

# **Marston Moreteyne Parish Plan**

## **Introduction**

The concept of a Parish or Village plan was first mentioned by Central Government back in 2000. The purpose of these plans was to set a framework around which communities could plan their own futures. Plans should “identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved.” (Our Countryside the Future: A Government White Paper 2000) They should be “holistic or comprehensive in scope...and should set out a vision for how the community wants to develop, and identify the action needed to achieve it.”(Parish Plans: Guidance for parish and town councils. The Countryside Agency 2003)

The Parish Council was keen for a plan to be prepared for Marston Moreteyne and that it should be prepared from the bottom up by members of the community. To this end a small committee was formed with the intention of getting other interested people from the village to come forward and take part. Unfortunately despite several attempts at raising interest the initial group has not grown sufficiently to undertake all the necessary tasks required to make the plan truly representative of the whole community.

Despite this lack of interest, the Parish Council was still keen to see a plan that would give focus to those areas and aspects of village life that serve to lower the amenity value for residents. Given this desire it was decided to incorporate what information had been gathered into this document. In making this decision the Parish Council are aware that this will not be the product that was first envisaged, however, it is believed that it will, nonetheless, serve to ensure that energy and resources are targeted correctly. Circumstances do change and new objectives and priorities can arise and it is hoped that this format will prove flexible enough to be capable of adaption as required.

## **Description**

### **1. History**

What we now know as Marston Moreteyne was originally a collection of hamlets: - Upper Shelton: Lower Shelton: Caulcott: Millbrook Station: Church End: Wood End; and Roxhill. It was not until after the war that mains water and sewage were installed and residents had to rely on wells and/or collection tanks for their water. Despite these hardships there was a thriving community with more facilities and shops than today.

Upper Shelton had a public house, a general store and a butchers shop. Lower Shelton had two shops, a public house and a butcher and slaughterhouse.

Caulcott had two public houses next door to one another – The Rose and Crown and The Three Horseshoes. Church End had a post Office, one general store, a bake house and the Bell public house.

There were two schools, one at each end of the village that pupils from the village and Stewartby attended throughout all their school lives. Upper Shelton School had only two rooms each subdivided by a curtain and yet taught a role of 120 pupils in classes of 30. Conditions at Church End School, now the Nursing home, were much the same.

Soon after the war there was a major building programme and council estates were built in Moreteyne Road together with in excess of 60 prefabricated houses in Manor Road. The “prefabs” were only temporary having a life expectancy of only 10 years; so 20 years later the council built further houses in Tylecote Close to re-house the residents from the “prefabs” in Manor Road. Following the demolition of the temporary houses further council building took place in Manor Road and Banks Close.

The 1970’s saw the development of the Scotchbrook Road estate, the shops area at the junction of Station Road and Bedford Road, Browns Close and Reynes Close. At this time the route of the A421 was along Bedford Road and it was following the building of the bypass in 1986 that development within the Parish really took off with the developments at Arundel Road, Denton Drive and Howes Drive all of which have contributed to the village trebling in size in a period of just 30 years.

## **2. Present Day**

Marston Moreteyne is currently the sixth largest settlement in area and the tenth largest in population in Mid Bedfordshire and it is set to grow considerably with the development of the land east of Bedford Road. The route chosen for the A421 bypass in 1986 was a tragedy for the village in that it not only split the village in two but encouraged development that paid little if any heed to village cohesion or structure.

Notwithstanding the negative aspects highlighted above Marston also has much in its favour. It is served by two excellent lower schools. It has medical facilities: a chemist: a Post Office: a supermarket; and a variety of other shops and services. It has a nature reserve/forest centre: an ancient woodland and site of special scientific interest at the Thrift; and easy access to open country via a network of footpaths and cycle ways. Architecturally it boasts: two Manor Houses: an eighteenth century “Old Rectory”: several other listed buildings; and what must be one of the best examples of a medieval church to be found anywhere in England. Sports facilities available within the village include 3 football pitches: a cricket table: a multi-use games area (tennis, football, netball and basketball); and a skate park. There is a sports pavilion and a village hall and six children’s playgrounds. The new development on the land east of Bedford Road will bring: a new community building with an internal

sports hall capable of housing a badminton court: a new cricket table; and additional sports pitches.

### **Analysis of Results from Planning for Real Exercise 20.04.06**

Before starting this undertaking it is necessary to stress that due to the limited number of people who took part, and the fact that they were a self-selecting group, any analysis of the data obtained from the above event will be indicative only.

### **Methodology**

Residents who attended the event were confronted with a large-scale map of the parish onto which they could attach comments/suggestions regarding their experience of life within Marston Moreteyne. These comments were, in the main, location specific referring to an area of which the resident had knowledge. For the purposes of the following analysis the locations have been disregarded and where possible comments have been aggregated to give a global picture. These aggregations are by their very nature arbitrary and others may have constructed them differently. The original un-aggregated lists are still available and will be kept for future reference.

The event was attended by 94 residents: -

Age range	Under 18	18 -24	25-44	45-49	60-70	75+
Male	4	0	4	15	20	2
Female	6	0	12	14	15	2

Time Resident	< 1year	1 - 5	6 - 10	11 – 25	> 25
Male	4	7	5	9	19
Female	4	5	8	12	17

The above figures represent those residents who recorded their details, and although every attempt was made to ensure they did, there was no compulsion. Therefore, the numbers of attendees should be seen as a minimum

In total 301 comments were recorded and these have been grouped under ten headings. These headings are in themselves convenient constructions for manipulating the data; they are not fixed and are capable of further sub division or grouping. The headings are: Community Facilities: Crime and Safety: Environment: Health: Housing: Leisure: Traffic: Transport; and Work, Training & Education.

## **Community Facilities**

This topic received 18 responses: - 7 of which expressed a desire for more local shops whilst 4 wanted a community centre/café. The remaining responses were too diverse to aggregate - none receiving more than one comment.

## **Crime and Safety**

This topic elicited 41 responses: -13 were concerned with young people hanging around: 8 sought the regular attendance of police foot patrols: 8 were concerned about drugs and/or alcohol misuse: 6 stated that there were areas: - Pembroke Close: the underpass; and the shops area, where they feared for their safety; and 2 were concerned by graffiti and/or vandalism. The remaining responses were too diverse to aggregate - none receiving more than one comment.

## **Environment**

This topic had the second largest response rate with 48 responses. Of these 15 were concerned with the flora and fauna of the village. Suggestion included planting wildflower meadows to encourage wildlife: tree planting: pond creation; and ensuring the preservation of open spaces. The next two largest responses, with 13 and 7 comments respectively, were dog fouling and litter. Some of the respondents suggested, in an exercise of hope over experience, that more bins were needed to overcome these problems. The lack of seating around the village was seen as a problem by 5 of those responding. The remaining responses covered a wide spectrum ranging from local food production through to the removal of electricity pylons - none receiving more than one comment.

Since this exercise was undertaken the intention of the County Council to build an incinerator in the disused Rookery Pit has been made public. This decision will have an impact on Marston and the surrounding area and has the potential to cause major damage to the environment. So whilst it was not a part of the original exercise it cannot go unremarked. Ultimately whether or not the imposition of this facility succeeds will depend on the response of the people of Marston and the surrounding Parishes. This response will depend on a sound knowledge of what is being planned.

## **Health**

This subject received 9 responses of which 7 concerned the establishment of a dental surgery: 1 sought community based health education; and 1 sought better waiting times at the local Doctors surgery.

## **Housing**

12 responses were recorded under this heading: 3 concerned the belief that the infrastructure of the village should be upgraded to keep pace with the growth of accommodation: 3 stated that the village should not grow any further: 2 expressed a desire for housing priority to be given to local people: 2 wanted accommodation for young people; 1 wanted accommodation for the elderly; and 1 wanted all new housing to be built to the highest environmental standards.

## **Leisure**

Leisure facilities received 41 responses: - 14 were concerned with improved playground facilities. These were split equally between improving the facilities provided for under five year olds and installing adventure playgrounds suitable for six to thirteen year olds: 6 of the respondents wanted allotments to be made available within the village: 4 wanted a sports complex: 3 wanted a youth club: 2 wanted a café or cyber café, where young and old could meet; and 2 wanted a local history group. There were 10 further single comments, which were too diverse to aggregate - none receiving more than one comment. One that is worthy of greater discussion is the lack of things for young adults to do: an aspect that resonates with other items that appear under other headings.

## **Traffic**

124 responses were recorded under the Traffic heading. Of these 37 were concerned with speeding and a number of suggestions were made regarding how this could be ameliorated. These included lowering the speed limit: fixed traffic calming measures; and installing speed cameras on village roads. 29 were concerned with dangerous parking, the main areas of contention being Bedford Road near the shops and along Lower Shelton Road. 23 were concerned with pedestrian/cyclist safety and sought more controlled road crossings: improved cycle lanes: the establishment of safe routes to school; and more pavements. 10 were concerned with the noise generated by traffic using the A421. Those who responded asked for screening and/or for an improved road surface to reduce the level of noise generated. 7 sought improved road surfaces on village roads to reduce noise and vibration to residents. 6 were concerned with the size and number of Heavy Goods Vehicles using the village; and 5 expressed their belief that there was just too

much traffic. The 6 remaining comments were too diverse to aggregate - none receiving more than one comment.

### **Transport**

This subject received 6 responses: - 2 concerned the lack of public transport: 1 wanted a free bus service to and from Bedford: 1 sought a shuttle service between Shelton and Marston: 1 wanted the establishment of a car sharing scheme; and 1 wanted a bus service so that young people could get to and from Milton Keynes in the evening.

### **Work, Training and Education**

There were only 2 responses under this heading: 1 sought classes in basic reading, writing and maths; and 1 sought evening classes in art and languages.

## **The Way Forward**

The above analysis, whilst limited, does give an impression of what are the major concerns facing inhabitants of the village. What follows is an attempt to put some of these concerns into context; and where possible to suggest systems of management that will reduce or, perhaps, even eradicate them altogether. The subjects chosen for inclusion are those where it is felt that some meaningful improvement can be gained. In doing this the authors are conscious of the fact that setting an objective is always easier than achieving it. However, accepting that some traffic will always speed or that some dog owners will always allow their dogs to foul does not mean that plans should not be in place in an attempt to control them.

## **Traffic**

The greatest concern is that of traffic and the negative impact that it has on the amenity value of life in the village. The concerns expressed were: - volume: heavy lorries: speed: parking; and noise.

Volume: Traffic volume has grown as a direct result of the growth of the village and with limited shopping facilities, inadequate and expensive public transport and virtually no local employment there can be no surprise that traffic movements, attributable to residents of the village, continue to rise. Of greater significance, however, is the geographical position of the Village in relation to an access point for the A421. This has led to a large volume of traffic passing through and using Beancroft Road, Station Road and Bedford Road on route to and from the A421. The last traffic survey, carried out on behalf of the Parish Council in 2005, recorded 43418 traffic movements a week along Beancroft Road and 35328 along Station Road. These figures will inevitably continue to rise as a result of population growth and developments within Marston and the surrounding towns and villages.

Insofar as heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) are concerned there are two issues. The first is that HGVs are only supposed to use the village for access: a rule that is never enforced. The second issue is the volume of heavy goods traffic using village roads to gain access to the Millbrook Test Track. Anyone who has witnessed the largest and heaviest vehicles allowed on Britain's roads, struggling to turn from Beancroft Road into Bedford Road and then into Station Road, will wonder why this has been allowed to happen: for if planning law has any purpose it should be to ensure that such things are controlled. This is all the more frustrating given that there is an alternative route from the B530. What effect the proposed incinerator will have on traffic flows through the village is yet to be ascertained; but, given the ease of connection to the A421, it is hard to see why refuse lorries would take a different route to that taken by car transporters.

Speed: Speeding traffic is a problem throughout the village but the worst spots are Upper Shelton Road and Station Road. Flashing signs have been installed on Upper Shelton Road, Station Road and Bedford Road in an attempt to slow

down the traffic. Until the next traffic survey is undertaken it is not possible to say with any certainty whether these have any effect. However, on the rare occasions that the police have undertaken speed traps they have continued to catch motorists exceeding the limit. The cheapest and most practical solution to speeding is for fixed deterrents to be put in place. It is not acceptable for villagers to have to rely on ad hoc enforcement by the police: enforcement that only seems to be outside the times of greatest traffic movement. This has been recognized by the Parish Council who have been successful in attaining funding from developers for measures to be put in place along Bedford Road. They have been trying to get similar measures put in place along Station Road and funding from developers was available. However, those responsible at Bedfordshire County Council do not believe such measures are necessary.

Noise: Traffic generated noise is a major source of pollution within the village and for some residents borders on the intolerable. The main cause of this noise is the A421 with its ever-increasing traffic flow. Much of the problem stems from tyre generated noise that, if the experts are to be believed, can be greatly reduced by modern road surfaces. A further issue with the A421 is the lack of any screening to reduce noise: a fact that must be addressed before the proposed modifications are undertaken. There is another aspect of traffic noise that needs to be addressed and that is noise resulting from poorly maintained roads. This has a profound, if localized impact and prime examples of can be found in some parts of Bedford Road and virtually all of Station Road.

Parking: There are two aspects to this problem: the first is nuisance/inconsiderate parking; and the second is dangerous parking. The first is a problem generated, in the main, by residents having more (and larger) cars than the available space for parking them. A situation that can only worsen given that planning guidance now stipulates that new developments should be planned on the assumption of 1.5 cars per dwelling. The second is mainly, but not exclusively, restricted to the shops area in Bedford Road where motorists consistently ignore the parking restrictions. Another dangerous aspect, that some drivers seem to believe is their right, is parking on the pavement. This is at best a nuisance for others causing inconvenience and damage to footways; but in areas where there is a high traffic flow it can be dangerous as it can force pedestrians into the road.

## **Crime and Safety**

The major concern expressed by residents was of anti social behaviour. This behaviour manifests itself in a variety of ways including: alcohol and drug misuse: vandalism; and intimidation. These problems are predominantly caused by a very small minority of the young people of the village. The true cause, however, are parents who either condone, or take no interest in, the behaviour of their children.

Central control of the village is managed from Ampthill Police Station by a Beat Sergeant. The district is separated into 8 areas, and Marston and Cranfield are linked together under a Beat Officer who is supported by PCSO (Police

community support officer). Police presence is available, in theory, from 7 am to midnight, and response teams are available after that to deal with emergencies.

Due to concerns about a lack of police patrols within the village the Parish Council pay for the services of Burton Endeavour Security whose officers patrol the village for 15 hours each week. The parish Council also pays for CCTV cameras which are installed at the following locations: St Mary's Church; the shopping precinct; the pavilion; and the village hall. Work is currently taking place to upgrade these cameras so that the images can more readily be used by the Police.

The village has an active Community Safety Group (CSG) who work closely with both the Police and Burton Endeavour Security. This group meet quarterly in the Bedford Road Chapel; the meetings are open to the public who are very welcome to attend. The group liaise closely with the Homewatch co-ordinator and this has resulted in several schemes being set up within the village. The CSG are also responsible for the implementation of a Nominated Neighbour Scheme for the protection of vulnerable elderly residents.

## **Environment**

Since the original exercise was undertaken Bedfordshire County Council has indicated their intention to build a rubbish incinerator in the disused Rookery Pit. This is especially disappointing given the fact that this site was refused permission to be used for land fill following a Public Inquiry. This decision has the potential to have a major impact on life in this village and whilst few details are available it is the unanimous view of the Parish Council that in principle this should be resisted.

The two topics that together received the largest response and that, in theory, should be the easiest to rectify were dog fouling and litter. Both of these anti social practices are offences under current legislation, although enforcement is very difficult and rarely undertaken. Repeatedly allowing a dog to foul carries a maximum fine of £1000 and the District Council actually employs a dog warden who has the power to levy £50 spot fines, however, Mid Bedfordshire is a very large area for one dog warden to patrol.

In so far as litter is concerned the Parish Council does employ a litter picker who does a sterling job against impossible odds but his hours of work are limited and to increase them would place a greater financial burden on the majority of residents who don't just discard their litter. As previously stated littering is an offence with a maximum fine of £2500. Enforcement is the responsibility of the Police and MBDC who can prosecute offenders. MBDC also have the power to levy £50 spot fines.

## **Leisure**

By far the majority of responses concerned facilities for the young of the village. It is fair to say that compared to some villages of a similar size Marston has some very good facilities – Skateboard Park – MUGA – Youth Shelter – sports pitches - playgrounds. These facilities have been provided on an ad hoc basis and perhaps what is needed is a strategy for future growth. The building of this strategy should involve all interested parties, especially the young of the village, so that what is eventually provided is what the users want.