Secret Garden

HERS funding for 3 years to make townscape improvements



The magnificent copper beech trees at 'The Beeches'

Q11 Is the town centre dominated by shops or are there a range of other uses which take place such as housing and employment? Identify whether there is a diverse mix of uses in the town centre

ANSWER

- ◆ Church Street is a mixture of shops, pub and eating places and houses.
- ◆ Stratford Road is a mixture of houses, shops including Tesco's Supermarket, major industry (Alstom Railway Works, Mc Corquodale's Printing works), garages, car showrooms, pubs and a large community centre.
- ◆ The Square has shops (including the back of the Agora), a church and Foundation House, a cafe, a snooker hall and a number of flats above the shops.
- ◆ There are a number of corner shops, most of which are run by members of the Asian community
- ◆ There is a lack of small business premises/offices but there is potential. The Garage/stable blocks and empty flats above shops would make ideal work/office spaces for small businesses.



Trees in Oxford Street

Q12 Are there areas in the town which are over-cluttered with signs, street furniture, advertising hoardings etc? Identify areas where signage and street furniture could be rationalised or new signage or street furniture provided

ANSWER

- ◆ An overall scheme is required to co-ordinate signing for residents and visitors. The existing signs are currently cluttered and confused.
- ◆ The Car showrooms/garage area is awash with large and ugly signs - which is unfortunate as it is one of the town's gateways.
- ◆ The large hoarding on the side of Unwin's at the bottom of Cambridge Street is covering architectural features.



Medieval village site looking towards motte and bailey castle mound

Q13 Are there important groups of trees which are either covered by Tree Preservation Orders or are important to the character of the town? Identify where trees add character to the town

ANSWER

- ◆ Trees within the Agora Car Park (all in need of professional pruning attention) - have TPO
- ◆ The Square
- ◆ Wyvern School – Judas Tree, cherry trees and many shrubs add interest and character to the Victorian school grounds
- ◆ Two magnificent Copper Beech trees at Beeches in Western Road
- ◆ Cedar of Lebanon at Museum

- ◆ Avenue of horse chestnuts at Secret Garden
- ◆ Horse Chestnuts in the Wolverton Park
- ◆ American Walnut and Cedar of Lebanon at Holy Trinity Church Old Wolverton
- ◆ Trees partially camouflaging The Gables flats on roundabout in front
- ◆ Beeches and horse chestnuts in St George’s churchyard
- ◆ Planted brick containers in Oxford Street and Bedford Street, containing various trees and shrubs (now in need of attention) greatly enhance the streetscape
- ◆ Various surprisingly large decorative trees growing in town gardens, i.e magnolias, holly, lilac, eucalyptus - these trees enhance the backways.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

Q1 What is the local countryside’s distinctive character? Identify what makes it distinctive and attractive.

ANSWER

In an area between Manor Farm to the east and Holy Trinity Church to the west lies a motte and bailey castle, deserted village and monastic grange. The deserted village next to the castle survives as extensive and well-preserved earthworks within which roadways, house platforms, boundaries and field systems can be clearly identified. The second area to the north east and separated by the canal consists of earthworks surrounding the manor farm. Hollow trackways, a pond, building platforms and field systems can be identified. The area also contains the remains of a grange of the Gilbertine order.

A parkland and walk area near the Manor Farm is designated as an area of beauty leading to the river. The character of the Ouse Valley Park is predominantly open floodplain pasture, the floodplain being sharply defined on the Wolverton side by a limestone escarpment.

At Wolverton Mill, a more enclosed feel is created by hedges and smaller fields, some of which are managed as traditional hay meadows. Earthworks associated with the creation of the Grand Union Canal still survive.

Q2 Is the landscape of high quality? Identify areas of high landscape quality

ANSWER

Following a landscape assessment by the MK Council the Ouse Valley Park has been noted in the Local Plan as an area of locally attractive landscape.

The presence of the railway, caravan park and the industrial estate prevented the parkland from attaining the designation as an Area of Attractive Landscape.

All landscaped areas adjoining main grid roads in the new town area surrounding Wolverton have been designated wildlife areas. The area at Wolverton adjacent to Manor Farm and Holy Trinity Church is a scheduled ancient monument.



The viaduct built by Robert Stephenson overlooking the Ouse Valley Park

Q3 Is the countryside important for agriculture? Identify areas of high quality agricultural land 1,2 and 3a

ANSWER

Manor House Farm and Manor Farm Cottages down to the River Ouse; the area from Wolverton to the North i.e. Haversham/Castlethorpe; the area from New Bradwell (north of Wolverton) to Stantonbury are all classed agricultural Grade 3 land. Most of the Ouse Valley Park is farmed by local farmers under licence from MK Parks Trust. This is seen as the best way to manage the landscape for amenity, landscape and conservation purposes. Obtaining high agricultural yields from the land is not seen as a priority.



Secret Garden site

Q4 Is the Countryside important for nature conservation? Identify areas which have national, regional or local wildlife designations. Identify areas important for wildlife

ANSWER

The Ouse Valley Park is important as both a habitat for wildlife and as a conduit that allows the spread of plants and movement of animals. It is designated in the local plan as a Wildlife Corridor. All grid road landscaping are designated in MK Council Local Plan as wildlife corridors. (See "The Wildlife Corridors of Milton Keynes" 1996 for a detailed description of the River Ouse Corridor, including areas of higher and lower conservation value and a map showing its boundaries).

A Natural History site is located in the Manor Farm area of Old Wolverton – local wildlife, bats, badger, barn owl, bluebell, Bee Orchid and Black Poplar. New Bradwell (Hinterland) Railway Cutting is a Milton Keynes Wildlife Site



A view across the River Ouse into Wolverton

Q5 Are there areas of historic importance? Identify areas with concentrations of Listed Buildings, Conservation areas, historic parkland, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and areas of archaeological importance. Identify areas of historic or architectural importance.

ANSWER

There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Ouse Valley Park near Manor Farm. There are ancient fishponds at Warren Farm.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q6 Is the countryside being actively managed? Identify areas being actively managed to maintain and improve the environmental quality of the countryside

ANSWER

The Ouse Valley Park is managed by the MK Parks Trust. Unusually for the public park, the section of the Ouse Valley Park between the canal and the A5D was entered into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 1998. This is a Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs scheme that offers grants to farmers and land managers to improve the natural beauty and diversity of the countryside.

Its objectives are to:

- ◆ Sustain the beauty and diversity of the landscape;
- ◆ Improve and extend wildlife habitats;
- ◆ Conserve archaeological sites and historic features;
- ◆ Improve opportunities for countryside enjoyment;
- ◆ Restore neglected land or features;
- ◆ Create new habitats and landscapes



A view down the Grand Union canal towards the Iron Trunk

The meadows and pasture are now managed in the traditional way without the use of herbicides or artificial fertilizer and the numbers of grazing animals is restricted for conservation purposes and to prevent damage to the Scheduled Ancient Monument. In order to improve the biodiversity of the area further, wildflower seed was sown onto the two fields adjacent to the river in 2000. Even though they are still in the early stages of establishment, the flowers have added colour and interest to this part of the Ouse Valley Park. These meadows are cut for hay so that the wildflower will persist in the future. The Parks Trust is also rejuvenating all the hedges in the Ouse Valley Park at Wolverton and New Bradwell by either coppicing and replanting or laying them. The aim is to be able to lay all the hedges in the future on a rotation. This ensures their longevity in the landscape and improves their value for many nesting birds. (Information supplied by MK Parks Trust)

Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust manage the reserve next to the A5D primarily for conservation. (Subject to a review of the lease that terminates in September 2002).

A Secret Garden Doorstep Green is being planned by the Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council and the Wolverton Society for Arts & Heritage on a derelict piece of land alongside the Grand Union Canal off the Stratford Road opposite the site of the former Victorian station.

ENVIRONMENT

Q7 Do community groups participate in the management of the countryside? Is there potential to expand that contribution?

ANSWER

Volunteers work with MK Parks Trust in many different ways. They give nearly 1,000 hours per year. Tasks range from helping to ensure parks remain safe and enjoyable for everyone to use to helping out with varied events programmes and with practical and conservational work.

- ◆ At Manor Farm some of the river bends have been fenced and volunteers have planted native shrubs and trees to provide cover for otters
- ◆ Volunteers have built otter holts at various points along the River in the Ouse Valley Park and the MK Parks Trust has also sponsored barn owl and kestrel boxes
- ◆ There may be scope for community groups to assist the MK Parks Trust with hedge planting and coppicing in the Ouse Valley Park
- ◆ The Secret Garden Doorstep Green will involve volunteers in both its creation and management.

QUESTION 8 Are there plans for major change on the urban edge? Identify areas on the urban fringe that may change in character

ANSWER

There is a plan for a major change to the urban edge with proposals for gravel extraction in the Ouse Valley Park at Old Wolverton.

There are two opposing views as to the effects that this development will have. On the one hand the opposition states that the water meadows, a major Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, will be obliterated permanently. The actual process of extraction could be going on for at least 10 years and will affect people's enjoyment of the Ouse Valley Park area.

On the other hand the project's proposers, the MK Parks Trust, see the long term aim as changing the existing landscape and restoring it to floodplain forest – the natural and most bio-diverse ecosystem in Europe. They say the project will also create new recreational and educational opportunities. As the first of its kind in the UK it has the potential to attract nature tourists to Milton Keynes.

LINKS BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTRY

Q1 Are there natural or man made features such as rivers, canals, roads or railway corridors that link the town and country? Identify elements which link the town and country both physically and visually.

ANSWER

There are several links that link the town and country both visually and physically:

- ◆ The railway viaduct
- ◆ The canal and the Iron Trunk aqueduct
- ◆ The Haversham Road
- ◆ The Stratford Road
- ◆ The A5D
- ◆ Footpaths and particularly the Sustrans cycle Route 6 that goes out towards Castlethorpe

Q2 Are there any distinctive design elements found in both the town and the surrounding countryside? (Identify the presence of distinctive local house types, local architectural detailing and use of local materials) Identify common features that provide visual continuity between development in the town and country and where they are to be found e.g. which villages

ANSWER

All Victorian houses are built in a terraced grid system and are built with local red brick, many once made in the Kiln Farm area. Blue engineering bricks were extensively used on roads, pavements and garden paths. Roofs were originally made of slate and some were topped with fancy red ridge tiles. Iron railings were used on tops of front walls. The vast majority of the iron railings were taken away for the war effort in the Second World War. Many houses are dated and contain ornate patterns to brickwork and fronts of houses.

The houses in the town were built originally by the London & Birmingham Railway Company and its successor the London & North Western Railway Company to accommodate their workers. The early original workmen's houses have disappeared but many from the 1880's onwards remain. In 1878 the Wolverton Permanent Building Society was formed and small plots of land were sold to build individual houses or small clusters of houses. The grid pattern was continued and the red brick, blue engineering bricks and slate materials continued to be used. The main visible difference was that the new houses had front bay windows and were larger than their predecessors.

Later developments - Stacey Avenue, Marina Drive etc. in the 1930's and the Galleon estate in the 1960's did not reflect the style or the materials and finishes of the railway town housing. The latest development of houses at College Fields, while containing design details that do not occur in the original houses, are built in red brick and have faux slate roofs.

St George's Church is built in stone not redbrick and has Hollington Stone dressing and extensive use of local course squared Cosgrove stone for walling. The roof and spire are clad in slate. Pre-Railway housing in old Wolverton extensively uses local Cosgrove stone although Holy Trinity Church has much Warwickshire sandstone, transported to the site from the Midlands via the canal.

Many of the villages in the hinterland have houses made from local stone although Hanslope and Castlethorpe also has many late 19th century terrace houses built in red brick. Neighbouring New Bradwell was originally a satellite railway village with houses built from the 1860's onward by the Railway Company. The materials and appearance of the houses are similar to Wolverton although most are generally smaller in size and not built in such a rigid geometric street pattern.



Some of the old rail buildings alongside the canal

Q3 Are there any memorable views either from the town to the countryside or from the countryside to the town? Identify memorable views in terms of what they are views of and where the view can be seen from.

ANSWER

From the countryside to the town:

- ◆ The Gables flats from Cosgrove and the Sustrans route to Castlethorpe

From the town to the country

- ◆ MK Museum out towards City Centre
- ◆ Wolverton Mill across fields towards Cosgrove
- ◆ Manor Farm across the Ouse Valley to Hanslope and Cosgrove
- ◆ Views from the Iron Trunk Aqueduct and the rear of Manor Farm across the Ouse Valley
- ◆ Galleon Bridge northwards up the Canal
- ◆ Top of Station Hill towards New Bradwell and the surrounding countryside to the north
- ◆ Wolverton Mill industrial estate – see down towards lake
- ◆ From the top of Anson Road, Windsor St, Jersey Road and others you can see northwards to Hanslope Church spire.
- ◆ The view down to the river meadows from the area of parkland next to the motte and bailey is particularly good, although partially screened by the agro-forestry research planting adjacent to the canal embankment. This planting is due to be thinned in 2002 and then radically reduced by 2006. There have also been discussions with Holy Trinity Church about open up views to and from the grounds of the church to the valley. (*information from the MK Parks Trust*)

Q4 Are historic commercial links between the town and country still apparent? Identify strong commercial associations between town and country

ANSWER

There is still evidence of the main arteries for commercial links between town and country. The main London to Birmingham railway runs along the edge of the town and the viaduct across the Ouse is an important local landmark. The canal was once an important artery for commerce with materials to the Railway Works being

delivered to a wharf at the Works and materials to build local houses and public buildings arriving by this route too. It is still an important source of tourism. Roads link Wolverton to the villages in the hinterland to the north and to Stony Stratford and the A5 Watling Street to the west. The original Market Hall was burnt down and its successor was until recently occupied by a local training organisation. The traditional Friday Market has largely disappeared, but there is a weekly Friday WI Market that brings both producers and buyers from neighbouring areas.

The strongest historic commercial links between the town and country were the Railway Works and the Printing Works that provided employment for many thousands of men and women who lived in the Wolverton hinterland.

Q5 Does the character of the surrounding countryside become less distinct the closer it gets to the town edge? Identify areas where the quality of the countryside has been diminished by edge-of-town activities

ANSWER

The Railway Works ends the countryside at the side of the Grand Union Canal and 'starts' the town. There is a complete distinction between the two. The Old Wolverton industrial estate, built in the 1960's on the other side of the canal from the Railway Works, also creates a sharp division between town and country.

The proposed commercial extraction of gravel at Old Wolverton will threaten the character of the surrounding countryside's distinctiveness for a number of years. The character of

parkland at Wolverton balancing lakes is diminished by the views of the adjacent industrial site at Wolverton Mill. It could be argued that the character of the parkland at Manor Farm, is diminished by the development of Cosgrove Caravan Site in the hinterland.

Q6 How does the town sit in the landscape? Are there opportunities to enhance the urban edge by, for example, planting or even development that will make the town more attractive? Identify key views of the town for approach roads and identify opportunities to enhance and manage the fringes of the town.

ANSWER

Wolverton sits on a natural terrace looking North and East towards Ouse Valley Park and countryside.

There are several opportunities to enhance and manage the fringes of the town:

- The Blue Bridge (a listed structure) although redundant, needs to be restored and integrated into the Redway system and as a pedestrian link with Blue Bridge housing
- The development of the Secret Garden on the Stratford Road offers the opportunity for a new footway link across the canal from the towpath that is a disabled friendly and green and pleasant gateway to the town. Likewise the proposed road treatment and crossing to the Secret Garden could provide an important and attractive area associated with the Railway gateway to the town.
- The western gateway, which is dominated by car showrooms and garages, is dealt with in Qs 5&8
- The future development of old Railway buildings alongside the canal corridor is a major opportunity to make the town attractive to visitors by canal. There will also be an opportunity to create better links by bridging the canal
- The old EMEB site alongside the canal offers a major opportunity to enhance one of the fringes of the town
- Gloucester Road is a 'back door' to Wolverton and possibly it needs to be kept less conspicuous to deter too much traffic from entering the town through streets of housing
- McConnell Drive is currently an unattractive entrance and more thought could be given to making it attractive and at the same time providing an interesting and pleasant pedestrian link between the Museum and the town

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q7 Are there any long distance or locally important footpaths, cycle paths or bridleways linking town and country? Identify important recreational links between town and country.

ANSWER

The nearest link to the Redway system on the eastern edge of the town is at McConnell Drive. There are also Redway links from Stacey Bushes and Greenleys. The Redway system does not run through the old railway town so cyclists have to ride on the roadway and there is no signposting for pedestrians and cyclists within the town giving directions to neighbouring areas, including the paths through the Ouse Valley Park.

The national Sustrans cycle track is accessible at New Bradwell and Haversham and a new connection has been made to Castlethorpe but there is no clear signposting or an easy link directly from Wolverton.

The canal towpath runs along the eastern edge of the town but access from the towpath into Wolverton is currently up a set of metal steps that is not only impossible for wheelchairs, extremely difficult for pushchairs but is actually intimidating and steep for pedestrians. This is why the proposal to have a bridge linking the towpath to Wolverton via the Secret Garden Doorstep Green proved to be so popular in a recent community consultation.

In a general questionnaire completed by 86 people, local residents were asked the following questions relating to

Environment (see Appendix 1):

When you have family or friends visiting, to what part of Wolverton or its surroundings do you most often take them for a walk or something to do?

Most popular destination: The Canal

What is your own favourite place to go for a walk locally?

Most popular destination: The Canal and Riverside walk

POPULATION

Q1 What proportion of the total population live in the town compared to the hinterland? Identify where people live

ANSWER

59% of the total population live in the town

The number of people living in the town and surrounding areas are as follows:-

Wolverton	6,080
Old Wolverton	507
Greenleys	2,297
Stacey Bushes	1,439
Hodge Lea	1,282
TOTAL	11,605

Source: Bucks Health Authority Patient Registers population data April 2000

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

The 1991 Census of Population has Wolverton with 5.89% with of its population of ethnic origin as against MK Borough with 2.06%. We have not yet got the figures from the 2001 Census that we know, from personal experience, will tell a very different story. The Chairman of the Mosque tells us that there has been a large influx of principally Pakistani families over the last 2 years and he estimates there are now 150-200 families in the town. Wyvern First/Nursery School has 344 ethnic minority pupils on roll (21.8% of the total). Approximately 30% of their reception intake in September will be from ethnic minorities.

Q2 What proportion of the population is of retirement age i.e. over 65/60? Identify if this is high or low.

ANSWER

Higher than the Milton Keynes and Bucks County averages according to the 1991 Census

	Wolverton	M K Borough	County
60-64	4.46%	3.33%	3.91%
60-65	12.85%	9.98%	12.38%

Q3 What proportion of the population is under 16? Compare number of children under 16 with the total population of the area and then compare with regional and national averages. Info available from Census of Population. Identify if this is high or low

ANSWER

About the average for Milton Keynes and above the average for Bucks County according to the 1991 census.

	Wolverton	MK Borough	County
0-14	23.12%	23.7%	20.40%
15-19	7.16%	6.94%	7.06%

Source 1991 Census

Q4 What proportion of the population have professional and managerial jobs? Identify whether there is a high or low proportion of professional and managerial workers.

ANSWER

Low but rising. The 1991 Census shows a low figure in relation to the Milton Keynes average, but personal experience leads us to suspect that the influx of newcomers over the last 10 years will mean that the 2002 Census figures will show an increase in this figure.

	Wolverton	MK Borough	County
Professional Occupations	2.18%	5.45%	6.26%
Managerial & Technical	14.04%	23.77	28.51%

Source:1991 Census

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

Q5 What proportion of the population have semi-skilled manual, and unskilled jobs? Identify whether there is a high or low proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled workers

ANSWER

Fairly High combined skills. The 1991 Census shows a higher than average proportion of skilled workers in relation to other parts of Milton Keynes. This is presumably because of the relatively high number of local people employed in the local Railway and Printing works.

	Wolverton	MK Borough	County
Skilled Non manual	7.99%	10.52%	9.60%
Skilled Manual	23.49%	19.56%	16.78%
	Wolverton	MK Borough	County
Partly Skilled	13.80%	9.89%	7.26%
Unskilled	3.15%	2.88%	2.15%

Source: 1991 Census

Q6 What proportion of total households are elderly people living alone? Identify if there are a significant number of elderly people living alone

ANSWER

Higher than the Milton Keynes average.

Wolverton	MK Borough
11%	10%

Source: Household Composition BLPS Oct 1996

Q7 Has the population of the town and hinterland grown or declined in the last ten years?

ANSWER

Fairly static population – no significant increase or decrease in population of town and hinterland.

Source: Demographic Profile, Facts & Figures MK Council 1999/2000

HOUSING

Q1 Does the housing needs survey give an accurate picture of housing needs for both the town and hinterland?

ANSWER

The Milton Keynes Housing Needs Study 1999 does not specifically mention Wolverton or its hinterland. The study did show a gross housing requirement for over 15,800 homes over the 5 year period 1999-2003. The report's authors' research estimated that demand averages 3,170 additional dwellings each year over the 5 year period - a level considerably more than the additional 1950 additional homes needed each year (over the longer period to 2011) to meet the Structure Plan target.

It is estimated that almost 80% of the total shortfall will be for full owner-occupation, with a further 16% being for shared ownership and only 4% of the total being a shortfall for rented accommodation (predominantly private renting).

Q2 What types of houses/flats are currently available? (Identify the types of properties by type, size and tenure.) Identify how many and what types of housing are available and where these are, i.e. in town centre, town edge or hinterland settlements. Is there an under or over supply of housing of different types?

ANSWER

	Owner/occupied	Reg Soc. Landlord	Rented	Shared/owner	Rented	Shared/owner
WOLVERTON	2,176		17	2	350	1
GREENLEYS	420		51	27	333	16
STACEY BUSHES	205		292		149	0
HODGE LEA	207	75	2		193	22
HINTERLAND						
NEW BRADWELL	843		88	0	322	0

Source: MK Council 2002 Housing Tenure List

Housing for Sale availability and prices

Wolverton – Town Centre

2,3,4 bedroomed terraced family houses

1,2 bedroomed flats

Local estate agents report brisk trading with average prices between £100,000 - £160,000 for 2/3 bedroomed terraced houses. Joint income must be £30,000 for would-be purchasers at lower end of market. There is little on the market at present and what does become available is snapped up quickly. There is a shortage of one bedroomed flats in the area.

Hinterland prices start slightly lower at £85,000 for 2 bedroomed property. Properties on market in Stacey Bushes from £80,000. Greenleys start at around £80,000. New Bradwell has 2,3 bedroomed terraced houses £80,000 + plus (unusually) 1 large 4 bedroomed Victorian detached property at £500,000

Newer houses in Wolverton (i.e. Wolverton Mill) prices higher £185,00 - £200,000 plus.

West End (Stratford Road) is currently being developed and will provide 90 dwellings. Prices commences £100,000 plus. There will be 10 bungalows for affordable rent by William Sutton Trust Housing Association and will be available in approximately one year.

There is an under supply of all housing for sale available at present

Types of housing currently occupied

	Number	%
Detached House	260	5.79
Semi-detached house	931	20.75
Terraced house	2,723	60.69
Purpose built flat	511	11.39
Converted flat	52	1.16
Other dwelling (inclgd temporary)	14	0.31
TOTAL DWELLINGS	4,487	100%

Source:- Milton Keynes Council Facts and Figures 1999/2000

	Owner/occupied	Total Stock
WOLVERTON	2,176	2,546
GREENLEYS	420	847
STACEY BUSHES	205	646
HODGE LEA	207	499
HINTERLAND		
NEW BRADWELL	843	1,253

Source:MK Council Estimated Housing tenure as at 1 April 2001

Q3 How much new housing is being planned in your area and what type? (Identify areas where new housing is planned and note the number and type of housing).

ANSWER

Currently being built owner/occupancy - 1, 2 and 3 bedroomed town houses on outskirts of town on Stratford Road – 90 dwellings- to include 10 bungalows at affordable rent by William Sutton Trust Housing Assn.

The Local Plan has earmarked a site for possible housing in Marron Lane to supply 60 houses to include 30% affordable houses.

There are plans to possibly allocate sites for housing in the West end of the town and in the redevelopment of the former railway properties alongside the canal

The MK Council policy is to provide affordable housing, supported housing and housing for older people (bungalows and sheltered homes). The Council's targets will be 25 dwellings or residential sites of 1 hectare.

Any redevelopment proposals should comply with the following aims:

WOLVERTON WEST END

1. Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wolverton Conservation area
2. Minimise the traffic impact of development and improve links between the area and the rest of the town and adjacent grid squares
3. Ensure a high quality design
4. Improve leisure and recreational facilities within the West End area
5. Increase the amount and range of housing available in Wolverton
6. Promote mixed use development, consistent with the location of the area, adjoining existing residential areas

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

7. Support the regeneration of Wolverton Town

WOLVERTON RAILWAY WORKS AND RELATED LAND

The redevelopment proposals are the same as above with the addition of the following:

1 Improve public access to the Grand Union Canal

(Source Sarah Taylor- MK Council Local Planning Officer)

Q4 Is existing local housing, including affordable (social) in good condition? Identify areas in need of maintenance and restoration

ANSWER

Local housing is in varying conditions due to age and the fact that some houses have been occupied by the same local people for 70+ years and are in therefore need of "updating", i.e. damp course, central heating etc. As new people are moving in most of these problems are being tackled.

The 1991 Census showed that Wolverton had 16.3% houses without central heating (worst in MK except for remote villages) Stacey Bushes had 4.1% households sharing inside washing/toilet facilities (worst in MK except for remote villages) – this seems an odd figure for fairly new houses!

Greenleys rental housing stock suffers ongoing maintenance problems particularly in relation to exterior woodwork, tiling, cladding etc. exacerbated by design limitations.

Q5 Is local housing affordable? Compare local income levels with average house prices and rent levels

ANSWER

Local housing for sale is longer affordable by the local population. Six years ago a 3 bedroomed terraced property would sell for £45,000 now it is well over £100,000

Income levels for Wolverton area supplied by MK Job Centre

Example

Housing Assistant £10,-15,000pa

Driver/Labourer £12,000pa

Trainee Dental Nurse £4.50 ph

7.5 ton driver £13,000pa

Customer Service Asst £5 ph

Taxi Controller £5ph

Bar staff £4.50ph

Cleaner £5 ph

Fitter £14,500pa

Dental Nurse £5 per hour

Warehouse Assistant £10,500pa

Driver's mate £11,700 pa

Administrator £12,000 pa

Sales Asst £4.50 ph

FLT driver £5.50 ph

Security £6 ph

Local people can no longer afford private housing in Wolverton ward and privately owned housing represents the larger stock of housing available within the ward.

There is a sufficient supply of houses at market rents - 2 bedroomed flat £450 per month 3 Bedroomed house £550 per month

There are 17 properties bought through local agent specifically to rent out as a second property. There are also 17 other properties let in the area for other reasons

Source: Local Estate Agents Wolverton June 2002

Q6 Is homelessness a problem in the area? Identify whether homeless levels are significant. Identify where people are formally counted as homeless by LEAs compared with those that may be staying with friends and are without a home of their own.

ANSWER

For the period April 2001/2002, Wolverton ward homeless rehoused 107 people. These applications were made from Wolverton addresses. It is not possible to establish further that they were Wolverton Ward people. Wolverton accounted for only 3.2% of applications in total which is low compared to other areas.

There are 48 properties in use for homeless households. These are mainly in St George's Way and The Gables. They are mainly small families.

Asylum seekers are barred from making applications so will not feature in this group. It is not specifically recorded how many refugees live in Wolverton.

Criteria for acceptance as homeless is not simple. The Council is directed by Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and statutory instruments.

Additional Information from M Vine Housing Needs Officer:

60 applications for homeless housing received from Wolverton in 2001.

Housed for the following reasons:

EMERGENCIES	2
HOUSING ASSN & OTHER RENT ARREARS	2
MORTGAGE REPOSSESSION	2
NEW/SPLIT HOUSEHOLD	2
NON VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN	5
FRIENDS & FAMILY NO LONGER WILLING	18
LOSS OF RENTED/TIED ACCOMMODATION	2
PARENTS NO LONGER WILLING	3
TERMINATION OF ASSURED SHORTHOLD TENANCY	11
VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN	9
YOUNG PERSON LEAVING CARE	2

ETHNIC ORIGIN OF APPLICANTS

ASIAN	8
BLACK UK	3
OTHER	1
WHITE UK	47
?	1
TOTAL	60

The Ark in Wolverton supplies some homeless accommodation for teenagers via Social Services Northampton, Milton Keynes and MKC Homeless section. The number of local people using this facility is not available.

The Ark has been chosen as the MK Mayor's charity for 2002

Source: MK Council Homeless Dept July 2002

HINTERLAND

New Bradwell homeless rehoused for this period were 39.

QUESTION 7 Does the local council give priority to a local connection for affordable housing, i.e. do local people have priority in accessing affordable housing? Does this differ in settlements in the surrounding countryside and the town?

ANSWER

Basically, the Council says, the answer is "No". However, in some rural areas where affordable housing has been developed on an 'exception sites' basis, the answer is yes.

Q8 Is supported housing available to those who need it through special units eg for the elderly. Identify if there is a need to supply more specialist housing for the elderly? Identify if support is provided for people such as the elderly in their own homes. Is this provision sufficient?

ANSWER

There is a sheltered housing facility for elderly at Orchard House/Furze Way consisting of warden operated bed sits. There is no waiting list for elderly people to be accommodated within the Orchard House complex.

Across the road in Green Lane there are small independent flat units for the elderly at Bushfields.

10 Bungalows will become available later in 2002 through William Sutton Trust Housing Association on the West End (Stratford Road) development.

There are old people's bungalows in Furze Way for rent but some of these have been sold off.

There is a need for a nursing home facility for the elderly in the Wolverton Ward.

There is also no accommodation and support for those with mental illness and behavioural problems that are not acute –eg like Richmond Fellowship in Stony Stratford.

Care for the elderly is available in different forms. The Red Cross provides day care for the elderly at the Meacham Day Centre. Age Concern provides a weekly day centre for the elderly in Wolverton and the hinterland at the Old Bath House Community Centre and for the other 4 weekdays a drop in with hot meals served at the same venue.

There is support at home for the elderly. Age Concern also offers help in the form of small household tasks, pension collection etc by volunteers. MK Council organisers carer help in people's homes to assist with such tasks as getting up and into bed. The Health Authority provides District/Community nursing at home. Meals on wheels are also on offer.

We were not aware of any complaints about the standard and supply of services to the elderly locally.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

Q9 Is there a significant level of second home ownership or holiday lets locally or in particular areas? Identify if there is a high number of homes not available to the local population.

ANSWER

There are no known second homes or holiday lets in Wolverton.

Q 10 Is there a high level of vacancy or empty houses? Identify if there are opportunities to bring existing housing back into use, including into use for affordable housing.

ANSWER

No There is full occupancy within Wolverton

MK Council Housing Tenure as at 1 April 2001

Q 11 Are there opportunities to bring housing in the town centre eg flats over shops back into use? Identify opportunities to allow people to live in the town centre.

ANSWER

There are some empty flats above businesses in the Town centre but some shop owners have said that they are not prepared to rent out and one gave the following reasons:

- would compromise security
- health and safety reasons
- Vatable businesses would have to charge VAT on the rent
- Council tax would rise significantly

In one of the general meetings an elderly person talked about the need for small flats for sale for people like her who are occupying large houses but do not want to move to smaller premises because they want to continue to live in Wolverton and there is no suitable housing available. This perhaps could be considered in any town centre redevelopment.

Q12 Will the planned provision of affordable housing meet local need? Identify any under provision of affordable housing

ANSWER

No. The recent rise in house prices locally has meant that there are many young local people who will not be able to afford to buy locally. The West End development to be completed late in 2002 will have 10 bungalows to rent.

Q13 Where there is poor quality housing, is this being addressed by improvement/investment programmes? Identify areas of private housing that are not being addressed.

ANSWER

In the 1991 census Wolverton had 16.3% households with no central heating, Stacey Bushes had 4.1% households sharing inside washing/toilet facilities.

Greenleys housing stock currently suffers ongoing maintenance problems particularly in relation to exterior woodwork, tiling, cladding etc. exacerbated by design limitations.

HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Q1 Do the ambulance, police and fire services meet their own response time targets? Identify any shortfalls in services and check whether any future planned changes to service provision will improve response times.

ANSWER

1. **The Bucks and MK Fire Authority** meet the required National standards being to send 1 fire appliance to C and D risk areas arriving within 10 mins for first engine.

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

The local standard is to use 2 fire appliances in C and D risk areas, the first fire engine arriving within 5 mins and the second arriving within 8 mins

2. **The Bucks Ambulance Service** - no reply from our enquiries

3. **The Thames Valley Police** - no reply from our enquiries

Q2 Does the number of doctors and dentists meet the appropriate standards? Identify any shortfalls and check whether any future planned changes to service provision will increase/decrease access to doctors and dentists

ANSWER

Yes appropriate standards are being met.

No planned future changes to service provision envisaged

Source:BUCKS HA Information Dept June 2002

Q3 Are local mortality rates for heart disease, stroke, cancer, suicide and accidents high? Compare the local HA statistics with the regional and national averages. Identify where rates exceed the averages and ask whether future health service provision is being targeted in these areas

ANSWER

Deaths per 10,000 people 1995-97

	Wolverton ward	MK Region	National
All Cancers	29.5	16.9	6.0
Heart Disease	6.3	8.8	23.0
Suicides & undetermined	3.6	2.8	2.8
Accidents	4.6	5.5	6.0
Stroke	2.1	2.0	3.01

Source: Bucks Health Authority/MK Council Data Community Indicators 1995/97

Source: BHA/MK CI Indicators 1995-1997

MK Facts and Figures 1999/2000

Cancer, suicides + undetermined and strokes are higher than Regional levels. Strokes are higher than national levels and MKGH has worse level of mortality than most hospitals.

The cancer figures could be due to the fact that Wolverton workmen worked with asbestos in the Railworks.

Q 4 How easy is it for residents to get access to non-emergency hospital services as a user or visitor? Identify where hospital services are difficult to access

ANSWER

These services are at the main Milton Keynes General NHS Trust and would be accessed Via Accident and Emergency at MKGH. Waiting time is prioritised by nurse on arrival upon clinical need. The distance involved is 4+ miles. It is hard to access by public transport because the buses tend to go around the estates. Services difficult to access are: Orthopaedics: Dermatology: Eye Clinic

Q 5 Are there adequate specialist clinics and out patient clinics available locally eg. Family planning, drugs and drink advice? Identify any gaps or under provision in services.

ANSWER

MKDAS and Drugs and Alcohol Service on Conniburrow used by GPs

The following clinics are based at GP centres:

GPs/ provide family planning clinics * Asthma clinics * Blood Pressure Clinics (i.e. Well Woman/Well Man) * Diabetic Clinics * Coronary Heart Disease * Vaccination and Immunisation * Cryo surgery (warts etc) * Minor surgery (moles etc) * Diet and Weight clinic * Physiotherapy (provided independently at practice for initial assessment and basic exercises paid for by MK Community Trust) * Over 75 health checks * CPN's attached to Practice for adult mental health (up to 65) AND elderly mental health over 65) * District Nurse Wilma Burns runs multi cultural baby clinics * Paediatric (provided by Hospital services) * Obstetrics (provided by Hospital) * Chiropody Clinics (provided by MKCommunity Trust at Practice) * Speech Therapy (provided by MK Community Trust at Practice)

Elderly drop-in centres provided by nurses at Fullers Slade NCH's accommodation

Age Concern elderly drop in at The Old Bath House Community Centre, Wolverton daily luncheons provided, Health Visitor Caroline attends

GAP IN PROVISION

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

No drop-in services provided at Greenleys Family's Centre (NCH accommodation). Practice Manager thinks lunch clubs could be provided at Community Centre

Family Planning Services would be re-instated if funding was forthcoming

ACCESS to the Centre is not good particularly for elderly infirm and vulnerable

No replacement has been appointed to succeed Dr Chowdray (retired December). Difficult to recruit GPs to 'deprived areas'

Dr Banerjee (single GP practitioner) has now merged with the Murthy practice). Dr Gangujli remains a single GP practitioner within the HC but separate from the main practice.

NB No Ethnicity numbers kept by Health centre but could be in the future. NB Quite a few Somalians are registering with practice.

A fully equipped dental practice is sited within the Health Centre and funded by MKCT. There is also a Dental Access Centre.

NB Practice family planning clinics have ceased due to lack of funding from MKCT

Community nurses and health visitors do visit elderly in their own homes if requested /required. Ethnic minorities do not usually use this facility because culturally they are looked after by family members.

Bus Service: A number 2 bus will pick up at the Agora end of Church Street to the Health Centre in Gloucester Road. A No 19 will pick up from Stacey Bushes and Greenleys and go to the HC. These buses travel frequently. However, many elderly, infirm, vulnerable people reside at the West End area of Church Street and find it impossible therefore to access public transport.

Q6 Is there adequate social and health care services available in the home eg community nurses, health visitors, home helps etc? Identify the number of people in need of but not recipients of social and health care services Identify under provision of services to vulnerable sections of the community.

ANSWER

Community Nurses visit patient in home as do District nurses. Health visitors visit parents of under 5's. Elderly may receive visit by Age Concern volunteer to help with Shopping and pension collection

Carers may be provided by local council to enable elderly to live independently in their own homes. They assist with specific tasks e.g.helping prepare for bed, getting up etc. MK Council will now provide Home care free for any person in MK on income support and in need. Those not receiving benefits will be charged £9 per hour upwards depending upon ability to pay.

Q7 Is there a high incidence of crime? Identify where they are problems, both in terms of geographical areas and in the types of crime prevalent. Identify if any future policing strategies will address these.

ANSWER

2001/2 - showing crimes place by place with change on previous year

	WOLVERTON		OLD WOLVERTON		GREENLEYS		STACEY BUSHES	
GREENLEYS								
Shoplifting	61	11%	0	-	13	-54%	17	-6%
Burglary dwelling	26	0%	0	-	9	-18%	14	-13%
Burglary non-dwelling	49	-39%	10	11%	45	45%	20	-35%
Violence agst person	73	4%	3	0%	21	50%	30	0
Criminal damage	169	19%	13	44%	36	38%	64	19%
Theft of motor vehicle	48	30%	5	0%	21	133%	19	-14%
Theft from vehicle	5	79%	14	133%	17	6%	39	-5%
ALL CRIMES	777	0%	64	14%	236	-2%	253	-5%

Neighbourhood noise nuisance complaints 2001 rate per 1,000 15 = 5.9% per ward

Source: MK Council

Wolverton, Old Wolverton and New Bradwell still have crime problems. Future Policing Strategy 2002-5 will address this

Source: Thames Valley Police June 2002

Q8 Are there any crime prevention measures in place?

ANSWER

CCTV cameras in town streets

Possible CCTV camera in properties owned by private businesses and bodies
Neighbourhood Watch schemes operate in town
Community policing in operation – covers the whole of Wolverton
Possible introduction of new street wardens patrolling in conjunction with community policing.
Thames Valley police have targets for crime reduction in place which are regularly reviewed.

The Town Council is discussing an extension of CCTV from the town centre area. In addition, money has been obtained for a mobile CCTV system (4 cameras) that can be used by police, council and parish councils and targeted at areas of crime and disorder. The system should be operational throughout MK (not only Wolverton) from October 2002.

Source: *Richard Solly MK Council July 2002*

The following areas would benefit from the introduction of crime prevention measures:

- The Square
- The Agora car park area and bus station
- The businesses shops side of Church Street (lights were removed to the other side of the street whilst cameras face the dark side!)
- Back ways of businesses i.e. Church street to Stratford road because of graffiti and vandalism
- The area which at present provides a back way access from the Agora to Buckingham Street and the Square
- The Agora car park and particularly towards St George's Church

Q9 Do background levels of noise, air quality and water quality meet or exceed local standards? Any pollution blackspots?

ANSWER

There are no local standards in place for Wolverton. MK Council anticipate that urban monitoring will commence 2004/5. However levels appear to be acceptable.

No pollution blackspots

Traffic noise is not monitored unless complaints are received and there have been no complaints.

Source: *Phil Winsor Chief Environmental Health Officer, MK Council*

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q10 Do the local health clinics, doctors and dentists operate mobile service units? Identify areas covered by mobile units. Identify if there are any planned improvements to increase the coverage of mobile units.

ANSWER

No mobile mammography unit visits due to vandalism last year. All patients now have to travel to the Hospital to mammograms. This now entails a bus journey which can take some time because local buses tend to enter each estate on the way to the hospital. Therefore a 15 minute journey can take up to one hour or more.

No planned improvements to increase or decrease Services

Source: *MK PCT*

Q11 Is the fear of crime significantly worse than actual crime rates?

ANSWER

Yes, there is evidence that fear of crime is considerably greater than reported crime. In Milton Keynes as a whole, only 7% feel that crime is falling, and 47% think that it is rising (from a survey by MK Council in 2001). However, reported crime actually fell by 10% between 1988-2001. Crime in Wolverton has also fallen by a similar rate during this period.

Source: *Richard Solly MK Council July 2002*

Q12 Is there visible evidence of vandalism, unlit streets, litter or graffiti?

ANSWER

Litter and graffiti still a problem in the back service roads but being addressed by local town council
 More street lighting needed by Agora Centre and in the back ways of shops in Church Street because of vandalism and graffiti etc.

More street lighting is required on the shops side of Church Street (this was removed to the other side of the street, although the CCTV cameras face the dark shops side of the street)

Graffiti on high walls of railway sites to railway station (this has recently been addressed by the new graffiti/clean team)

McCorquodales responsible for cut offs of paper flying around the Church Street/Jersey Road/Anson Road areas

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Q1 Do local residents have direct access to Town or Parish, the District and the Borough Council in the town? Identify how easy it is to access information about Council Services.

ANSWER

It is fairly easy to access information about Council services locally:

- ◆ Town Council Meetings are all public and welcome residents' participation. It also keeps informing you of future meetings.
- ◆ Local MK councillors hold surgeries for local people to attend
- ◆ Information about Milton Keynes Council Services can be accessed at the local library
- ◆ The Town Council offices are open on Wednesdays p.m.
- ◆ Information is available in freely delivered MK Council magazine *The Messenger*
- ◆ Information available in local free papers
- ◆ There are notice boards within the town - the Town Council has a noticeboard on the side of Design a Home in the Square; the Christian Foundation offices display information at Foundation House and the Town Council displays notices in its own office window.
- ◆ The Town Council has its own newsletter that is delivered door to door.

Q2 Are a large number off local people involved in community activities? Identify the number and range of community groups, their membership levels and compare with total population. Are these groups representative of the age groups of the population? Identify the level of involvement

ANSWER

There are a very large number of activities in the Wolverton area with high levels of participation with opportunities for all age groups. *See list in Appendix 1*. There are still complaints that people do not know what is going on. It was agreed that an up to date list of groups and contacts would be a useful asset to have based at the local library.

Some buildings are very heavily used as community facilities - e.g. although the Methodist Church has only 20-30 members, approx. 350 people go through its doors each week for various activities.

There are lots of activities but a lot of the same faces appear at different meetings.

In a questionnaire completed by 87 residents the following information about their involvement in community groups was obtained (*see Appendix 1*):

Are you involved as a member or participant in any of the following group activities?

(This chart showing who ticked 'YES', they are a member or take part in the following activities)

Group	Number	%
Council	2	2
Residents' group or similar	6	7
Social club or similar	14	15
Sports club or group	15	16
Arts or music group	11	11
Church	20	21
Voluntary organisation	11	11
Youth group	4	4
Other	12	13

Q3 Do local people have an interest in national and local politics? Identify level of local political involvement

ANSWER

Not a great deal of interest and this is a disturbing trend. Older polling records show higher turnouts. Older people too seem to be more committed to registering their vote. The turnout for Wolverton Ward at the local government elections held on 2 May 2002 was 26.65%. This compares with a turnout across Milton Keynes of 32.62%. No national average figures are available. In the last General Election the turnout for the South West Borough Constituency, in which Wolverton is placed, was 62.48%. This compares with a national average of 59.4% in 2001.

Q4 Is there somebody who can help develop community involvement? Identify if there is assistance that local communities can draw on

ANSWER

The MKCVO gives advice and help to voluntary organisations throughout Milton Keynes
MK Council's Neighbourhood Unit employs community workers.
The Town Council is considering the appointment of an events co-ordinator. It also regularly advertises the availability of small grants to help community activities.
The Living Archive gives information and assistance to individuals and community groups on an ad hoc basis.
Computer/Internet access is available in Library (where one can access information on community groups etc.)

Q5 Have community groups been influential in developing policies and strategies? Identify which groups or individuals, including the town or parish council

ANSWER

Yes.

The Town Council

- actively comments on planning applications. Local residents attending Planning Committee Meetings are encouraged to have their say
- is pro-active in tackling Wolverton's problems e.g. Town Caretaker post, anti graffiti scheme etc.
- Wolverton Partnership specially set up to oversee the spending of SRB money
- carried out a number of cocommunity consultations that led to the document Wolverton on the Right Tracks
- has spent money on shop improvements, CCTV, Street lighting, backways lighting, The Square and street improvements
- The Wolverton Society for Arts and Heritage
 - Worked with the Business Association to devise the Shop Improvements Scheme and are currently providing encouragement and advice and are administering the scheme.
 - are developing plans and raising funds for the Secret Garden
 - comment actively on matters that effect the environment of Wolverton

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q6 Is the local community well represented on committees? Identify where community representation is already successfully deployed

ANSWER

There are local residents on the Wolverton Partnership and as School Governors, although there is a need for more people to come forward as Governors. This has been exacerbated as the profile of School Governors has risen and their responsibilities have increased. Not everyone has the confidence to undertake such tasks. There are problems with local attendance on such committees as childcare is an issue.

Q7 Are there any active neighbourhood forums, residents or tenants' associations? Identify the level of community involvement in managing decisions about the management of their own environment

ANSWER

There are residents' associations in Greenleys (2) and Old Wolverton. Future Wolverton is involving the local community in making decisions about the future of the town.

Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council precepts the local population and has powers to manage the local environment

The HERS scheme is involving local residents in decisions about the spending of that budget, The Wolverton Society for Arts & heritage is administering the Shop Fronts Improvement Scheme.

Q8 Have local people had the experience of being actively involved in community development?

Identify the level of experience people have of being involved in local decision making

ANSWER

Wolverton residents have a considerable experience of being actively involved in community development.

- The Wolverton Partnership (on which local residents are represented) has carried out many community consultations as part of the SRB spending programme and devolved decision-making re shopfronts to the Wolverton Society for Arts & Heritage
- Local people are involved as Town Councillors and participate in decision making,. Local residents may attend Council Meetings and they are given every opportunity to participate. The Town Council uses questionnaires to solicit views and get good responses.
- Members of the Wolverton Society for Arts and Heritage commissioned the research for the listing of railway structures and other buildings, are developing plans for the Secret Garden and have commissioned artists to make a town trail and sculpture.
- More than 500 residents were actively involved in the *Future Wolverton* community planning

EMPLOYMENT

Q1 Are local unemployment rates high? Identify if unemployment is a significant issue locally.

ANSWER

Note

The area now covered by Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council was delineated in 1996. Most statistics relate to the area 'defined' as Wolverton. Occasional records include New Bradwell or Stacey Bushes. As much as possible such statistics have been discounted, and exceptions are noted. Unemployment is not particularly significant in the town. In line with Milton Keynes as a whole, rates are lower than for the UK in general.

The figures for Wolverton include those people working with the Christian Foundation and living in the Foyer. This is targeted at homeless and unemployed young people, and offers them a place to live, training for work and job experience. Some of the young people have been attracted to the scheme from outside Wolverton.

Figures for June 2002

	Number Unemployed	%
Wolverton & New Bradwell (Source : MK Council)	117	2.4
MK Council Area (Source : NOMIS)	2,355	1.8
South East		2.6
UK		3.2

Q2 Has unemployment fallen or risen in recent years? Identify if there are any specific trends in unemployment in the local area

ANSWER

Table A shows that unemployment in the town consistently fell during the period June 1996 to June 2001, falling by 70.3% in that period. In the year 2001-2, however, unemployment rose again to 117, an increase of 33 (39.2%)

Comparison with Table B shows that the trend in Wolverton largely echoes those for Milton Keynes as a whole and for the UK as a whole, with similar percentage falls in the period 1996-2001. However, in the period 2001-2 Wolverton's rise in the number of unemployed grew considerably faster than did the number throughout Milton Keynes, and faster still in comparison with the UK as a whole.

Table A

Area Name: Wolverton- Total Claimants

Male	Female	Persons	Date
229	54	283	Jun-96
127	43	170	Jun-97
108	31	139	Jun-98
80	24	104	Jun-99
77	26	103	Jun-00
75	9	84	Jun-01
75	42	117	Jun-02

Table B

Total claimants

UK	MK	Date
2096326	5051	Jun-96
1550141	3470	Jun-97
1322756	2516	Jun-98
1244709	2294	Jun-99
1077229	2062	Jun-00
947928	1921	Jun-01
937033	2345	Jun-02

<i>UK</i>	<i>MK</i>
% Fall 1996-2001	
45.2%	28%
%rise 2001-2002	
(1.1%)	22.1%

Source: NOMIS

Q3 What are the labour market participation rates?

ANSWER

Table A presents the picture for Wolverton and New Bradwell in 1991. This shows that 65.52% of all people over 16 were economically active, of these 67.8% were in full time work, 12.9% were in part-time work and 8.9% were self-employed, a total of 80.6% in work (not including Government schemes.)

The figures were considerably higher among men than women as Table B highlights.

Table B – from 1991 Census figures

	<i>Men (%)</i>	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>All (%)</i>
% of 16+ that were economically active	77.94	53.30	65.52
Of which % in work	89.22	91.88	89.66

Table C produces comparable figures in 1992 for England as a whole. This produces the following survey figures.

	<i>Men (%)</i>	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>All (%)</i>
% of 16+ that were economically active	73.69	50.22	61.44
Of which % in work	87.77	92.19	89.64

The most recent economic activity rates available are for 1999 (Source : NOMIS). These include those on Government schemes and unemployed. They are only available for parliamentary constituencies, regions and the country as a whole. These figures are summarised in **Table D** :

		%
Wolverton (adjusted to include Government schemes & unemployed)	1991	65.5
Milton Keynes South west Constituency (Source : Labour Force Survey)	1999	76.6
South East	1999	66.7
UK or England	1999	

The information is not sufficient to allow clear comparisons between Wolverton and other regions.

Q4 What are average household earnings?

ANSWER

National figures (2002) show that the average gross weekly earnings of full time adults were £411 in April 2000, an increase of 2.3% since April 1999.

In the 2002 New Earnings survey report the average gross weekly income (for workers not affected by absence) was £412.19 in the South East, and £434.90 in Wolverton. However the latter figure is based on a sample of less than 30 and may be statistically unreliable.

Q5 What proportion of the unemployed have been unemployed for over six months or one year, and what sectors of the population are most represented by age and gender? Identify if there are any recent trends in long term unemployment

ANSWER

The table below provides comparable figures for Wolverton, the South East and the UK as a whole (Source : NOMIS – for January 2003)

	<i>Wolverton</i>	<i>South East</i>	<i>UK</i>
% claimants claiming for 12+ months – male	7.7%	12%	15.7%
% claimants claiming for 12+ months – female	12.5%	9%	11%
% claimants claiming for 12+ months - all	8.9%	11.3%	14.5%
% claimants claiming for 6+ months – male	23.1%	27.6%	32.4%
% claimants claiming for 6+ months – female	31.2%	22.1%	25.8%
% claimants claiming for 6+ months – all	25.2%	26.2%	30.8%

Long term male unemployment, for 12+ months, is lower in Wolverton than in both the South East and the UK as a whole. Among females it is slightly higher. Among all claimants the figures are lower than the regional and national averages.

A similar picture emerges regarding those claiming for 6+ months. Among females, Wolverton has a higher rate than both the regional and national average, but overall there are proportionally fewer long term claimants than in the region or country as a whole.

Q6 What proportion of residents in employment commute elsewhere to work? Identify if the town is a dormitory town or has a significant employment role including how far people commute.

ANSWER

A survey of users of Wolverton Railway Station was conducted at rush hours on one day. Of a total of 129 rails users who completed the survey, 43 (33.3%) were residents of Wolverton or Greenleys. The majority were from outside the town. All respondents were travelling outside Wolverton

A previous survey conducted two years earlier on behalf of the Wolverton Rail Users Group, was conducted over a 24 hour period. This counted 686 passengers getting on or off trains at the station, representing 343 different travellers or travel occasions. If 33.3% of these were residents of Wolverton the number of residents commuting elsewhere to work by rail alone would be 110-115 per day.

Across Milton Keynes as a whole, it has been estimated (by Milton Keynes Economic Partnership) that 20,000 of Milton Keynes residents commute out of the city to work elsewhere. If the number commuting away from Wolverton is in direct proportion to that of Milton Keynes as a whole, that number would be approximately 750, i.e. people working outside Milton Keynes altogether

A third survey was completed by residents in their homes. Questionnaires were delivered to every household. The number of responses varied from question to question. One of the questions asked, 'Where do you work?' 89 people answered the questionnaire. Of these 33 (37%) answered 'have no job' or 'not applicable', 27 (30%) worked elsewhere in Milton Keynes, over 2 miles out of town and 14 (16%) worked outside Milton Keynes altogether. People in these two categories comprised 73% of those who answered who were in work.

The sample is small and not statistically reliable. However, if these percentages were applied among all 4790 Wolverton residents currently employed or self-employed (*Question 3*) and only among those in work, then 25% (1240) would be working out of Milton Keynes and another 48% (2385) would be working elsewhere in Milton Keynes.

It can be concluded that between 750 and 1240 Wolverton residents work outside Milton Keynes altogether and another up to 2385 work elsewhere in Milton Keynes, at least two miles away from Wolverton. Together these two groups represent an estimated 65-75% of all Wolverton residents in work.

Q 7 Is the local economy particularly dependant on specific industry sectors? Identify strengths and weaknesses in the local economy.

ANSWER

There are two main source documents for the companies and employment in the Wolverton and Greenleys area. One is the 2001 Milton Keynes Employment Survey, produced by the Milton Keynes Economic Partnership. The other is the Milton Keynes and North Bucks Chamber of Commerce which maintains a database of all firms (not just Chamber members) and is claimed to be updated daily or weekly as changes become known.

Both include all firms in the MK12 postal district. This includes the area of Stacey Bushes, which could be considered part of the hinterland of Wolverton, but is not within the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council's boundaries. Stacey Bushes includes a lively industrial and services estate with an estimated 40-80 businesses in all.

The MK Employment Survey identifies 404 establishments and a total employment of 6139. The Chamber database identifies 260 firms and a total employment of 4492. In at least two areas the Chamber list underestimates the total number of establishments (see below) by a combined total of approx 50 establishments, the equivalent of 26%. Both surveys do not include the eight businesses that have moved within the last year to new premises on the developing Stonebridge industrial estate. Taking these factors into consideration, and excluding the estimated number of Stacey Bushes firms on both lists, it is projected that there are 310 firms within the area served by the Town Council, employing an estimated 5100 people.

Tables A,B and C below summarise the information available in the Chamber database, which provides a business description and the number of employees per establishment.

Table A Establishments and Employment by Area

	<i>Establishments</i>	<i>Employment</i>
Wolverton Town	140 (1)	1044
Old Wolverton	47 (2)	1701
Wolverton Mill & Greenleys	47	998
Other	6	111
Total	240 (3)	3854

- (1) A survey of the town conducted on foot for the purposes of Future Wolverton identified 166 firms trading (and other premises where businesses have closed). This is an increase of 18% on the database figure.
- (2) This is believed to be a considerable underestimate. A survey of the estate on foot approximately six years ago identified over 70 firms.
- (3) Stacey Bushes firms excluded.

Table B Establishments by Sector

	<i>Mfr.</i>	<i>Retail</i>	<i>Distr. & W'Housing</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Vol. Sector Church & Public</i>	<i>Total</i>
Wolverton Town	3	52	2	64	19	140
Old Wolverton	13	4	6	22	2	47
Wolverton Mill & Greenleys	6	8	8	22	3	47
Other		2		4		6
Total	22	66	16	112	24	240

Table C Employment by Sector

	<i>Mfr.</i>	<i>Retail</i>	<i>Distr. & W/Housing</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Vol. Sector Church & Public</i>	<i>Total</i>
Wolverton Town	4	218	28	550	244	1044
Old Wolverton	366	144	732	448	11	1701
Wolverton Mill & Greenleys	235	78 (2)	268	371	46	998
Other	-	3	-	108	-	111
Total (1)	605	443	1028	1477	301	3854

(1) All Stacey Bushes firms excluded from all boxes.

(2) Clearly a significant underestimate.

The numbers suggest that the town is not dependant on any one sector. In the past it was very dependant upon the Railway works, which used to employ 6000 (mainly men). The complementary business, McCorquodales (printers) were the most predominant employer of women in the area. Now both firms have significantly reduced their numbers. In the case of the rail works just over 400 are currently employed there.

Now, the greatest numbers of employed are in distribution/warehousing services, and the voluntary/church/public sectors. Together they employ some 72% of all employees, and manufacturing employs 16% only. These figures broadly reflect the national pattern.

Q8 Is the local economy dependant on a small number of large employers? Identify reliance of the local economy on a few large employers.

ANSWER

According to the Chamber of Commerce database (2002) the largest employers are :

	Number of Employees
BHS Home Appliances (Distributors of home appliances)	650
Alstom Rail Care (Servicing of railway carriages)	440
Tesco Stores Ltd (Food and other retail)	320
Tyco Electronics (Electronic components and sub-assemblies)	160
Fiege Merlin (Logistics)	150
NHS Wolverton Centre	100
Total	1820

Together these six firms employ 35-7% of the total estimated number of employees in the Wolverton and Greenleys area.

30 years ago, when the town's employment was dominated by the rail works (6,000) workers and McCorquodales (printers), the town would have been very heavily dependant on just those two companies, together providing an estimated 70-80% of total employment. Dependence on large employers has reduced as particularly the number employed in the rail works has reduced.

The six currently largest companies are all in different sectors. All except Alstom and NHS have moved into the area in the last ten years and may reasonably be expected to stay for some time, business conditions permitting. On the other hand, under modern business conditions, BHS, Tyco and Fiege Merlin can be flexible regarding location and have the capacity to move out of the area with reasonable ease if there becomes a business case to do so.

Q.9 Is the number of jobs available locally increasing or decreasing? Identify how strong the local economy is.

ANSWER

The Milton Keynes Economic Partnership's 2001 Employment survey shows that the numbers employed within MK12 (which includes Stacey Bushes, outside the Wolverton and Greenleys area) grew from 5,775 in 1999 to 6,139 in 2001. This is an increase of 364, or 6.3%, over the two years. MK12 is one of 12 postcode areas (out of 20) in the Milton Keynes area that experienced job increases in that period. The rate of increase places it 8th of all postcode. The figure is marginally below the average for Milton Keynes as a whole.

These figures suggest a relatively buoyant economy. However, most of the jobs are located outside the town, on the new industrial estates. McCorquodales, Alstom and Tesco are the exceptions, but the former two have shed significant numbers of jobs over the last 20-30 years, and the economy of the town's shopping area itself is not vibrant.

A detailed street survey of all business premises in the town of Wolverton (Autumn 2002) identified 26 business premises (representing 11.6% of the total) which are either vacant (7.6%) or had recently been converted into residential accommodation (4.0%)

Additionally at least six other businesses on the Old Wolverton and Warren Farm industrial estates, are known to have closed in the last 12+ months.

Detailed figures for a longer period are not available.

Q10 What are the rates of business start-ups and failures? Identify how dynamic the local economy is.

ANSWER

Detailed figures for Wolverton are not available. However, the MKEP 2001 Employment Survey shows a net increase in the period (for all MK12 post code areas) of 18 establishments (4.7% increase) since 1999. This places it 15th out of the 20 MK postcode areas, and 2.3% below the Milton Keynes average.

Over the last 12-18 months Stonebridge estate has expanded in capacity from one business to 18, and additional buildings have been extended on the Wolverton Mill estate. The Stonebridge estate alone has a vacant capacity in excess of 200,000 sq.ft, and the capacity of Wolverton Mill estate has increased by a similar amount. At least 15 new businesses are known to have started or moved into Wolverton in the last year.

The prospects for growth in the number of establishments are good. Many of these will be medium-sized businesses. However, Wolverton is both a market town and a district centre within the larger Milton Keynes area. There has been little evidence of any immediate from the new businesses on the economy of Wolverton town centre. The challenge and opportunity for Future Wolverton, is to translate the growth in business around the perimeter into trading growth in the town centre.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q11 What opportunities are there for new employment from the expansion of existing local firms? Assess business confidence and the scope for growth in jobs.

ANSWER

The major employment opportunities arise from firms that are starting in or moving into the considerable number of new industrial and warehouse buildings around the edge of the town. It is also known that, after a long period of gradual decline, the rail works (now Alstom) are planning limited growth in employment, including apprentices.

Q12 What economic development / inward investment grants are available? Identify the forms of assistance available to existing and new local businesses

ANSWER

The Wolverton area does not qualify for any economic development or inward investment grants. Companies considering Wolverton as a location do benefit, however, from Invest in Milton Keynes. Operated from the Chamber of Commerce, IIMK has a small team dedicated to helping potential inward investors with ;

- information about vacant sites and buildings

- in – city tours to assess possible sites
- tours for staff moving with the company from outside MK – looking at shopping, sports, leisure and housing facilities
- induction support for companies once (if) they have moved into the area.

RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

Q1 How much of the local shopping provision is in the town centre, out-of-town centre, or in the villages? Identify in particular out of town supermarkets and other shops

ANSWER

There are four shops in the Greenleys Local Centre, across the V5 grid road running along the south of Wolverton Town, ½ - ¾ mile from Wolverton's main shopping area. There are no shops in Old Wolverton or Warren Farm. All other shops are in Wolverton Town. A street survey of all trading retailers in Wolverton identified a total of 82 shops, banks and estate agents or other services (restaurants, pubs and not-for-profit organisations excluded).

In the hinterland villages and areas, there are two retailers in Castlethorpe, one in Hodge Lea, one in Stacey Bushes (plus a few trade counter operations), and 22 in New Bradwell.

The shopping provision is distorted by the size of Tesco, many times larger than any other shop in the town, and benefiting from 30,000 shopper visits weekly. Wolverton's retail centre is also highly affected by ;

- the existence of Stony Stratford 2 miles to the NW ; Stony is a traditional market town, offering a range of hotels, and is a centre for villages up to 10 miles away to the north and west. The nearest towns in those directions are Buckingham (approx 8 miles) and Northampton (approx 14 miles).
- the existence of the Central Milton Keynes shopping centre 3 miles to the south ; this is considered one of the biggest and best shopping centres in the country, and attracts visitors from up to 50 miles away. Over the next 20 years the central shopping centre will double in size and is planned to become a major retailing and cultural centre.

Q.2 What type of shops and services are there in the town centre? Identify particular shops and services which attract visitors and shoppers from outside the town and any obvious gaps or shortages in provision

ANSWER

In Appendix 5 there is a summary analysis of all shops and local services in Wolverton and its hinterland.

Retailers that attract shoppers from outside Wolverton are:

- Tesco- a major attraction for the district (radius 2-5 miles in different directions)
- Hollywood Music - a specialist shop that attracts visitors from a wide area, including other regions
- Lakes - a shop that specialises in powered model making

The main gaps in current shopping provision are solicitors, bakers, clothes shops and department stores. Thirty years ago Wolverton had a number of each. Now most residents travel to Central Milton Keynes or other centres for these goods.

Q3 Has retail floor space in the town centre been lost in the last five years? Identify whether the town centre has become a less attractive location for retail development

ANSWER

Accurate figures to offer direct comparisons over the last five years are not available. There have been two competing trends ;

- i) New floor space has been created through the conversion of an old office/ warehouse behind Glyn Square into new retail space (approx. 4,000 sq ft) and through the extension of Tesco in 2001/2 (adding an estimated 10,000 sq ft)

ii) Retail space has been lost through the closure or conversion of traditional retail premises in the

Q4 Is there a variety of markets operating in the town and surrounding countryside? Identify the number and frequency of markets and the number of outlets for local produce. Identify local producers who are not represented in local markets

ANSWER

There are no regular markets in the hinterland of Wolverton. Wolverton used to have a thriving Friday market with a variety of stalls from fresh produce and meat through to plants, clothing etc. The remnants of this market still exists and older people still come in to Wolverton from the hinterland on a Friday to shop.

Central Milton Keynes has a large and thriving market, immediately adjacent to the central shopping building. This is held on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Q5 What is the frequency of the general market and what are the numbers of traders/stalls? Identify if the market is a thriving concern

ANSWER

See above. Every Friday. There are about 3 or 4 stalls only now.

Q6 How many shops are vacant in the town centre and how many have been vacant for more than two years? If there are significant vacancies, find out why the vacant shops are not being reopened.

ANSWER

There are 10 shops currently not open for business. Additionally six previous shops are now private houses. Together these represent about 25% of retail accommodation in the town of Wolverton, although some premises that traditionally were retailers have been occupied by service and other types of business. Competition from Tesco (recently expanded), Stony Stratford (successfully developed into a niche shopping centre) and Central Milton Keynes have all contributed to the decline of retailing in Wolverton in recent years. The shrinkage in numbers of workers employed in the traditional town, of the order of 70% in the last 2-3 decades, has been another factor, reducing the number of shoppers.

Q7 How many new shops in the centre have opened in the last three years, or have had major refits? Assess retailer confidence in the town centre.

ANSWER

The clearest and largest example of this are Tesco (extension) and the Inside Out shop (newly converted into approx. 4,000 sq.ft of retailing space). There is not a great deal of confidence from the smaller retailers.

Q8 Are rents for retail premises stable or increasing? Assess rent levels for the main shops and whether the increase reflects buoyant demand

ANSWER

A local estate agent confirms that whilst most rents are stable at present, some - particularly in the Square - are decreasing.

Q9 Are local retailers confident about future trading? Assess local confidence about the town's role as a shopping destination

ANSWER

Some 25 businesses contributed to meetings associated with the Healthcheck.

The majority of these were traditional retailers in the town centre. They were pessimistic about levels of trading, primarily because of declining numbers of visitors to the town and the perceived shabbiness of the streets. Some were considering closing. None were considering moving.

In contrast a small number of retailers were considerably more positive. These appeared to be more enterprising in terms of marketing and shop layout. Some of them were in specialist or niche retailing

areas, and did not depend for their custom totally on local shoppers. Among the majority of retailers, there is falling confidence about the town's role as a shopping destination. The majority cannot see how changes in Wolverton will increase the number of shoppers.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q10 Is the town centre promoted as a shopping destination in any brochures or other publicity material? Identify whether the town is being actively promoted.

ANSWER

As a result of the consultations and planning for Future Wolverton, the W>C has committed to producing a directory of all businesses in Wolverton and its hinterland, including as well information about leisure and social facilities and organisations in the area. The target publication date is late 2003.

Q11 Is there commercial demand for additional retail floorspace? Identify any demand for expanding retail provision.

ANSWER

According to a local estate agent, they have experienced no demand for additional floorspace within the town itself. Empty premises are available and the take up of these is generally slow.

Q12 How many shops are charity shops?

ANSWER

There is one, Age Concern, on The Square.

Q13 Is the local provision and/or livestock market vulnerable to closure?

ANSWER

Not applicable. There is no such market, and has not been for a long period. Wolverton was traditionally an industrial small town, only two miles away from Stony Stratford, the traditional market town for the wider area. Nonetheless, there had been no livestock market in Stony Stratford for over 20 years. It does host a small Saturday market.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

This section answers the questions on Worksheet EC3

Post school training

i) Current Choices.

IT Training MK College IT Training Centre, Wolverton Agora.

Milton Keynes College at Wolverton.

IT courses e-Qual

Agora Centre, (Upper level) Church Street.

Free course, (fee for certificate) module format. Flexible hours.

City & Guilds levels 1 & 2

This is a very popular facility in Wolverton. It benefits from flexible hours, low cost to the student and capsule approach to learning. The student can study at own pace and still gain a qualification at end. A student with some IT knowledge is able to fast track through first stage, gain qualification and go on to next level. So far about 2,500 students have passed through this Centre.

Manpower Forum, Creed Street : Deals with outreach for MK College.

BUT: moving to Bletchley

This Centre specialises in co-ordinating Work Based Training, Modern Apprenticeships and schemes whereby a company takes on a trainee to give them work experience.

Unfortunately, this Centre was closing so yet another Wolverton facility was moving to Bletchley.

Wolverton businesses or residents could obviously still use the facilities but no longer local.

Kiln Farm Training. MK College

Outreach courses continue at Kiln Farm

- Warehousing & Distribution experience/qualification..

Milton Keynes Council Adult Continuing Education Radcliffe School

There are several IT & Business Courses available.

- Introduction to computers 1day £19
- IT CLAIT courses levels 1 - V2 12 weeks £123

Business based

- Client Satisfaction. (1 day course)
- Time Management (1 day course)
- Pitmans Desk Top Publishing (10 weeks)
- Excel Beginners (5 weeks)
- Return To Learn :
- Prep for GCSE English
- Maths GCSE modular (3 terms)

Foundation Training

Based at Foundation House and forms a core activity of the Christian Foundation : Literacy, numeracy, life & social skills for young people.

- Extended Training (15 & 16 year olds)
- Initial Training (16 -18 years)
- New Deal Scheme for Voluntary Sector 18 - 24 years
- New Deal Scheme for Voluntary Sector for over 25 years
- Environmental Task Force - small building works, graffiti removal, gardening, painting &decorating, conservation and recycling.
- Training Scheme for Young Mums-to-be.

Foundation Foyer Housing: 16 living units for trainees. Assistance with accommodation.

Stantonbury Campus

Has a very wide range of courses including;

Business & IT, Languages, Creative, hobby & Leisure.

The Living Archive

Based at The Old Bath House,

- Often runs IT with graphics courses
- Photography/film making
- Coming soon: web design for business course

Languages:

- Spanish: *Beginners* (Old Bath House)
- Urdu : *Beginners* (Radcliffe)

Non Vocational/leisure Courses.

At Radcliffe:

Sewing Skills for Asian Clothing, Gardening design (Intro) , Singing -Find Your Voice, Creative Writing (Novels), Psychology An Intro + Watercolour Painting at Wolverton Youth Club adjacent to Radcliffe.

Health, Beauty & Social Care

These can form an introduction to an accredited course or new hobby skills

Radcliffe: Crystal Healing , Reflexology (intro), Voice Dialogue - explore Your inner Self

Family Development & First Aid: Radcliffe:

- First Aid - Lifesaver for Babies & Children - St John's Ambulance. 1day
- First Aid - Emergency Aid St John's Ambulance - 1day

- Pilates Old Bath House 11 weeks
- Yoga - mixed abilities Wolverton Youth Club & Yoga - Old Bath House

All ACE courses hold enrolment days at local libraries. Wolverton: Fridays 9.30 - 11.30

ii) Factors in Training

Consideration of choices for School leavers:

Until recently Wolverton had a college.

- Wolverton College (MK College) having been demolished, land used for housing and assets moved to Bletchley.
- Mk College asserted commitment to staying in Wolverton - IT Courses at Agora Centre & Manpower Forum. Manpower Forum now also moved to Bletchley

Therefore no longer an option to attend a technical college in Wolverton.

- IT Courses: Probably used by older people more often than school leavers. Good to increase skills and especially to gain confidence in technology.
- Foundation Training : Worthy & useful endeavour. Useful skills/life skills - fills gap in system for many young people but not prestigious. Catchment not just Wolverton area
- Modern Apprenticeships; Alstom (Rail Works) do have apprentices and will be recruiting two more shortly. However when this is compared to a time when the Works had its own training School in Wolverton this can be seen as an extreme contrast.

Problems:

Radcliffe School is seen as having problems

- Negative image both in and out of town.
- Results near bottom of league, but starting to improve.
- Knock on effect - parents want to avoid their children being in Radcliffe catchment area, people are increasingly sending their children over Northants border to Deanshanger (better reputation & results).
- Head Teacher at Radcliffe aware of problems/reputation and need to turn round school. Sports College status sought but it will be very hard to carry out necessary turn round/improvement.

Assets:

- First & Middle Schools in the area are considered good.
- Housing popular

iii) How does this impact on Business and Economy?

- **Minus:** Wolverton no longer college town - few courses locally available.
- Wolverton no longer centre of Engineering excellence - Technical College & Works Training.
- Image of low quality training.
- **Plus:** Businesses benefit from students from IT Course at Agora Centre using shops.

Businesses seem reluctant to release staff for training for the following reasons:

- Today's Workforce is considered to be transient.
- Full employment in Milton Keynes means people often move around - large catchment area of labour & jobs.
- Time factor: sometimes not enough staff to fill in while employee on course.
- Apprentice/training implications: skills often have to be continually changed & upgraded. Some skills have been superseded.
- Some businesses use "clawback" techniques if they pay for training course, not popular with employees.

iv) **Strategies for developing training**

1) Attract businesses to the town on the strength of training

- It is an asset - if there is a pool of skilled, trained staff.
- Good quality training/conferencing facilities.
- Good quality schools. Radcliffe needs to improve.

2) Work with local businesses to develop Wolverton as a location with skilled workers.

- If we have a lot of new businesses, it is desirable to have Wolverton people employed with them.
- Emphasis on quality businesses with high employment and quality training.
- Emphasis away from businesses like warehousing: low skills (and low employment) for large area.
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3) Partnerships

- Establish co-operation and joint initiatives between Wolverton Businesses and Companies.
- Use expertise and knowledge from the Chamber of Commerce and Business Link.
- Have business initiatives that link Companies with local schools.
- Set up a self help local group of businesses including industry.
- The 5M's Club (as described previously) a manufacturing excellence club - training advice.
- Encouragement of Radcliffe to set up a better and more innovative programme for the over 16's. Many of the brighter students move on elsewhere.
- Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council could consider funding advice courses to local businesses.
- Pilot scheme - demonstration window display in shop where advice is considered desirable.
- Schemes to provide Training Centre/Conferencing facility as a central resource.

4) Strive to become a centre of Manufacturing Excellence

- Wolverton has always been a manufacturing town.
- Skilled work force with specialist knowledge.
- Industrial Estate in Old Wolverton
- Large Railway Works area.

5) Training Co-operation

- Encourage a co-operative to be set up between manufacturing businesses of all sizes. Promote joint training initiatives where employees from a small firm could visit/train at a large company, joint funding and networking of expertise/training within "local group".
- Establish initiatives together with English Heritage - using local skills & expertise with heritage restoration/ repair/manufacture.

6) Plug the Skills Gap

- Milton Keynes College are apparently open to suggestions on local courses - although this would be dependent on cost implications. Courses are meant to deliver on results for cost ratio.
- Potential for College to take mobile courses/equipment into Companies that need skill training.

Retail Training

- Good, on the job knowledge agreed as essential.

There could be instruction in the following:

- Marketing: Very few Wolverton businesses advertise or promote their business
- Window Display: Some Wolverton shops make an effort all the time, some just at Christmas and some not at all. Scruffy windows can let down an area and make it look run-down.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY NEEDS

Q1 How much new commercial or industrial floorspace has been built or let in the last three years? Identify business confidence in the local area

ANSWER

There has been very significant new build in the last three years in two key areas ;

- Wolverton Mill industrial estate, immediately to the west of the town
- Stonebridge industrial estate, immediately to the east.

Wolverton Mill offers to let or for sale a total of 250,000 sq.ft of office and warehouse space. 95,000 sq ft of this is the previously Post Office Training Centre, recently sold to become a large serviced workspace for smaller firms. The other buildings were all erected within the last two years.

Stonebridge offers a series of large warehouse and manufacturing units, all but one of which have been erected in the last two years. The new space comprises a total of sixteen units in a slightly smaller number of buildings. The estimated total floorspace of the new buildings is 225,000 sq. ft. At March 2003 six of the sixteen units remained available for sale or let.

Q2 How much good quality office or industrial floor space is vacant or on the market? Identify any over-provision of office and industrial units

ANSWER

In March 2003 the availability was ;

- i) Wolverton Mill Estate (new build or refurbished) – 174,800 sq ft
- ii) South Mill – 9,250 sq ft
- iii) Old Wolverton – 55,100 sq ft

These offer a total vacant and /or marketed space of 249,150 sq ft. Additionally there are small units available in Warren Farm (offices) and in Wolverton town, comprising an additional total estimated space of 4-5,000 sq ft.

Q3 Are there sufficient premises at affordable rents for new small businesses? Identify how easy it is for small businesses to find affordable premises

ANSWER

At any time there is a small number of premises available in Wolverton town, which are of a relatively low cost. The town, however, offers no very small units that are not designed for retail and that are below 500 sq ft in area.

With the new builds to the west (Warren Farm in particular) there is increasing and good quality space for businesses of 5+ staff.

Throughout the whole of Wolverton and Greenleys, there is a dearth of appropriate accommodation in units of 150-500 sq ft, the type demanded by new non-retail businesses with 1-5 staff.

Q4 Has there been an increase or decrease in the rents of industrial and commercial property in recent years?

ANSWER

No formal data is available, but local surveyors report that in the centre of Wolverton the market has been gradually declining in the last 20 years. Most properties are old and few are appropriate to modern needs. In the surrounding industrial and office estates, the market is strong, although less so in the older Old Wolverton Industrial estate. For many non-retail firms Wolverton is strongly placed in terms of access by the grid road system and to major routes accessing other parts of the UK.

Q5 Have vacancy levels for commercial properties increased or decreased in recent years?

ANSWER

Within Wolverton town vacancy rates and conversions to non-commercial or residential units have been consistently increasing.

The major gap is of accommodation suitable for small and knowledge-based businesses. The

Victorian core of Wolverton does not provide very small offices other than for retail and there are no serviced facilities. Premises that are suitable for such firms are almost all too large for the 1-2 person firm.

The demand for such premises is hidden because there are no suitable premises.

Q6 Are there any planned expansions of existing commercial and industrial firms? Identify confidence in the local economy

ANSWER

Alstom (railway maintenance and engineering) is planning to reverse the long term trend and to increase staff by a small percentage, notably through taking on apprenticeships. No other firm already established in the area is known to have significant expansion plans. Most expansion will come from firms moving into the area.

Q7 Are there economic development and funding initiatives in place to assist incoming firms and the expansion of local firms? Identify if help is provided to attract investment to the area.

ANSWER

There are no grant programmes specific to the area. However, both Invest in MK and predominantly English Partnerships market the area of Milton Keynes as a whole and provide excellent liaison services to assist inward investors moving into the area.

TOURISM AND VISITOR SERVICES

Q1 What are the main tourist or visitor attractions including festivals and events in the town or nearby? Identify what is on offer to tourists

ANSWER

- i) Main tourist attractions in Wolverton are:
 - Milton Keynes Museum of Industry and Rural Life
 - The Open Air Swimming Pool
 - The Summer Arts and Music festival
 - The annual fireworks display
 - The Lantern Festival
 - The Canal (Grand Union) offering short trips on boat in the summer from Cosgrove to Wolverton and long walks on foot in both directions along the tow path.
 - Madcap – a not-for-profit organisation providing rehearsal space and a venue for music, performance and art. This works a great deal with young people, is expanding its programme, and attracts people from elsewhere in Milton Keynes and the hinterland.
- ii) Main tourist attractions in Stony Stratford, two miles away are :
 - Stony Stratford Live, an eight day town wide festival of music and the arts : this starts with Folk on The Green, a day long festival of music in June attracting an average of 2000 visitors; the eight day festival involves an average of 40 events staged in different venues and on the streets.
 - Fox and Hounds Blues and Jazz Festival – a three day indoor and outdoor event.
 - The Christmas lights switch on, on the last Saturday in November, when the High Street is closed for a fair, local music, parade and switch on of the lights which adorn the whole High Street through the Christmas and New Year period.
 - Walks along the River Ouse.
- iii) Within Milton Keynes there are :
 - The country's newest and thriving 1300 seater theatre, which consistently attracts a very high percentage of total capacity in audience figures.
 - The new City Art Gallery, adjacent to the theatre.
 - The Stables, a long established jazz and music venue, recently refurbished to accommodate 450, started and actively patronised by Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Laine, in Wavendon, to the south east of Milton Keynes.
 - The Snow Dome – the largest indoor ski centre in Europe, in the city centre.
 - Gulliver's Land – a theme park in miniature designed for young children.

- Many lakes within the city, offering attractive walks and water sports.
 - The Linear park, a connected series of woods, lakes, open land allowing the possibility of walking for miles within the city's boundaries.
 - Bletchley Park, the base where the Enigma code was cracked during WW2, and now developed as a museum to exhibit and demonstrate that period.
- iv) Further afield (all within ten miles)
- A number of beautiful villages in north Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire.
 - Woburn House and Safari Park
 - Althorp Gardens
 - Racing at Towcester
 - Waddesdon Manor
 - Stoke Bruerne Canal Centre
 - Motor racing at Silverstone

Q2 How important is tourism related employment to the local economy? Identify how reliant the local economy is on tourists and day visitors

ANSWER

Tourism is important for Milton Keynes and neighbouring Stony Stratford.

The only current significant attraction in Wolverton is the Milton Keynes Museum of Industry and Rural Life. This is half a mile outside Wolverton on one of the city's grid roads, and is easiest accessed by avoiding Wolverton itself. It has the potential to add significantly to Wolverton's attractions in time, but at the moment has little tourist value for the town itself.

In the summer people from the immediate hinterland are attracted to the Swimming Pool because it is outdoors. Bigger and more modern pools in Towcester, Shenley Church End and Stantonbury are competing attractions.

Q3 What is the range of tourist accommodation available in the area, e.g number of hotel beds by grade, bed and breakfast, youth hostels, caravan and camping site pitches? Identify the location of the facilities and any potential gaps in provision

ANSWER

Two establishments in the town offer overnight accommodation. Both would be towards the lower end of the market :

The Roman Room – B&B for £25 per night single, £37.50 double. They offer 1 single room, 5 doubles and 3 triples.

Crauford Arms – a large old public house, offers 3 single rooms, 1 twin, 2 doubles and 2 triples. These are linked with the Milton Keynes Tourism office.

A high percentage of visitors to these establishments are believed to be connected to local businesses, but many such visitors also board in Stony Stratford.

The nearest Youth Hostel is in Bradwell Village. Another is in Central Milton Keynes.

A more attractive hotel and/or conference venue might attract more business visitors to stay in the town, but significant other improvements to the town would be necessary before Wolverton was considered an attractive place to stay.

Q4 How many visitors come to the town or area and how long do they stay? Identify the number of visitors to the area and whether they stay for long periods of time

ANSWER

There are no significant numbers coming to the town itself - approximately 300 people a year use the overnight facilities. Some stay through the week, others stay for 1-2 nights only (see following question). Milton Keynes Museum has approx. 10,000 day visitors a year

Q5 How seasonal is the visitor activity? Identify how vulnerable the local economy is to seasonal variation.

ANSWER

Current trade is highly seasonal, mostly concentrated in the period April -September. The two most frequent visitors are builders who stay in Milton Keynes while on new developments and those who

attend concerts and other events in the Milton Keynes Bowl (or occasionally Zaks in Wolverton)

Q6 Is there a Tourist Information Centre in the town and how well is it used?

ANSWER

There are no specific information facilities in Wolverton about the town. The Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council is, however, planning to produce a town directory of businesses and all other facilities and groups in late 2003.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q7 How much do visitors spend in the town or surrounding areas? Identify how important tourism spending is to the local economy.

ANSWER

There is no such information available specifically for Wolverton. Given the answers to previous questions the average spend will be very low. Often B&B clients will go out of Wolverton for evening and/or weekend entertainment. Tourism spending is currently of negligible importance to the local economy.

Q8 Is visitor activity concentrated in the town itself or does it take place in the surrounding countryside? Identify the pattern of visitors

ANSWER

As Question 5 outlines, the main tourist destination in Wolverton and Greenleys is the Milton Keynes Museum of Industry and Rural Life, on the outskirts of the town.

By far the majority of destinations currently are in surrounding areas and in Central Milton Keynes. Very few, if any, visitors to the Milton Keynes area will come to the town of Wolverton itself (the only exception being canal tourists mooring to do food shopping at Tesco – in small numbers), and very few, if any, visitors to Milton Keynes will choose Wolverton as their overnight location.

Q9 Does the number, range and quality of visitor facilities match expectations? Identify need to improve or expand facilities.

ANSWER

As previous answers have explained, there are very few visitors, and no visitor surveys have been conducted.

Within the town there are several burger and breakfast outlets, and Chinese and fish and chip shop take-aways. Feature restaurants include one Greek, one Italian (at Warren Farm towards Stony Stratford), one Mongolian and a range of Indian restaurants. There is no information available about the areas from which each draws its clientele, but it is believed that the market for all of them is predominantly local.

The main exception will be the Italian restaurant midway between Wolverton and Stony Stratford. Stony Stratford provides strong competition in terms of restaurants, and definitely attracts visitors from a wider hinterland. The town offers a number of Chinese and Thai restaurants, a number of Indian restaurants, a number of public houses with dining rooms, offering mainly English cuisine, and a hotel with a restaurant offering Italian cuisine.

Q10 Is there a visitors guide or town trail? Identify the types of guide currently available and the potential to increase/alter the selection to better promote the town.

ANSWER

There is a leaflet 'Wolverton – Historic Railway Town' published in 1996 by the Wolverton Partnership. There is a CD ROM that has been produced through a training course at the Living Archive. It is interactive, and is an excellent guide to the town and its immediate environs but is already out of date. Information is published on the Wolverton Society for Arts and Heritage website. The proposed Town Directory, to be published in magazine format, will provide additional sources of information for visitors. More recently a Heritage Art Trail leaflet has been produced by the Wolverton Society.

Q11 Does the Town enter the 'Britain In Bloom' competition or the surrounding villages 'Best Kept Village'. Identify any attempts that have been made to improve the profile of the town through nationwide competitions.

ANSWER

With the introduction of Area Caretakers to the town by Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council, an intra-town Wolverton in Bloom competition is planned as the culmination of a drive to encourage and assist residents with hanging basket and window box planting.

Q12 Are there any specialist tourism enterprises, such as language schools, conference centres? Identify any additional draws to the town not usually associated with tourists.

ANSWER

Radcliffe School (secondary comprehensive) has excellent sports facilities, indoor and outdoor. These are sometimes used for city and regional events, and are used for Adult Education evening classes (promoted city-wide by the Local Education Authority). The predominantly (well preserved) Victorian character of the traditional town attracts some people with an architectural interest.

Q13 Is there adequate signing to visitor attractions and the town centre? Identify opportunities, including improving links between the town centre and other attractions

ANSWER

There is very little such signage at present, anywhere. There is one sign for the Town Centre (pointing incorrectly), and no sign for the library. There is no signing from outside the town to any particular facilities, except for the Milton Keynes Museum of Industry and Rural Life. Visitors do have difficulty locating The Square and the swimming pool (poorly signed).

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Q1 Do the banks, financial institutions and other business support services offer a full range of business advice and support? Identify shortfalls in the provision of financial support and advice to local businesses

ANSWER

Following the merger between Lloyds and TSB there is one bank in the town, recently relocated to The Square. This is a local branch and clients need to visit the city centre branch for certain services.

There is a local branch of the Nationwide Building Society (originally the Wolverton Building Society), used as an alternative bank and savings institution.

In recent years, two new companies have become established which deal predominantly with members of the Asian community, estimated to be the purchasers of up to one third of all properties on the market. One of these is an estate agent believed to offer additional complimentary finance facilities. The other is primarily a financial services organisation, but much of its work surrounds house purchases and sales.

Q2 Does the town have a town centre manager, town centre forum or similar partnership organisation?

ANSWER

The Wolverton Partnership was established in 1998 to apply for (successfully) and manage a Single Regeneration Budget programme. Among other things this has replaced old street lights with improved lights reflecting the town's Victorian character, managed a successful scheme to encourage over 50 retailers and other businesses to improve their frontages (again in character with the Victorian era), and agreed plans for improvements to the road and path surfaces in the centre of the town's shopping activity. It has also employed two different town centre managers or co-ordinators to lead the work.

With the establishment of the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council and with the ending of the SRB budget, the new council has taken over leadership of this function. It now employs a full time

caretaker and two part time assistants. Together they are responsible for everyday cleaning and upkeep of streets and paths (including graffiti removal) and for the development of landscaping in the town.

The future of Wolverton Partnership is in balance, pending a decision on the structure of the body to take *Future Wolverton* forward.

Q3 Is there a presence in the town of a Small Business Service, Business Link, Chamber of Trade, Learning and Skills Council, Enterprise Agency?

ANSWER

The main offices for all of these are in Central Milton Keynes, three miles away. Most are grouped together in the offices of the Chamber in Tempus, Midsummer Boulevard.

The Learning and Skills Council does have an office in the Agora, from where it runs a number of I.T training and access programmes, some of them targeted at business.

There is a local Wolverton Business Association. The membership of this has declined to a handful, and its rules of eligibility have been changed to restrict it to traders. With the help of the Wolverton Partnership the Association is campaigning to increase its membership.

Q4 What business support or initiatives have proved successful?

ANSWER

With the help of committed and proactive local volunteer action, the Shop frontages initiative (offering up to £1,000) for improvements) has been taken up by enough businesses to make a discernible difference to the appearance of certain shopping sub-area.

The Wolverton Business Association has had negligible effect in improving the position of local businesses. Understandably it has been focused on the trading issues of current members, not on strategic redevelopment of the town to improve overall trading conditions.

Q5 Are there regular events which have the potential to draw the business community together?

ANSWER

There is no history of such events being organised. Recently, communal events have been established, notably the Lantern festival (pre-Christmas) and the summer Music Festival in the square. In other towns, for example Stony Stratford, the business association is heavily involved in similar events, seen as a way of increasing visitor trade. In Wolverton, the Business Association has not been involved. Were it to be so, the events could overtime significantly add to the numbers visiting the town.

When the rail works were thriving the railway company organised an open weekend/festival. The new management hopes to restart something similar in the next 1-2 years, opening most of the works to visitors. Such an event would appeal to railway enthusiasts from a wide area, sometimes nationally (given that the works is immediately adjacent to one of the main Inter City lines). That event, if joined by local businesses, could become a major opportunity to draw the business community together.

More recently, The Town Council has initiated a business network in the town, who meet once a month for a breakfast club meeting at a different business premises each month. This includes most of the large employers as well as smaller retailers.

The Wolverton Rotary holds its monthly meetings in a hotel in Stony Stratford.

Q6 What is the current and likely future demand for broadband communication services?

ANSWER

All residential and business premises in Wolverton are able to check whether broadband services are available to them by either calling BT or checking their website. By entering post code details, you are told whether the facility is available to those specific premises. A line test would then be carried out to ensure suitability. In theory, all premises within 5.5km of the local exchange (situated behind Glyn Square in the North East corner of the town) are able to be supplied. Information about current use and unsatisfied demand is not available. All the new industrial and commercial estates surrounding the town are fully equipped.

Q7 What is the current and likely future status of the supply of broadband technology communication services?**ANSWER**

BT is the only broadband supplier in Wolverton. There is no NTL cable network, although newer areas of Milton Keynes were constructed with this facility. There is no alternative to BT currently for the provision of fixed links and this looks unlikely to change by the end of 2003. The nearest ISDN capable exchange is situated behind Glyn Square in the north east corner of the town. It is within three miles of all properties in Wolverton. There is reasonable mobile network coverage and all networks are available in the area. BT have plans to provide LLU (Local Loop Unbundling) in the local exchange but as yet no date has been set. Again this would be within three miles of all premises in the town. The plans for expansion of broadband services appear to be in line with regional and national targets.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS**Q8 Is there a Business directory or website for the town, or any arrangement for networking local suppliers?****ANSWER**

There is no such directory currently, but the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council is actively planning to produce one during 2003.

There is a voluntarily maintained website giving details of the main features and area of interest in the town and its immediate hinterland.

There is no directory on the internet of Wolverton businesses, nor a system for networking local suppliers on the internet or email.

There is a fledgling business network that meets once a month and is facilitated by the Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council.

The Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce is one of the bigger ones in the country with 1430 members, equivalent to 21% of the area's total business population. Its head offices are in Central Milton Keynes, 3 miles away and are easily accessible.

Q9 Are there adequate business meeting and conference facilities locally?**ANSWER**

Within the town the spaces available for meetings include The Christian Foundation, The Crauford Arms, The Old Bath House Community Centre, the Scout Hall, The Methodist Church, MADCAP and the schools. None of them are designed for use as a business venue, and none of them are adequate for business use. A symptom of this is that the Wolverton Rotary Club meets in Stony Stratford. The nearest appropriate venues are in the Cock Hotel, Stony Stratford (Marquee room) or in city centre locations some 3-4 miles away.

Q10 What results have there been from any existing town centre management work?**ANSWER**

No work has been undertaken specifically to improve facilities for businesses or to attract visitors to local businesses, other than the shop front improvement scheme and other aesthetic improvements to the shopping areas.

Q11 How well used are the agencies such as Small Business Service, Business Links, Chambers of trade or commerce, Learning Skills Council, Enterprise Agency?**ANSWER**

The Milton Keynes & North Bucks Chamber has 1,430 members, equivalent to 22% of all firms in the area. Within MK12 (which includes Stacey Bushes, outside Wolverton and Greenleys) the Chamber's members comprise 18% of all companies. It is highly likely that most such members are firms outside the traditional centre of Wolverton. The local Traders' Association does, however, participate alongside equivalent bodies in the other traditional centres in quarterly meetings together with Milton Keynes Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Thames Valley Police.

Q12 Is there a published strategy relating to the use of information technology?

ANSWER

There is no published strategy. There is no information about the number of households having internet access. There is public internet access at the library, with some educational and government websites being free of charge to view. There is also public access at the Regency Diner Internet café for a fee.

EASE OF TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE LOCAL AREA

Q.1 What is the distance to a national network of dual carriageway roads from the town and the least and most accessible villages?

ANSWER

Wolverton is bounded on three sides by major roads which form part of the city's grid road pattern. The fourth side comprises Old Wolverton Road, the spine for the Old Wolverton Industrial Estate. By road the centre of Wolverton is two miles north from direct access to the dual carriageway A5, linking to the West Midlands and to Dunstable and the M1. Direct access to the M1 north is along the A508 (9 miles to Jn.15), and to the M1 south is 8 miles (to Jn. 14). The estates of Hodge Lea and Blue Bridge, and the urban village of New Bradwell, are as accessible to these roads as is Wolverton. The hinterland villages are further away, by 1-2 miles (Haversham) and by 2-4 miles (Cosgrove and Castlethorpe).

Q2 What is the distance and average travel time by car to the nearest large town, from the town itself and from the most and least accessible village within the surrounding countryside?

ANSWER

The average travel time from Wolverton to Central Milton Keynes is ten minutes. Travel times from New Bradwell and Blue Bridge will be similar. From Hodge Lea they will be marginally shorter. From the villages of Haversham, Castlethorpe and Cosgrove the travel times will increase by another ten minutes.

Q3 What improvements are planned for the local / regional highway network in your area?

ANSWER

No improvements to the current road patterns around Wolverton are expected in the short or medium term.

Q4 How far is the train station from the town centre by foot, bicycle, taxi and bus?

ANSWER

For all modes of transport the distance is half a mile. By foot this takes 5-10 minutes, by bicycle 3 minutes (there are cycle racks at the station), by car, taxi and bus 1-2 minutes. Travelling by bus involves a short walk to 20+ steps to climb down before walking another 100 yards to the platform. This adds to the time needed. On the other hand, travellers using cars or taxis can go down the hill to the second entrance to the station, arriving in a car park and at ground level. This makes a car or taxi journey (and cycle journeys) considerably quicker, if one includes the distance to the train platform itself. Waiting for buses often takes several minutes. In practice, for this reason, walking is usually quicker than using a bus. The route for cyclists and pedestrians is not attractive. For the most part pavements are narrow and the road is bounded on both sides with high brick walls. There are 2-3 roads that need to be crossed by most walkers.

Q5 Is the main bus station or main concentration of bus termini in the town centre?

ANSWER

The bus terminus is along Church Street, 200 yards from the Agora (route stop) and 50 yards away (route start). There is a negligible distance to be walked.

Q6 Is it convenient to change between train and coach and/or bus services, i.e. is it easy to walk into town or is there a bus service that connects with the train?

ANSWER

A bus would be needed from the centre to the train only for those unable to walk. Buses are irregular and do not always run at advertised times. Some have been known to call 8 minutes early. They are not timed to meet specific trains. Bus numbers 4,5,19,33,34 stop at the train station (at the top of the bridge which means a walk down steep steps to reach the platform).

Q7 What is the frequency of the rail service?

ANSWER

Virgin Inter-City trains do not stop at Wolverton, but they do stop at Milton Keynes Central, three miles south down the line.

Silverlink trains provide two services per hour from early morning to mid evening (when services reduce to hourly). To the north these trains stop at Northampton and at other stops to Birmingham. To the south trains stop at Milton Keynes Central, Bletchley and other stops to Euston.

The trains are heavily used by commuters, for those travelling to Milton Keynes and for those travelling to work (predominantly to points south). Some services at these times are crowded. None of the neighbouring villages have rail connections.

There used to be a local service from Wolverton to Newport Pagnell. That service was one of those axed under the Beeching review in the 1960's. There is no plan to re-open it.

Q8 What is the travel time to the nearest large town by bus/coach/train, from the town and the villages in the surrounding countryside?

ANSWER

From Wolverton to Central Milton Keynes is five minutes by train (half hourly service, average waiting time of 15 minutes). There are no coach services.

There are four bus services during the week connecting Wolverton with central Milton Keynes. Two of these are less regular than the others and do not operate for the full day. During peak day times they together provide for up to 8 buses an hour travelling to central Milton Keynes; the journey takes 15-22 minutes to the Point (buses take different routes). During off peak hours the number of services is 5 per hour. The frequency is satisfactory. The journey time is relatively long, a function of the need to serve the dispersed communities within Milton Keynes.

Hodge Lea, Blue Bridge and New Bradwell enjoy half hourly services or more, and the journey time is 5-7 minutes reduced. Castlethorpe and Haversham enjoy a basic hourly service, which takes 7-12 minutes longer (than from Wolverton) to central Milton Keynes. Cosgrove is served only by occasional buses each day (on the central Milton Keynes to Northampton route).

With the exception of Castlethorpe, services from Wolverton and surrounding villages are regular. The villages of Haversham and Hanslope have a service only half as frequent, or less, as that for Wolverton, Hodge Lea, Blue Bridge and New Bradwell. For people in these areas the bus service can be used and relied on for work and shopping. For the other villages the service might be adequate for shopping, but not for work. Most residents would need to use cars. Buses do not provide cycle racks.

Q.9 What is the number of national coach services per day?

ANSWER

There are no national coach services to Wolverton. There is a national coach terminus at Junction 14 of the M1 on the outskirts of the city. There are no direct bus or rail services to the Coachway, but a ten minute service operates from the CMK terminus at the Point for the Coachway.

Q10 What improvements are planned for the public transport infrastructure and public transport service in the area?

ANSWER

The bus timetable is updated twice a year and services are adjusted to meet changes in demand. Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council have recently commissioned Transport Regeneration to look at possibilities of redevelopment and improvement at Wolverton train station. This could result in significant aesthetic and service facility improvements for the station. Alongside the proposals for the upgrade of the West Coast main line by Network Rail, there could be substantial improvement in the rail infrastructure serving the town and wider hinterland.

Milton Keynes Council have initial proposals to trial the running of buses on grid road only routes. This could significantly cut journey times from Wolverton to central Milton Keynes for bus users.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q11 Is it quick and easy to travel to the nearest large town by public transport as it is by car?

ANSWER

No. From Wolverton the journey by bus will be 10-15 minutes longer (100%+) than by car, not including waiting time which might be an average additionally of 5-10 minutes. All services with one exception are indirect (travel through different estates) but none involve changes.

The differences become greater in off-peak hours and at weekends, when bus services are less regular.

The differences are also considerably greater for people in Haversham and Castlethorpe, allowing for waiting times. They are markedly greater for people in Cosgrove, for whom the bus service is occasional.

Q12 Are there cycle or walking routes between towns and villages?

ANSWER

Yes. Milton Keynes has been planned to have a network of redways (for cyclists) across the whole of the city. This network almost totally avoids conventional roads, and is also used by walkers.

The Sustrans national cycle network passes through Milton Keynes very close to Wolverton, crossing the River Ouse in Old Wolverton.

There are pavements (and in parts, cycle ways) on the routes between Wolverton and New Bradwell, between Wolverton and Haversham, and between Wolverton and Stony Stratford. Hodge Lea and Blue Bridge can be reached through a combination of paths and redways, but the latter are not considered as safe as conventional paths, not always running alongside roads.

Castlethorpe can be reached via a redway (but this would not be considered a safe route for pedestrians, and is unlit). Cosgrove can be reached via a path alongside the river Ouse and/or the Grand Union Canal, but neither route is appropriate for everyday use.

EASE OF ACCESS TO SERVICES

Q.1 Are bus and train times from outlying villages to the town convenient for travelling to work and going to school?

ANSWER

During term time a school service for Hanslope, Castlethorpe and Haversham travels to and from Wolverton Campus (site of Milton Keynes College for students in year 12+), leaving Castlethorpe at 8.05am and setting off on the return at 3.45pm.

For the journey to Wolverton (Radcliffe School) there is a bus that leaves Castlethorpe at 7.45am and another from Wolverton leaving at 6.03pm. A parallel service, number 33/34, operates more frequently (11 journeys per day), picking up in Castlethorpe at 6.35am (early for school) and 8.38am (late for school), leaving Wolverton to return at 16.30pm and 17.05pm.

These services are barely adequate for schoolchildren or for workers. Residents of these villages would have difficulty relying totally on buses for their transport if in full time education or work.

Some buses serve the Open University from various places in Milton Keynes, including Wolverton. However, there is only one return bus and it is not timed well, leaving for Wolverton at 17.35pm and 17.05pm on Fridays. It would be necessary to leave work early each day to get that service.

Q2 Are there any planned changes to rural public transport services

ANSWER

Not to our knowledge

Q.3 Is public transport accessible to the mobility impaired?

ANSWER

Senior and disabled residents in the Milton Keynes area can apply for a concessionary travel permit. This entitles travel at all times on all local bus services for 35p per single journey. It also allows them to receive some discounts on services to certain places outside Milton Keynes. Passes are also valid

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

for travel between the six rail stations within Milton Keynes (some of them local stations on the Bedford line).

The great majority of routes are served by modern single decker buses which provide

- a step free entrance (and low step up from the road)
- priority seats within easy reach of the entrance.
- buggy zones (for parking buggies)

Q4 Are there special public and private transport services, e.g bus, taxi or alternative community or voluntary transport catering for people who are mobility impaired?

ANSWER

Milton Keynes Community Transport is operated by MK Metro on behalf of Milton Keynes Council. It has 4 mini buses operating on scheduled flexible routes Monday to Saturday, and additionally operates six fastchair vehicles for use by individuals from their houses to destinations not covered by the mini bus service (eg shopping trips).

The service is operated for use by the long term disabled and frail elderly residents who are unable to use public transport. There is a membership fee.

12 of the council licensed Hackney carriages vehicles are able to carry people in wheelchairs and some types of scooters. Additionally Stephen Drews has three transit minibuses, suitable for some people with disabilities.

Age Concern has mini buses available for group bookings.

British Red Cross has a voluntary driver scheme to help people with hospital visits.

Q5 Is information on public transport easy to obtain?

ANSWER

Train times are available on boards at Wolverton station. Bus times are available on boards at the Wolverton bus stops. Complete timetables for both as well as details of coach services are available at the library.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q.6 How many public services are available on-line and where can they be accessed?

ANSWER

Travel guides are available for the area on-line at www.pindar.co.uk/mk and at the council's detailed website www.mkweb.co.uk

The MK Travel guide publishes e-mail addresses for council departments.

Q7 Do buses travel right into the town centre?

ANSWER

Yes. Buses stop in Church Street outside the Agora, which is where most people consider the centre of the town to be. They also stop outside the railway station, but on the bridge. This requires either a walk down 20+ steps, or a walk of 200 yards down the hill on the pavement to access the station from its car park.

Q8 How easy is it to get to health, education, cultural and retail services by public transport?

ANSWER

The three rural areas which clearly fit (partly) within Wolverton's hinterland are Castlethorpe, Haversham and Cosgrove. Other areas of the hinterland are close to Wolverton, and as close as Wolverton to Central Milton Keynes: these areas are as well serviced as Wolverton itself for most services – Hodge Lea being a possible exception.

Bus times are suitable from Haversham and Castlethorpe for students travelling to-from school in Wolverton, although there is little flexibility for students returning later than normal. The service is reasonably direct and travel time is 10-20 minutes. There are no alternative public transport services available.

Cosgrove residents have a significantly poorer bus link to Wolverton. It is not always adequate either

for school students or for other users to rely on.

Route 2 buses (half-hourly) travel from central Wolverton to Monks Way and Greenleys, close to Wolverton Health Centre (but across the road). It is believed at times to stop outside the Health centre. The alternative is a walk (15 minutes) or a taxi to the centre.

Route 4 buses (every 20 minutes) travel between Wolverton centre and the Milton Keynes Hospital.

Route 6 (half hourly) also links Wolverton to the Milton Keynes hospital.

Q9 How easy is it to get to health, education, cultural and retail services by car?

ANSWER

To the Wolverton Health centre journeys might take 10-20 minutes. Travel to Milton Keynes Hospital would add another 10 minutes (slightly more in rush hour).

Q10 What time is the last Friday or Saturday night bus service from the town to the villages in the surrounding countryside?

ANSWER

Last buses to Castlethorpe and Haversham are ;

Friday Route 5 – 6.03pm
Route 33/34 – 5.05pm

Saturday Route 5 – 5.58pm
Route 33/34 – 4.30 pm

Last buses to Cosgrove are ; Route 35/37
Friday – 2.05pm
Saturday – 2.09pm

These are completely inadequate for people visiting Wolverton on weekend evenings. They must rely on cars or taxis. Bus services from Central Milton Keynes to these villages is equally poor.

EASE OF MOVEMENT AROUND THE TOWN

Q1 Are there any seriously congested junctions or parts of the local road network?

ANSWER

The worst area is the intersection between Church Street and Radcliffe Street to the front of the Agora. Problems are often caused by lorries reversing into the Agora car park/loading bay. A roundabout and other improvements to that junction are planned to be implemented during 2003.

Q2 Have there been many road traffic accidents involving pedestrian and cyclists at key locations in the town.

ANSWER

In the period January 2000 to February 2003 there have been:

Pedestrians: no fatal accidents, 5 serious accidents and five slight accidents (by severity of injury)

Cyclists: no fatal accidents, 1 serious accident and 3 slight accidents (by severity of injury)

Q3 Are there any particular locations, e.g shopping streets, where there is conflict between pedestrians and cars, buses or heavy vehicles?

ANSWER

The most dangerous areas are :

- i) Stratford Rd, from Tescos to the pedestrian crossing and traffic lights beyond the car showrooms : this is a significant through route for people travelling to and from other parts of Milton Keynes, and the main route out of Wolverton for many local residents. Visitors to Tesco (30,000 visits weekly) add to its use.
- ii) Church Street between Creed Street and the junction with Radcliffe Street : this is used by cars, lorries, buses and pedestrians : the bus station is along this route, and buses are frequently parked on the road before starting their journeys : problems are caused by lorries

reversing alongside the Agora to make deliveries to shops within, and all buses turn across Church Street and into Radcliffe Street.

Safety has improved following traffic calming along both streets, chicanes, road narrowing and mini roundabouts in Stratford Road, and sleeping policemen along Church Street. Further measures have been approved for implementation in 2003, including a roundabout at the junction with Radcliffe Street and Church Street, and associated changes to pavements and surfaces to increase safety for pedestrians.

Additionally large lorries, some with trailers, use Creed Street to exit the McConnell Drive industrial premises, onto Stratford Rd. This is, or will soon be, in breach of restrictions on the routes HGV's can take in the town, but represents a risk until those restrictions are enforced.

Q4 Where are short and long term car parks and disabled parking spaces, and how well used are they?

ANSWER

There are five off street car parks, all within a quarter of a mile of each other and from the Agora ;

- i) Church Street (adjacent to the Agora) has spaces for 150 cars (six spaces planned for use solely by those with disabilities)
- ii) Creed Street (Glyn Square) has spaces for 48 vehicles (none of them reserved for disabled parking)
- iii) Tesco has spaces for 470 cars, including 12 specifically for families with young children and another 18 spaces for disabled parking, but this car park is intended for shoppers only and not for general or long term use.
- iv) Old Bath House Community Centre (at rear of Tesco) has spaces for 62 cars including a number specifically for disabled parking.
- v) The station has parking for approximately 75 cars. None are specifically reserved for disabled parking.

The total spaces available are 805 spaces. During most weekdays the station car park is used close to capacity. At times during the week both the Creed St and Church St car parks are full at times to 70-90% capacity. During the busiest periods on some Saturdays, all spaces (excluding the station) can be 90+ full.

All parks are currently free, except for the station where charges apply depending on the time of day and length of stay.

Both Tesco and Church St car parks, intended for short term use, appear to be used long term by rail travellers to avoid the charges. Tesco is considering the introduction both of wardens and of penalty charges for long term users.

Q5 How well used are the on and off street car and coach parks?

ANSWER

Off street parking at the station is about 70% used most weekdays. Free on street parking around the shops and houses is well used at all times. There is no market day, but on Saturdays all parks together can be 90+ full.

Q6 How many public buildings and shops have disabled access?

ANSWER

The Co-op, Netto and Tesco supermarkets all have wide entrances and no steps up into the shops (although there is a kerb from parking spaces to the path in Netto's case). The Agora has some ramps for access by wheelchair to the upper level offices and a lift to the second floor.

Hardly any of the traditional shop premises have been adapted for disabled access.

The public library's entrance has been adapted (offering a ramp as an alternative to steps).

Foundation House (used for council meetings) is well adapted for people with disabilities.

The Old Bath House Community Centre is accessible both front and back (from the car park) without any steps, and all parts of the ground floor are easily accessible for those with mobility difficulties. The front entrance to the Living Archive has steps up and its lower ground floor is not accessible to those in wheelchairs.

Madcap (community drama and arts) is an old multi-storey building and is not easily accessible to

those who have mobility problems.

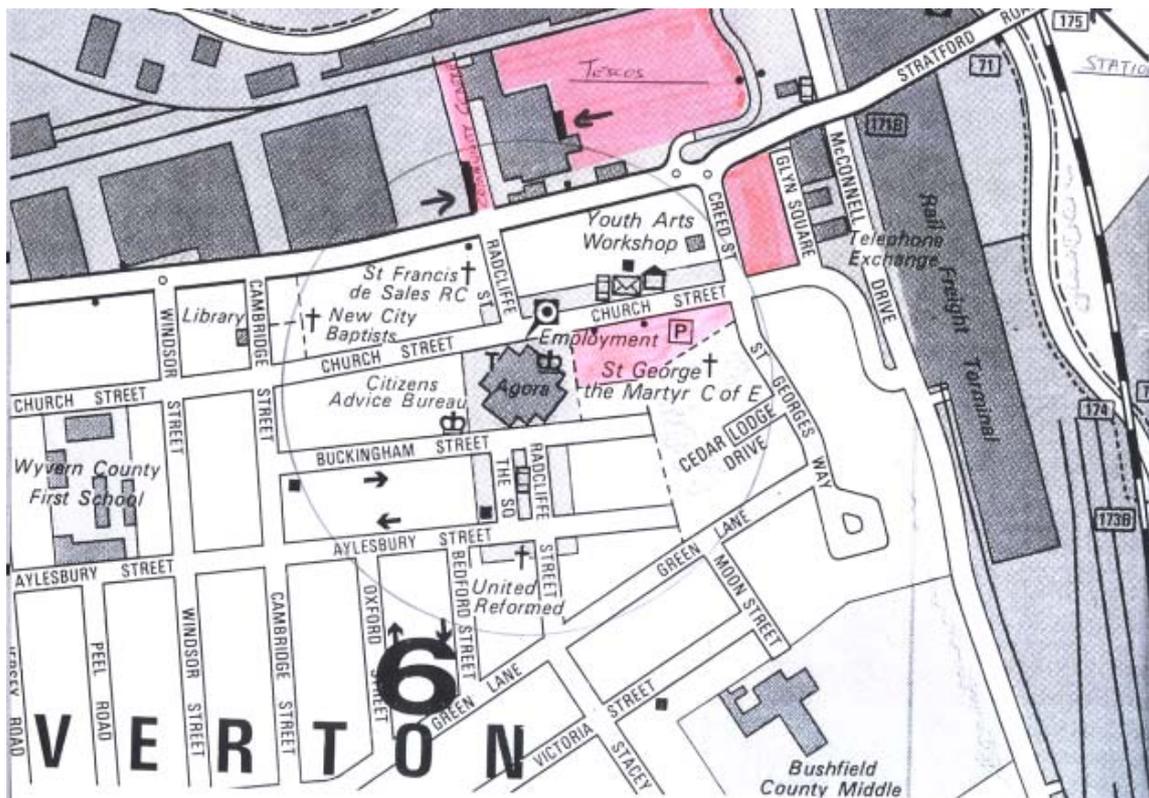
The schools tend to be used for many of the larger public meetings in the town. By and large these provide good access for people with mobility difficulties.

No buildings in the town are specifically signed as suitable for disabled access.

Q7 Are the majority of disabled parking spaces within 250 metres of the main focal points of the town centre?

ANSWER

The plan below highlights in pink the main public parking areas and identifies precisely where disabled parking is located, in the Tesco and community centre car parks (shaded in black with arrows indicated). Together these spaces make up approximately 2.5% of all parking. The map also defines the area within a radius of 250 yards of the centre of the Agora.



The spaces in the community centre are 220 yards from the Agora, the centre of Wolverton's shopping area. There are no steps down from the parking places, but users would need to cross Stratford Road and Church Street to get into the Agora. In both cases there are kerbs to mount and dismount. Alternatively there are traffic lights at a pedestrian crossing between Radcliffe Street and Creed Street. These have a small ramp down to street level. However, the diversion would add 110+ yards to the total journey.

The spaces at Tesco, only intended for shoppers at the store, are further away. That car park is 20+ft below the level of Stratford Rd. There is a switchback ramp adjacent to the community centre entrance which exits at the pedestrian crossing. The total distance on foot to the Agora would be nearly quarter of a mile.

No shop mobility scheme is on operation.

Q8 Can buses move freely throughout the town centre?

ANSWER

Buses are not usually blocked by traffic congestion. Traffic calming measures slow them down just as they do other vehicles. Buses do have to negotiate their exit out of Radcliffe Street on to Stratford Rd, sometimes a difficult measure if traffic is heavy.

Buses already go right into the centre of town. Arguably an ideal public transport system would service the western and southern parts of the town more, but the narrowness of streets created in the Victorian

era and on-street parking both make that unfeasible.

Q9 Are there any traffic management measures in place?

ANSWER

Traffic calming road humps were introduced a few years ago, to slow speeding traffic. More are planned along Church Street and Radcliffe St (to be implemented in 2003). In addition, restrictions are about to be placed on HGV's to prevent them using the bridge over the railway (and to reduce through traffic along Stratford Rd). The main measures have been :

- Stratford Road – chicanes, mini roundabouts and road narrowing.
- Church Street – sleeping policemen at both ends
- Creed Street – mini roundabouts at both ends

The measures have all largely succeeded in slowing traffic and in deterring through traffic, especially heavy goods through traffic.

Q10 Are the main shopping streets in the town centre pedestrianised or with pedestrian priority measures?

ANSWER

No streets have yet been pedestrianised, but the slowing of traffic along Church Street has made it safer and easier for pedestrians to cross.

The redesign of The Square to the south of the Agora has made the square a more attractive place in which to walk and sit. Surrounded on all sides by narrow roads, it has the potential for further development to improve pedestrian amenity. Further development of pathways and roadways on Church Street will enhance the area's amenity for pedestrians.

In the long term, traditional back ways between the sets of Victorian houses, which criss cross central Wolverton, offer an excellent opportunity to introduce attractive and safe pedestrian priority routes.

A second opportunity long term exists along Creed Street / Glyn Square and the eastern end of Stratford Road (with a largely retained Victorian street frontage on one side) and both the pedestrian access to Tesco and the community centre on the other. Depending on large scale traffic calming measures, both areas could become more pedestrianised.

These opportunities have been discussed in depth within the Transport and Access working group and are discussed further in the Conclusion section of this document.

Q11 What are the main foot and cycle paths within the town?

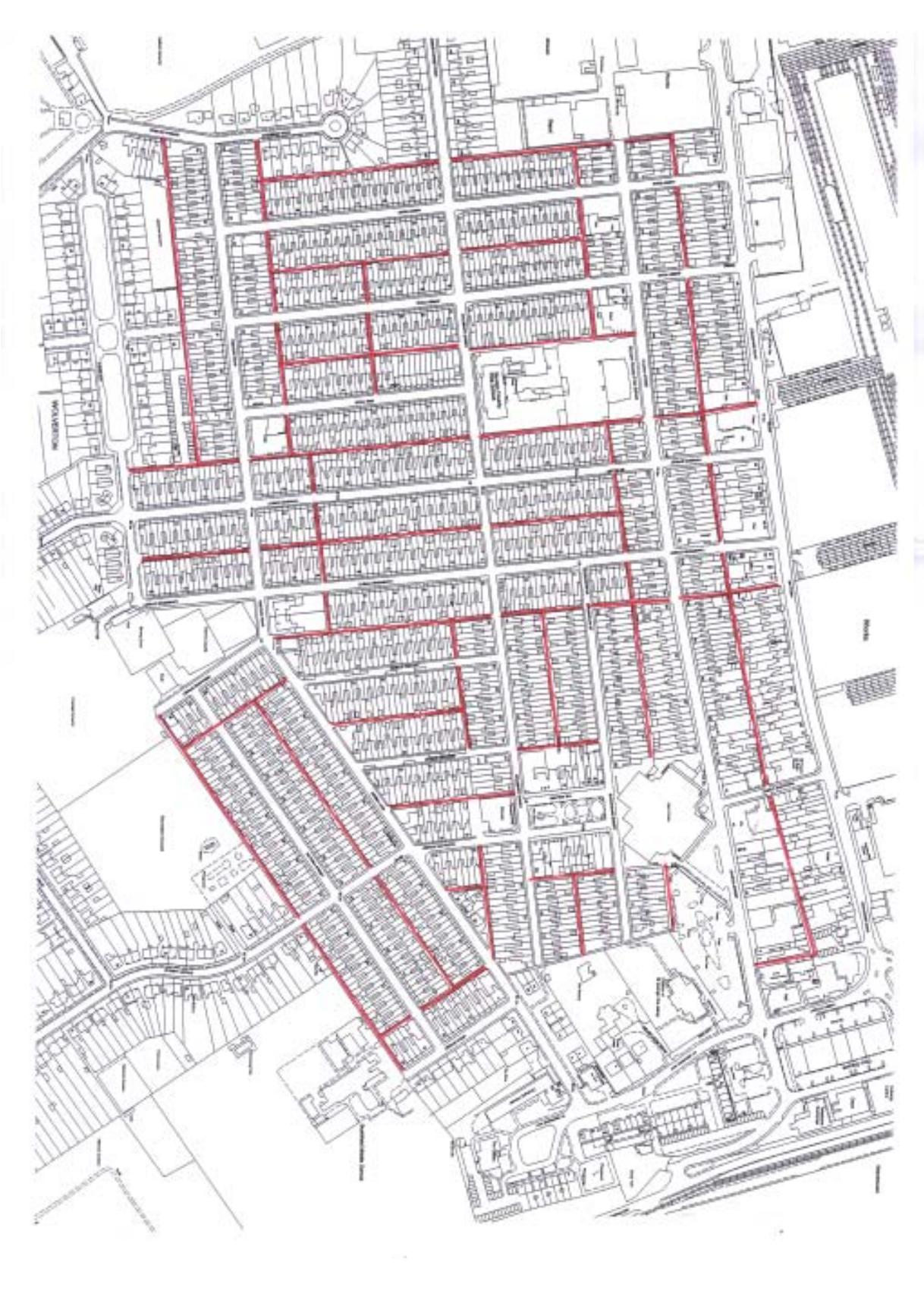
ANSWER

Back ways, built into the town in Victorian times, provide an alternative system to roads. These in principle enable any resident to move on foot or bicycle to any other part of the town. In practice they can be poorly maintained, dirty and are unlit at night. They do involve the crossing of roads wherever the back way system crosses with the road system (*please see map overleaf*).

Towards the west of the town The North Bucks Way crosses Stratford Road. This is a traditional long pathway, several hundred years old, which connects south Wolverton to parts of Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire in one direction. In the other it passes beside the Galleon estate (Old Wolverton), past Manor cottages, into what was Manor Farm, and connects with a redway that runs along the River Ouse. This part of the way has now become part of the Sustrans system of bicycle ways, and continues over the river to Castlethorpe.

Other redways connect cyclists and pedestrians to all parts of Milton Keynes. They are well made and have a solid even surface. They are suitable for family groups and the less able bodied. They are attractive to use in daytime, passing mainly through green spaces between settlements. They can be dark and intimidating at night, because they are deliberately set aside from roads. People can find it difficult to navigate through them because they follow contours and features sometimes out of sight of the main roads by which walkers usually orient themselves.

These paths and redways are excellent for recreational use, and in daytime. They are not popular at night time. Added lighting and improved signage would make them more popular specially in daytime but would not overcome the isolation that some stretches provide.



Q12 Is it easy to find your way around town?

ANSWER

There is signage from outside Wolverton to the Milton Keynes Museum of Industry and Rural Life, which is also outside Wolverton.

At the entrance to the town from the railway bridge (junction of Creed Street and Stratford Road) there is a sign for 'Town Centre' pointing to Tesco (the opposite direction from the traditional town centre).

There are no other signs within the town, a problem for visitors particularly concerning the Square ('hidden' behind the Agora), the library and the swimming pool. It has been recognised that a thorough signage system, with a consistent design, would be helpful. Directional signs might be appended above eye height to walls at all street corners.

There is a sign to MADCAP, but only from McConnell Drive, not in any direction from Stratford Road.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Q13 Are the pavements in good condition and are there dropped kerbs at crossing points?

ANSWER

Pavements are generally in a bad condition. Few crossing points have dropped kerbs. At certain places on Stratford Rd, the road surface has been raised, both acting as a sleeping policeman for vehicular traffic and allowing pedestrians to cross without manoeuvring kerbs.

Q14 Is there a shop mobility scheme?

ANSWER

There is no such scheme in Wolverton. There is an excellent shop mobility scheme in central Milton Keynes.

Q15 Do the majority of pedestrian crossings have tactile markings and audible warnings, i.e. pelican crossings?

ANSWER

There are two pelican crossings in the town, at either end of the built up stretch of Stratford Rd. At both there are raised buttons and audible warnings.

Q16 Is there secure cycle parking at convenient locations throughout the town, e.g. at the railway station, in the main shopping areas, at the bus station, at schools?

ANSWER

Cycle parking is available only at the station. It is not secure and many bikes are stolen. The security cameras cover the car park but not the cycle park.

Q17. Are the majority of short term parking places within 400 metres of the main shopping areas?

ANSWER

Yes, they are. Please refer to the outline map on page 56.

Q18 Do buses experience delays or unreliability as a result of traffic conditions and/or traffic management measures within the town?

ANSWER

The distances between the bus station and the entrances/exits of the town are respectively a quarter of a mile (from the east) and half a mile (from the west). Journeys along that route rarely contribute to bus delays. Any delays are invariably caused in other sections of their routes.

Within the town most people are a short walk from bus stops, but those living in the south of the town have further to walk. The station is in what everyone would consider the town's centre.

Given the dispersed character of Milton Keynes, buses take a variety of routes through different estates and areas to be accessible to all. This does result in a relatively slow service for those dependant on the services in getting to/from central Milton Keynes.

Recently, however, a direct and frequent service linking Wolverton to central Milton Keynes and Bletchley has been introduced, making it easier for those travelling to the other main centres.

The buses are generally relatively new, clean, in good condition and comfortable to ride in.

Q19 Are there dedicated, segregated cycle routes linking residential areas to the town centre and to local schools?

ANSWER

The redway system offers dedicated cycle routes throughout Milton Keynes. These are also used as alternative pedestrian routes. Technically the Sustrans/redway system allows anyone to cycle from Castlethorpe to Wolverton. In practice the route through the country would be intimidating in the dark, and then joins a busy roads (Old Wolverton Road) before taking the cyclist to the centre or schools.

The system is not available on routes from Castlethorpe or Haversham. It is available for residents of Blue Bridge, Bradwell Abbey, Greenleys and Hodge Lea (each a few minutes from the centre by bike), connecting them to traffic calmed roads for the last part of the journey.

Q20 How easy is it to walk to / from school?

ANSWER

Journeys are short but there are many roads to cross on most routes to schools in the town, as well as unpleasant underpasses under the grid roads from Greenleys, Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes. Many parent prefer to take their children to school by car, even for short distances, and this causes additional congestion around the school. Students travelling to Radcliffe Secondary school might use redways which sometimes involve travelling in small isolated areas which are unlit at night.

Additional Question. Are there any plans to restrict HGV's in any part of Wolverton?

ANSWER

It has been agreed that, except for loading and unloading, HGV's are to be banned from using Stratford Rd. This is to be implemented from 2003. HGV's are to be obliged to use grid roads, and the Old Wolverton Road, to bypass Wolverton itself.

Additional Question. What numbers of people come into Wolverton by bus and by train per day/week?

ANSWER

- i) Silverlink trains state that the annual 'footprint' is 101,000 per year. This is people passing through Wolverton station. Assuming no one-way journeys in either direction, that number is 50,500 people arriving in Wolverton per year, or 1,098 per week (assuming only 48 weeks per year, due to holidays) or 220 per day (assuming 5 days per week).
- ii) A round-the-clock survey for the Wolverton Rail Users Group in June 2000 identified (on a Wednesday) a total footprint of 686 passenger, 356 up (towards Northampton) and 330 down (towards central Milton Keynes), an average of 9 passengers per train. The most popular train was 7.31am up : 55 passengers got on the train and 7 got off. 45 passengers (7%) took bikes with them on the train
Very few were commuting northwards. Most were commuting southwards or were commuting to Wolverton. 61% of passengers, presumed most to be commuters, left between 6.10am and 8.50am (See Appendix 2 for survey report and chart tracking movements over time).
- iii) A second survey for *Future Wolverton* was conducted on a weekday in October 2002. This invited passengers to answer a number of questions. A total of 129 responded. The detailed analysis is attached. The key points to emerge were :
 - 50% came from Wolverton or New Bradwell, and 33% came from outside Wolverton's hinterland
 - 40% travelled to the station by car, and 40% travelled on foot : 11% travelled by bicycle.
 - Easily the most popular destination was London (61%), with 13% going to Northampton and 10% to Bletchley.
 - 61% use the station every working day, but 20% use it less than once a week.
 - 65% sometimes catch a train for this journey from a different station ; 84% of these would use

Milton Keynes Central, primarily because it offers more services, faster services, and can be more convenient.

- Generally the rail service from Wolverton is considered good, but people would prefer more/better facilities and more frequent trains.
- The suggested improvements are to provide toilets, to provide hot drinks and newspapers, to provide better shelter, and to build it into more of a 'proper' station.

CONCLUSIONS

Each of the five Working Groups drew up a series of conclusions following their deliberations

ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP CONCLUSIONS

Wolverton's strengths

- A fairly intact and compact example of a Victorian/Edwardian railway town including houses, public buildings, road and backway network
- Clear evidence of the town's railway heritage and the potential to conserve, enhance and exploit it
- Conservation Area status has been achieved
- Some of the old railway structures have been listed
- Town contains many fine buildings
- Good communications -it is accessible from a number of directions by rail, road and canal
- The potential size of the development site alongside a canal and near to a railway station
- The location next to a new town, but appearing to be separate from it - contrast of the old and the new emphasising our own strong identity. The type of buildings that don't exist elsewhere in MK
- Large well-built family houses
- Small shop units
- All facilities within walking distance
- Town close to parkland, river and canal - easily accessible, good for walking

Wolverton's weaknesses

- Ownership of important buildings and sites in the centre of the town in the hands of absentee landlord
- Lack of appreciation of the worth of the town's environment by both local people and important people in the Council
- Piecemeal development since initial railway town development
- Access to developable areas is a problem
- Gateways to the town are unattractive, don't merit what comes afterwards
- The railway station building and access to the town from there
- Car parking in fairly narrow streets affects circulation
- Maintenance of backways a problem
- Renewed backways are too 'clinical' and have taken some of the character away from the town
- Houses have been improved using non traditional materials
- Attitude of people outside Wolverton is largely negative - unlike their attitude to Stony and Newport
- Buildings out of keeping that are prominent - Gables, Agora, Glyn Square shopping and car showrooms.

Wolverton's Opportunities

- Old railway buildings to be used as a shell for new developments
- Opportunities to use old small stable blocks as sites for small enterprises
- Cheap land/property prices, means that compulsory purchase can be achieved relatively cheaply
- Spare land to move things to when a site is redeveloped
- Style guide/palette for developers to be done
- Educational programme re value of the town's heritage
- To reflect the cultural diversity in the decoration of the buildings
- To have a practical demonstration of what can be achieved - via a Building Preservation Trust - a showcase house to show people how they could restore the original features of a house
- Gateways to be improved and the Glyn Square shopping site to be redeveloped
- Opening the canal up
- Making access to the railway easier, particularly for pedestrians

CONCLUSIONS

- New station, made integral to the town
- Secret Garden development
- Museum/attraction that reflects the town's railway heritage

Wolverton's Threats

- Piecemeal housing developments that don't reflect the town's architectural heritage
 - The apathy of Wolverton people
 - People who live in Wolverton not realising the value of the town's history
 - Not taking care of the town's assets
 - The loss of the town's Park
 - Not having tight development control
 - The closure of the railway station
-

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP CONCLUSIONS

Wolverton's Strengths

- Vigorous Town Council – giving opportunity to participate, newsletter, caretaker etc, mechanism for cultural improvements
- Lots of groups based here
- Sporting activities clubs – tradition
- Ouse Valley River Walk
- Arts activities originated and linked with Wolverton
- Lots of people prepared to get involved
- A friendly place, a good community spirit
- Events are well-attended – brings in Asian families (especially school fetes)
- History

Weaknesses

- Lack of nursing homes for local people means they have to move well away (e.g. Greenleys residents have to go to Newport or Bletchely and leave families)
- Health Centre – difficult to get doctors
- Lack of interaction between Asian population and rest - some within schools and sport (e.g. cricket) but need to develop richer cultural life through mixing
- No one owning and tackling the drug problem within the community
- Little police presence
- Agora cuts town in half visually and physically and disrupts grid system upon which town originally built
- Lack of publicity re advertising community groups to wider community
- Lack of places for wedding receptions etc
- Quality and no. of pitches/spaces

Opportunities

- Diversity, scale of new housing development and range of prices
- Linking youth and sports activities
- Make connections with Greenleys through joint activities (eg sports provision)
- Opening branch surgery in central Wolverton
- Linking health resources to other community services/resources (e.g. Keep Fit classes, library etc.)
- Non stop circular bus service to provide access
- Richer cultural life through mixing

- Street wardens to reduce fear of crime
 - Get a better relationship with police and other agencies to tackle drugs and other problems
 - Tesco's – new centre of town – social focus now (centre shifting north)
 - Old buildings invested in to make them part of modern world
 - Family pub
 - Regeneration of local recs and parks
 - Make a strength of Wolverton's arts activities – right kind of environment and buildings
 - Making something of the history “think creatively while respecting the past”
 - Using Housing Associations to help build a community
 - To provide more expensive homes too, and shops the occupants can go to and spend money
 - Developing the MK Arts 'Fringe'
 - Royal Train/Tourism
 - Secret Garden
-

ECONOMY WORKING GROUP CONCLUSIONS

1. Snapshot of Wolverton' Business Economy.

i) Overview

Wolverton contains a mix of businesses from small local to large national. Many large companies are located in Old Wolverton, but they have not previously been involved with or made comments on town regeneration. Little is known about where their staff come from and how or if they use local services.

There is a need to 'uplift' the environment, to bring people in to Wolverton. The town's image is tatty. We need to sort out environmental problems and tackle 'yob' culture. We need to investigate social issues or trends that are holding the area back from regeneration. There should be the means for people to spend a nice day out in Wolverton. This is lacking at the moment.

ii) Transport and Access

Businesses see the need to encourage customers to park up and walk round town. The following problems/potential were highlighted:

- Nothing to encourage people to venture any further than Tesco's. Signage around Tesco's is aggressively marketing Tesco's alone and no information boards to indicate the town beyond.
- No Council run carpark in Wolverton (unlike other areas). This has seen environmental problems in the Town's main carpark.
- Walkways shabby, ill lit and perceived as threatening. This can affect trade to some areas of town especially The Square. Unpleasant even by afternoon in winter months.
- Needs to be a way of making walking around town pleasant. This would encourage window shopping.
- The Square should be an asset. Lovely evening, ideal location for people to sit out and enjoy the evening but nothing to carry this through. Café tables? Quality wine bar?

2. EMPLOYMENT

Employment : current situation

- Believed that there are many more varied employment possibilities for the future than there are at the moment. This holds one of the main keys to regeneration

- Businesses tend to be large like Alstom, Tescos and some of those in Old Wolverton; or small like Wolverton shops and businesses – there is a definite gap in medium size businesses.
- Population of about 6,000 in Wolverton & Greenleys Parish area but believed to have high proportion of elderly people beyond working age.
- According to local estate agents people recently moving here see Wolverton as on the “up” but its convenience to London can promote the dormitory factor.
- About 90% of employment had been lost over 30 years from Railway Works alone. This has had a knock on effect on businesses in Town. Many shops in Stratford Road were geared up to service early mornings and lunchtimes for workers.

ii) Catchment areas: Prospects and problems

- There are approx 70 businesses in the Old Wolverton Industrial Estate. There is potential for those employed there to use Wolverton services, which would help to boost businesses. However there is no quick direct route that could be used lunch times. The two areas are very isolated and separate from each other.

iii) Employment profile - to encourage a mixed profile

- Encourage more but at the moment there is a lack of office space in Wolverton.
- Engineering units. Wolverton has had a long experience of engineering expertise. Small starter units to encourage a growth of this type of business desirable. Encourage apprenticeship schemes and quality training.
- High tech industries. IT and internet based companies. Small print works. These can provide specialist services and operate from small units. This can improve prosperity in an area. Variety of different skills/training/education schemes.
- Service industries. These are traditionally low skills but necessary if there is to be a good mix in the Town. Coffee Shops, Pubs, cinemas, hotels and tourism all need these workers.
- Rail-based skills. Make a connection with a Railway Museum/ Railworks/heritage railways. Building on local reputation and contacts.

iv) Opportunities

- **Wolverton Railway Station:** Current lack of facilities there but the Town still has rail access. This should be an opportunity to invest in the Station area. Rail link important for some businesses. This could be a good gateway to the town. Station much closer to shops than most towns.
- **Development & investment**
Railway buildings and redevelopments in Old Wolverton. Multi-use desirable for new residents and employment.
- **Business Networking.** The local businesses do not seem to relate to each other or take advantage of local contacts. Opportunity for them to join in schemes of excellence or sharing of services/facilities and contacts. Inter-trading and consultancy.
- Desirable to attract inward investing businesses who would be committed to and invest in the area.

i) Where retailing is positioned

- The traditional shops are still considered an asset.
- Connections between the current shopping streets are not ideal. There is not one conventional High Street and this makes it more difficult to portray a strong image.
- Pedestrian routes, attractive and safe, need positively to be planned in.
- Specialist shops and services: some of these exploit their personal and specialist knowledge to attract customers from Wolverton's hinterland. Jeweller's customer list showed 60% are from outside Wolverton. Towcester inhabitants seem to be frequent visitors to Wolverton. Olney inhabitants used to be more frequent visitors but the new town carpark in Olney is believed to have improved the situation there- so probably more residents now stay there for shopping.
- Very little to encourage someone to "make a day of it". Not the variety of services and browser friendly environment like Stony Stratford.

ii) Ways Forward

- **A Market.** Wolverton market days on Friday was always bustling with activity. Local villagers specifically visited Wolverton for the market.

Possible locations discussed:

- The Square,
- The Agora Carpark,
- The Community Centre Carpark incorporating adjoining waste ground.
- Possible redevelopment of Glyn Square to incorporate market area to make that area more sympathetic to the Conservation Area.
- **The "Wolverton Experience"**. Combination of niche businesses and services alongside railway/canal tourism possibilities. Former Royal Train Shed and Triangle Locomotive Shop development.
- **Business mix.** Careful consideration of business mix has worked for other towns. Perhaps provide incentives for key businesses?
- **Marketing:** There would have to be a way to project the "big picture" to encourage businesses to move to Wolverton. The ideal would be for companies and businesses to commit to promote Wolverton.
- **Tesco's** : Tesco's is an isolated entity at the moment. There is no encouragement for their customers to notice the rest of Wolverton. Roads and paths from the carpark do not encourage shoppers into the rest of Wolverton. Even if half of their customers used rest of Wolverton before or after shopping there it would provide an immense boost in trade.
- **Signage: This is extremely bad. Attractions are not emphasised. Unattractive commercial signs dominate. There are hardly any information signs.**
- Tackle environmental difficulties.
- Partnership role from police.
- Play on Wolverton's image and cultural diversity. It is not Stony Stratford or Newport Pagnell!
- Reinstate traditional pedestrian routes within the centre.
- Investigate making an area suitable for pedestrian precinct (Covent Garden feel - walker friendly- a place to sit and spend time, entertainments/promotions/image building.)
- Make Wolverton a real alternative to CMK, with an interesting image - not the same names as in every high street.
- Investigate town link transport - to link attractions within the town, perhaps reflecting the town's heritage.
- Make a feature of old wall areas and railway remains round town.
- Try to get balance between attracting some evening/night activities but avoiding areas being closed up during the day.

CONCLUSIONS

iii) Current problems to be resolved

Security.

- Security has been a problem. Several businesses had been broken into - some more than once.
- The businesses feel let down by what they feel is a lack of police presence - keenly felt at night. Lack of opening hours at the local Police Station, and telephone calls are taken in Reading.
- Loss of the "Community Bobby", who had a good grasp on the local situation.
- Security shutters are now everywhere. This is as a result of the real worries about security. However, this gives a "run-down, inner city look to the area, which is not going to attract certain niche businesses.
- Take-aways are shut during the day so some areas are always shuttered up in daytime. They also generate a lot of litter.
- Several dark, threatening areas round town - intimidating for pedestrians. Inadequate lighting in some areas. Walk way up to the Square from Church Street particular example. Some people not comfortable using it, even on a winter's afternoon - so no encouragement to use shops/ businesses on the Square.

Environment.

- Hostile looking environment, vandalism, graffiti and shutters (see above).
- Heavy lorries use Stratford Road as through route, does not make for pleasant shopping area.
- Some premises are letting down the appearance of others. Examples can be seen in several different parts of the shopping area. (Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council will be considering enforcement issues for particularly stubborn cases).

Signage

- Signage has long been an issue in Wolverton. Tesco's is extensively sign posted and the approach area from McConnell Drive positively funnels traffic towards "the superstore". The odd dog-leg of road from McConnell drive does not encourage visitors into town. It is not inviting and does not sign post other facilities.
- The Square is virtually unknown to non residents.
- Lack of signage promoting other parts of town from Stratford Road.
- Lack of information on canal area promoting town facilities. There is a board there, but it is neither comprehensive or up to date.
- Signage currently focuses on directions to service areas.

iv) ASSETS

Environment.

Although there are problems with run down unkempt areas - there is equally a number of areas that have a positive image.

- The town area itself is compact but very unified with the shopping area. Apart from the notable exceptions (The Agora, Glyn Square and the car showrooms) the shops have the same image as the rest of the town. This makes it easier to promote a strong image.
- Heritage environment: the buildings, walls, railway structures and remains are all part of this strong image.
- Walkable: although the shopping area is spread out and not a conventional long high street - the area including Stratford Rd, Tesco's, Glyn Square & Creed St, Church St & The Agora, Radcliffe St and the Square, is still easily walkable. If this was made more pleasant - it could help the businesses in all areas.
- The canal. More emphasis needs to be put on this asset. Very few people passing through are aware of the presence of The Grand Union in Wolverton.

CONCLUSIONS

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS WORKING GROUP CONCLUSIONS

1. People & Cars/Traffic

- Line of sight at road junctions is bad.
- Parking on corners affects both cars and pedestrians.
- When taxis are home there is nowhere for residents to park.
- Parking around the schools is dangerous for pedestrians.
- Transport to schools – why do people take their cars?
- Other options like ‘walking buses’.
- Some roads need pedestrian priority or pedestrian only routes.
- Plan roads from a pedestrian point of view.
- Use the grid system to give pedestrians priority.
- Creation of one-way systems.
- Make better use of the back alley ways.
- Signage in the back alleys – our own redway network.
- Vehicle access at certain times only in alley ways.
- Resident only access in alley ways.
- Roads used for specific purposes to avoid conflict.
- Re-surfacing of back alleys – cobbles?

2. Buses / Transport

- Bus terminus – they need to have their own turning area to avoid the roundabout effect on Church St/Radcliffe St/ Stratford Rd.
- Link buses with Tram down Stratford Rd / Church St.
- A mini bus system for shorter journeys.
- A hop on hop off feeder Tram for main Tram running along Stratford Rd.
- Loop around Wolverton – linking Health Centre.
- The bridge to train station is a problem because it channels both vehicles and pedestrians in the same space.
- Station is a bad introduction to the Town.
- Approx 40% people using the station car park never come into the town.
- Stations are often ‘nodes’ for business – Wolverton could be.
- Station needs to say the right things about Wolverton.
- Station could be on the other side of the tracks, quieter and more peaceful.
- Wolverton’s heritage linked to station : Royal Train, Railway Museum?
- Links to Stacey Hill Museum.
- Consideration of canals as form of transport.

3. Signage & Routes

- Road layout and signage on Mc Connell drive ‘throws’ people towards Tesco.
- Problems with Church St roundabout.
- Possible route into the town by Radcliffe School.
- Main route for residents seems to be Gloucester Rd / Windsor St.
- Lack of adequate signs from grid roads into Wolverton.
- Specific routes in for different parts of Wolverton.
- Mc Connell Drive entrance is visually unappealing.
- Better access from canal into the town.

1. Wolverton has some specific characteristics – such as a network of back alleys and a grid road system – which we think can help us in separating people and cars/traffic. How might the layout of the town help to make Wolverton a safer place for pedestrians and cyclists?

- Grid roads seem to encourage road use and higher speeds. There are ways to separate traffic and pedestrians though. Speed humps and chicanes can be dangerous for cyclists, there are ‘slip through’ designs that can be used instead.
- Wolverton has the potential for a network of 20 mph zones and funding for the design stage has been secured by the Town Council.
- Road users, cyclists and emergency services need to be consulted for their views.

- One-way systems are often difficult for cyclists to negotiate.
- Important that the form of speed limit chosen does not require unreasonable levels of enforcement by the police.
- Home zones are a way of making streets into people spaces whilst still allowing vehicle access and parking. These zones blur the boundary between road and street and force traffic to slow down by placing trees and shrubs and street furniture in the road.
- Protection of public rights of way and publicizing of pedestrian and cycle routes is vital. The linking of walkways should be insisted on at planning stage.
- Walking buses are an established method of providing safer routes to schools. These are often operated by parents and receive funding from the Road Safety Grants Scheme. Schools and residents' associations can apply for grants.
- A traffic regulation order would be needed and The Highways Authority would need to commit. Community support is also vital.
- Vehicle access would still be required in the back alleys.
- A 'streetscape' design could be used: rising bollards with swipe cards. This is an expensive option. There is one such scheme in Aylesbury.

2. Parking

Defining The Parking Problem

i) Where does parking occur?

Resident Parking

- On the street – problems include pavement parking, double yellow line parking and ex-double yellow line parking

Visitor parking

- On the street - as above

Shopping parking

- Agora Car Park.
- Community Centre Car Park.
- Tesco Car Park – disabled bays and parent & child spaces.
- Glynn Square.
- Stratford Rd – Off Licence, Take-Aways.
- Bottom of Cambridge St by taxi firm, WMC and library.
- Outside Mr G's on Radcliffe St.
- 1hr limits on Stratford Rd / Church St.

Back Alley Parking

- Particularly entrances (a problem)

School parking

- Parking outside schools on zig zags. (a problem)

Other parking

- Is there a parking problem at the Train station?
- Problems generally with disabled parking in the town
- Parking near Western Rd Rec & Swing Rec
- At Working Men's Clubs / Sports Clubs / Churches.
- Railway Works – Alstom
- Zigzags on Stratford Rd by pelican crossing.
- Car showrooms

Why is parking a problem in Wolverton?

Resident Parking

- High density population.
- Number of large vehicles
- Increasing number of cars.
- Houses built without garages.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- More than 1 car per household.
- Security and car crime concerns.
- Wolverton not conceived as a 'car town'.
- Parking spaces not properly defined.
- High density of taxis owned by residents.
- Other commercial vehicles.
- Narrow roads.
- Poor parking skills.
- Inconsiderate parking.

Pavement, Yellow line and Zigzag parking:

- Lack of enforcement by police / council.
- Narrow roads.
- Yellow lines not put back after improvements.
- Lack of clarity about parking regulations.
- People's laziness.
- Lack of parking strategy in the town.
- Habit – people parking in the same place everyday.

Shopping Parking

Agora Car Park

- Security and safety are poor (lack of lighting) so people don't use it.
- IT Training centre visitors take up spaces that were previously empty.
- Abandoned cars.
- Long-term parking (possibly by station users?)
- Surfacing unsafe / uneven.
- Poor exit / entrance.
- Conflict with buses.

Stratford Rd

- Take away trade.
- Taxis.
- Dangerous to stop on side of road even in designated bays.
- Abuse of 1hr waiting limit.
- Lack of enforcement.

Tesco Car Park

- Enforcement issue.
- Mis-use of spaces by people without disabled badges or parent and child stickers.

Glyn Square

- Poor security.
- Entrance and exit poor.

CONCLUSIONS

- Road surface appalling.
- Lack of maintenance.
- Is the car park used by MADCAP visitors and train station users?

Parking at Schools

- Different needs for parking at different times of the day.
- Shortage of routes into Bushfield and Radcliffe Schools.
- Children living outside Wolverton for whom walking is not an option.
- Parents on their way to work and short window of opportunity to drop kids off.
- Lack of enforcement.
- Staff parking.
- Attitude that it's 'my right' to get as close to school as possible.
- Open car doors blocking pavement access for pedestrians.

Back Alley parking

- Abandoned cars.
- Prolonged work to rear of houses
- Lack of room on streets.
- Delivery vehicles.
- Dropping off of children particularly around Wyvern School.
- Habit – entrances that are free next to houses.
- Inconsiderate parking.
- Lack of enforcement.

Other Parking Problems:

Community Centre Car Park

- Tesco staff using car park at peak times and holidays.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- HGV's 'camping' overnight.

Parking at WMC and Sports clubs

- Time-related.
- At times when residents need to park (particularly Tennis/Cricket Club).
- Sheer volume.
- Perceived 'right' to park as close to venue as possible.
- Taxis dropping off/picking up and waiting in middle of roads.

Disabled Parking

- Lack of designated spaces.
- Lack of council action.
- Dangerousness of parking in certain locations.

Cyclists

- Lack of secure bicycle racks at car parks and station.

iii) Parking Solutions / Ideas

Resident parking

The Future – long term Visions and Solutions

- Rationing of public road space – certain amount of space per household.
- More public transport.
- Less need for travelling – more people working closer to home.

CONCLUSIONS

- Restricting number of cars / car ownership.
- A Wolverton with.....more walking, more cycling and more open public facilities.
- Keeping key services – schools, library, health services in the town and within walking distance for most.
- No car parking anywhere in town centre.
- Car sharing / pooling.
- Attitude change to ‘right to park’ outside homes – more community mindedness.

Resident Parking

Short Term Visions / Solutions (1-5 years)

- Residents’ parking permits – 1 per household.
- Visitor parking permits.
- A ‘strategy’ that rations.
- Improved enforcement.
- Income spent on improvements to public transport.
- Change in design of roads and parking spaces.
- Make back alleys safer and more secure with better parking enforcement.
- More secure parking on ‘fringes’ of town – for commercial vehicles, taxis etc.
- Planning enforcement.

Parking outside schools

The Future - long term Visions/Solutions

- Roads outside schools devoid of cars.
- Home Zone outside Wyvern school.
- Designated dropping off points elsewhere and more secure walking / cycleway entrances.
- Less ‘importing’ of pupils from other areas, the schools serve their immediate communities.
- Wider community responsibility for education – online, at home, pre and after school clubs.

Parking outside schools

Short term possible solutions (1-5 years)

- More pedestrian priority with increased visual presence (lights, road colour and width of pavement).
- Change structure of school days, staggered start and finish times?
- Longer drop off times before and after school.
- Better traffic calming outside schools.
- Enforcement.
- Alternative routes to school and drop off points.
- Rising bollards.

General Summary

- The use of cars needs to be controlled regardless of their demand.
- Let’s accept the heritage of Wolverton and the restrictions this imposes.
- Give equal consideration to ‘rights’ to drive, walk, cycle.
- Find workable alternatives and then impose restrictions.
- Need to ‘define’ our community more.
- Need for acceptance that you may have to walk to your car.
- Development of the right culture to accommodate these changes is vital.

Visitor Parking

Short term solutions

- Visitor parking permits issued to each household.
- Better use of Wyvern and Bushfield school car parks outside school hours.

- More 'stopping' trains including long distance and fast trains.
- Need more reasonable fare structure for travelling to and from Wolverton.

Future solutions

- Rationing of spaces for visitors.
- Satellite car parks at perimeter of town with good security.
- People visiting the town using improved public transport.
- Re-opening of East-West rail link as transport option for visitors from East & West areas.
- Improvement of train station environment with better parking facilities.

Shopping parking

Short term

- Enforcement of existing parking restrictions including abandoned vehicles.
- Improving appearance / security / safety of Agora car park.
- The small car parks at the rear of The Greek Villager restaurant and Regency Diner on Stratford Rd are under used. The condition of back alley and lack of signage may be deterring shoppers from parking there – take measures to increase their use.
- Manpower Forum car park could be made more available for general parking.
- In the community centre car park on Stratford Rd. Need to prevent lorries parking overnight, and better signage for shoppers and community centre users.
- Better enforcement of 1hr parking limit on Stratford Rd.
- Better enforcement of double yellow line parking on Church St.
- Improve car park between Maisonettes and Glyn Square. Could this be used by shoppers?

The Future

- Glyn Square to go!
- The shopping focus shifted to the Glyn Square area.
- A new market at Glyn Square.
- Parking in different areas depending on where you enter Wolverton.

3. Routes into Wolverton and Signage

McConnell Drive entrance

- The design of the road leads you before you know it into Tesco car park
- The sharp bend in the road at the turn off for the town is dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, particularly when lorries are stopped or turning into Electrolux and Tesco.
- The signage both directly off the H2 Millers Way Way and at the turn off at the end of Mc Connell drive is confusing and random. No Welcome to Wolverton feeling.
- The lines of sight for drivers at the mini roundabout on the corner of Glyn Square and Church St is poor, although safety for pedestrians may be better.
- More evergreen landscaping needed on the left hand side of McConnell Drive (to mask the railway sidings)
- Could the triangle of land next to the rail line be used for parking?
- Better cross-transport access links to Milton Keynes Museum.
- Expand the museum towards the town along McConnell drive – an historical walk for instance with information points and views over the old line.

Railway Bridge entrance

- Better footpath and cycle routes.
- Traffic calming and HGV restriction on bridge.
- Do we need it as a vehicle entrance at all?
- The train station needs to more accessible by pedestrians and buses.

CONCLUSIONS

- The canal and the Secret Garden would be easier and more pleasant to walk to if there were no cars entering on this road.
- The train station needs a 'presence' at the site of the old station building

Gloucester Road entrance

- Should primary use be for residents only?
- Is used as a through route to both 'sides' of the town.
- Used by residents throughout Wolverton.
- Dense car parking and poor road surface.

Stratford Road entrance

- Car show rooms are visually unpleasant as the first thing you see.
- Seems like a shrinking of green belt is happening at this entrance.
- Easy access for vehicles. The road is sufficiently wide.
- Signage is poor in this area.

Could there be other routes into Wolverton?

- Could the existing spurs that were built off the V5 between current entrance and Radcliffe School be opened up as new entrances?
- Could HGV access be restricted to Deans Rd through Old Wolverton Industrial Estate or along an extension of McConnell Drive into the Industrial Estate?
- Connecting H2 Millers Way with Southern Way for residents access?

Signage

- How do you know when you are entering Wolverton? And leaving it?
- 'Gateways' as well as signage needed.
- Better signs for car parks and in car parks to tell you where you are and where you can go! And links with pedestrian and cycling routes.
- Signage to and from the canal.
- Public transport on canal to link Wolverton with places such as Cosgrove
- Secure bicycle racks at car parks
- Unique signage style based on Wolverton's history

Access Around Town

- Backways – could these be pedestrian streets?
- At present the alleys are used for multiple purposes.
- A 'blanket' approach to their use and development may not be possible.
- However they could be a real asset.
- Resurfacing of alley ways would benefit pedestrians and cyclists.
- Better signage and lighting to encourage use by residents.
- CCTV presence in alleys that are heavily used i.e between Stratford Rd and Church St.
- Improvement and promotion of walkway between Green Lane and Agora car park past St George's Church. Better lighting and maintenance of overgrown trees and bushes.
- Improvement in safety and attractiveness of pathways on each side of Agora.
- All walkways need to be as user friendly as possible.

4. Public Transport

Station and Trains

- What station ! i.e no building. Currently only promised a temporary waiting room with toilet.
- What do we want? Short term solutions should not preclude further developments. This is felt to be very important and vital to future success of developments.

CONCLUSIONS

- In this case, a temporary low impact structure would be the best option.
- The operating franchise held by Silverlink expires soon but a two year extension may be on the cards. There is an inherent problem here in that they are working to a very short term vision.

Frequency and Reliability of service

- More trains needed!
- Requirement of a 'clock face' service (trains at same times and regular intervals every day.) There are still 'gaps' just after 11 am and later in the afternoon.
- Problem of disparity in fare structure. Able to purchase special deals from CMK.
- Upgrade of West Coast line would open up option of Wolverton being the terminus for local trains to London but depends on the re-jigging of platforms.

ii) Buses

Why don't we use the bus service?

- Lack of direct routes – having to go 'round the houses' to get where we need to go.
- Driving style/competency is often lacking.
- The Open University is difficult and time consuming to get to.
- Access by bus from Wolverton to the CMK Coachway is very limited, this makes it hard to travel to many destinations out of MK solely by bus/coach.
- The Agora bus stop is very grotty and feels dangerous.
- Church Street is felt by some to be the wrong place for a bus station, and people are concerned over the SRB plans for buses on Church St.
- It was felt a bus terminus would be better placed at the junction of Creed St and Church St at the end of the Agora Car Park. If buses were able to turn around, there would be no need for them to travel up Church St and down Radcliffe St.
- There is confusion over which side of the road buses to Wolverton leave from The Point bus stops in CMK.

Where can we get to by bus?

- Northampton is a popular destination and relatively easy to get to but difficult to get back from especially later in the day.
- Stony Stratford – although it is very expensive for such a short journey.
- Central Milton Keynes – many people feel the Number 5 is a good service.
- MK General Hospital
- Different fares for different buses makes for a confusing service and puts people off travelling by bus.
- A combination of factors such as the state of the vehicles, lack of route/fare clarity, and time gaps in service mean that very few people choose to use the bus service.

Where can't we get to – at all or with difficulty?

- Our own train station!
- The 'Hinterland'
- Buckingham
- Greenleys
- Health Centre
- Milton Keynes Museum (Stacey Hill)
- Old Wolverton Road (despite the bus depot being located there!)

Ideas for Improvement

- Set fee to get anywhere in MK
- Why don't the buses go up and down the grid roads – this would make for a very frequent

CONCLUSIONS

- service and be easier for people to be sure that the bus they get on goes where they expect it to!
- We need a bus service that fulfils the need to travel both locally and further afield, that then links with other forms of transport.
- A demand responsive 'micro-bus' service could serve smaller local journeys to both Hinterland areas and within Wolverton itself.
- For longer journeys, micro buses could take people to various stops on the 'edges' of town, which then meet up with city wide buses. For instance : a stop at Creed St to go to CMK, a stop at Radcliffe School to go West etc.
- More evening and Late services (would encourage people in to new developments and be vital if part of those developments are housing).
- We have both an ageing and a young population (as well as everything in between!) in Wolverton. A demand responsive shuttle service could serve different sections of the community at different times of the day and evening.
- Shuttle buses could collect and deliver people to peripheral car parks.
- We want to see 'bike' friendliness on buses – bike racks on the front of buses, as per Boulder, Colorado example.
- More bus lanes are needed to ensure journey times are reasonable.

iii) CYCLING IN AND AROUND WOLVERTON

Cycle Routes

- Redway maintenance is poor as is maintenance of the landscaping and subways. Overgrown foliage, broken glass, missing lights etc make redways sometimes dangerous and unpleasant to use.
- Cycling along Stratford Rd is dangerous. The traffic calming is difficult to navigate around, traffic travels too fast and there are too many HGV's.
- The new McConnell Drive redway crossing is not user friendly.
- The McConnell Drive and Miller's Way redway crossing is extremely dangerous for both cyclists and pedestrians.
- The surface of the redway route to Stony Stratford is very poor.
- The redway to Greenleys and Fullers Slade is torturously long and indirect. It's very easy to get lost on these routes.

Back Alleys as Cycle Routes

- Right of way could be given to cyclists from North to South, i.e : from the Water Tower to Stratford Rd.
- Could a vehicle size limitation be put on the use of back alleys? How would this effect refuse collection / businesses?
- The safety issue of where alleys meet roads would need to be looked at.
- Not all alleys would need to be cycle routes – a main network could be created that is clearly for cycle use – i.e by making them redways and providing good signage.
- The dumping of rubbish in back alleys needs to be addressed regardless but also especially if they were to be used by cyclists.
- There may be a conflict of use in the back alleys as many people use the rear of their property for parking. This removes cars from the street but could prove dangerous for cyclists.
- If streets were not used as 'through routes' cycling on them would be safer and easier.

Improvements and new redways/routes

- Safe, well lit redway access to the train station.
- A redway route via Secret Garden to New Bradwell.
- Improved cycle access to canal from Stratford Rd – steps are not practical!

CONCLUSIONS

- Lack of ramps/lifts at station makes cycle access very difficult.
- A more direct redway route between Stacey Hill and Bradwell Abbey along the railway line. Creation and promotion of this as a 'heritage corridor'.

Cycle Facilities

- More racks in key places in the town
- Cycle racks at Tesco should be to the left by main entrance.
- Information about routes/attractions/destinations and facilities should be provided at 'entrances' to the town, the station and other key areas.

iv) THE CANAL – REVIVED AND REINVIGORATED

- A 'canal shuttle' that serves the new development site, the station and hinterland areas.
- Encourage people to 'use' the canal as a form of transport as well as an attraction. This sits very well with our idea of Wolverton's transport system as both a heritage attraction and a model for 'joined up' transport options.
- A redway alongside the canal.
- Canal 'taxis' going to CMK/Bletchley.
- The canal could be a great transport connection between New Bradwell and Wolverton station.
- 'Float and Ride' : leave your car and visit the area by canal.
- A small canalside marina – encourage canal users to stop at Wolverton and come into the town for supplies, entertainment etc.
- Restoration of Buckingham canal.
- A canal redway should link to the Sustrans cycle route.

v) NEW FORMS OF TRAVEL - IDEAS

- Introduce shuttle service between Stony Stratford and Wolverton (perhaps by Tram, built to replicate the look of the original system)
- Introduce shuttle service (as above) between The Museum of Industry and Rural Life and central Wolverton / the Station.
- Introduce a mono rail service, perhaps between the museum and central Wolverton, or between central Wolverton and Old Wolverton (traversing the rail works and canal).

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE HINTERLAND WORKING GROUP

Wolverton and Greenleys' existing hinterland

Although it seems that particular groups may come to Wolverton from further afield in MK (eg, to Maisie's, to the MK Museum), we have taken the hinterland as:

- Haversham
- Castlethorpe
- Hanslope
- New Bradwell
- Blue Bridge
- Stacey Bushes
- Hodge Lea
- Cosgrove
- Stony Stratford

Wolverton's strengths

Residents in the above areas come to Wolverton because it is nearer or convenient for one or more of the following:

- The railway station

- Tesco, the Co-op, and other shopping, perhaps especially low-cost shopping
- Banks and building societies; post office
- Health, chemist and related services (opticians, day centres)
- Restaurants, take-aways and some cultural activities (eg, adult education, Madcap)
- The swimming pool or other services (library, dancing, sports....)

In addition, Wolverton is seen as having positive features that make it an attractive environment for many people. It is seen as being 'on the up' - not yet fashionable, but having character, and being safe and convenient, so offering good value, especially to those who like the Victorian feel or are seeking a larger house with scope for renovation. It is socially mixed with some specialist shops, and if there is a bohemian fringe in MK it is probably based in and around Wolverton.

Issues and obstacles

If Wolverton is to maintain and develop its attractiveness to this hinterland then the following were identified as issues:

- Bus services very poor after 6.00
- Wolverton's strong points were not well known and not obvious (eg, the Square, swimming pool, speciality shops), which links to...
- 'There is no good way into Wolverton' - the roads in are distinctly unattractive (eg, from the station, or past the car showrooms, or off the bus at the car park-Agora area)
- Historic link to Wolverton from the outlying villages now probably declining (Hanslope growing in significance, tendency to buy-pass Wolverton and go to City Centre; generational changes - older residents more likely to be committed to the Co-op than younger ones)
- The canal cuts the town off from the Old Wolverton Road industrial area, which is actually quite close
- The centre of gravity of the town is moving north (Tesco, etc), but at present it is cut in two by the Agora; hence there is much less of a centre to Wolverton than there is to, eg, Stony.
- Lack of suitable properties (eg, 'above shop' premises) for certain sorts of small businesses.
- Absentee ownership of key properties
- Not clear that Wolverton being a conservation area had impacted the thinking of council staff

Latent opportunities and potential hinterlands

The following were seen as offering scope for (re-)development:

- The listed building and unused site(s) to the north of Stratford Road – offering both commercial and leisure opportunities; these include Wolverton Park, with its listed stand, but perhaps also the Drill Hall...
- ...since both these areas are walking distance from the railway station and hence have a potentially much larger catchment area...
- Hence we believe the visitor potential is considerable, on the basis of the strong heritage/railways/transport linkages (Cosgrove Park is actually quite close; the Sustrans route; the Museum; the royal train) ...
- ...plus the canal could become a major feature (on the basis of the transformation Birmingham has achieved)

We want to stress that if these and other opportunities were realised, then Wolverton's hinterland would change, for some purposes at least. We can imagine its hinterland becoming:

- the *City* of MK – for future Wolverton's niche cultural and business district
- the *region* around MK, especially on the main routes north and south, for future Wolverton's leisure attractions, and exhibition/conference/specialist business venues.
- ... and rather more fancifully, Britain and beyond, for future Wolverton as the 'base camp' for history-minded holiday makers and tourists interested in jaunts to Warwick Castle, Stratford, Oxford, London, Blenheim, etc. (note: Peartree Bridge marina already attracts some overseas customer for hire of canal boats)

Possible solutions

The following ideas were suggested as ways of making Wolverton more attractive to its hinterland(s):

- Beautify the approaches – an avenue of trees on Stratford Road?
- Review and extend the bus services
- Re-think the Agora and car park, and perhaps bring back a decent produce market
- A good start had been made with flowers and hanging baskets – but scope for lots more

CONCLUSIONS

- Additional festivals or other annual events to bring in people (themed around Victoriana or transport?)
- Make more of (and don't lose) the swimming pool
- Introduce an HE campus, or perhaps a specialist training institute based on distinctive local industry (say, crafts associated with Victorian restoration?...)
- Beautify the canal-side, add a bridge or two across (to improve access to Old Woverton) and improve access from Cosgrove
- Arrange a re-development of the unused buildings and land – eg, a mixed small business and exhibition/conference centre like the Design Centre in London
- Introduce studio flats for artists, to build up the creative community

However, three points are probably fundamental in carrying things forward:

- Preserve and preferably re-develop the station – it's a great resource of which more could be made, and without it Wolverton's future would look bleak indeed.
- Secure the public investment in new access/infrastructure needed to unlock the potential of the unused works buildings and canal-side
- Go with the grain – don't try to copy or compete with Stony. Wolverton's different character is one of its assets (down to earth and interestingly mixed, not twee and rather pricey).