

# Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey & Co-production Workshop: OUTCOME REPORT



## Introduction

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council decided to develop a neighbourhood plan for the area in 2019 and it set up the independent Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG) to lead the process. Once adopted, the neighbourhood plan will set down local planning policies for the area for the next five years. The plan must work alongside - and be in conformity with - Milton Keynes Council's planning policies as set out in Plan:MK and any supplementary planning documents affecting the area that are adopted by the Local Planning Authority. The neighbourhood plan must be based on evidence and informed by the views and priorities of local people. It will be subject to rigorous independent review and a referendum before it is adopted. Once adopted, the plan will give local people more control over the future and a greater share of the money that new development brings in.

## Understanding the views and priorities of local people

Right from the start, the NPG has been working hard to understand the views and priorities of local people – the work undertaken has been logged in the NPG Community Engagement Strategy. This has helped the NPG focus on the issues that matter most to the community. However, to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate, a two-stage engagement process was launched in Spring 2022:

### STAGE 1: Understanding community priorities

- A household questionnaire
- A media communications campaign to raise awareness
- A leaflet drop to all households and businesses.
- Independent survey analysis

### STAGE 2: Co-producing neighbourhood plan priorities

- Co-production Café – workshop
- Independent report and initial policy scoping
- Priorities reviewed and developed by independent neighbourhood planning specialists – O'Neil Homer.

The household survey was undertaken between March and the end of April 2022 – every household and business premise in the neighbourhood plan area received a survey form. In total, 272 responses were received. This figure is in line with other surveys undertaken in the area. Most people completed the survey online (80%), although some preferred paper copies (20%). The survey gave respondents the chance to raise issues they felt should be tackled by the neighbourhood plan and these informed the co-production workshop on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

## Understanding the survey results

The software used to undertake the survey has some limitations. The choices and options offered for selection varied in number from theme to theme. This means that the tables are not directly comparable without adjustment. The selection of priority issues that formed our interpretation of 'strong support' gives a higher percentage where there are less options. To provide a more robust approach, a statistical adjustment has been applied to bring the results into line and make them more broadly comparable. The percentages quoted are the adjusted figures.

## Survey responses

The chart here (Fig.1) shows the spread of participation across the NP area. It is positive to see that the mail drop and communication campaign reached right across the town. Fig.2 shows the break down in the age and gender of respondents. There was a slight under-representation of younger people among the respondents. Slightly more women than men participated.

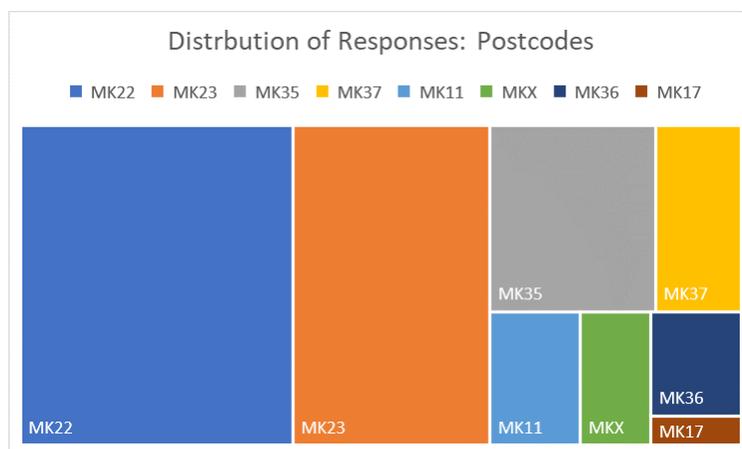
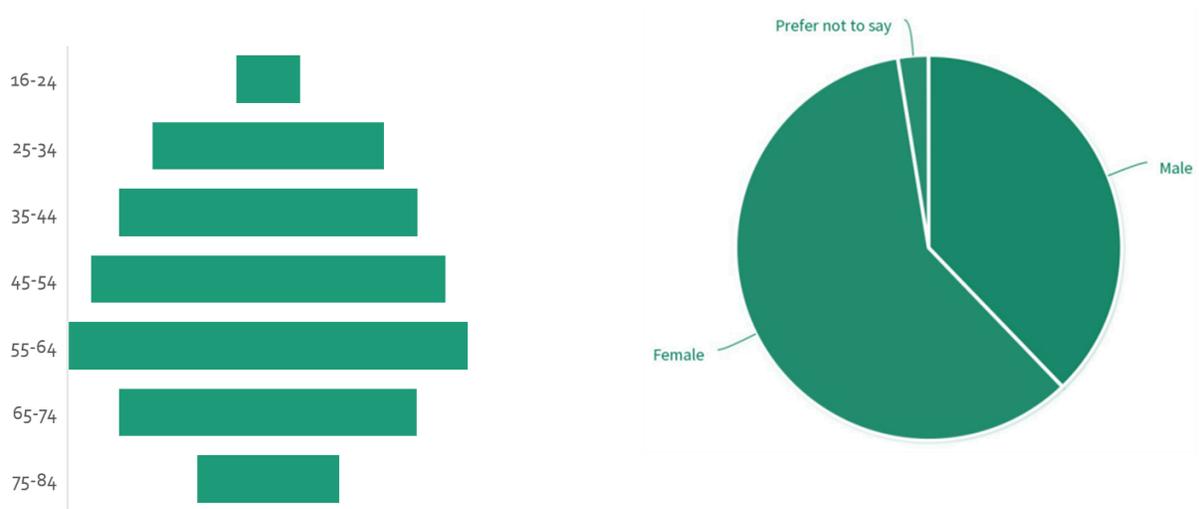
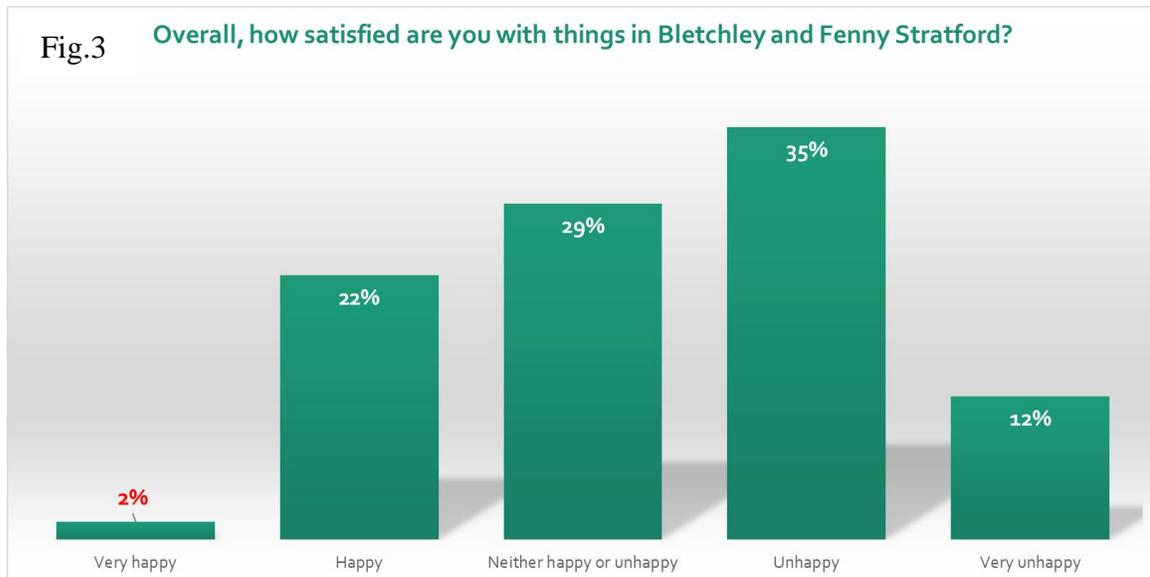


Fig. 2: Age and gender



### Overall satisfaction with Bletchley and Fenny Stratford

The next chart (Fig. 3) shows the first of the key findings of the survey – overall satisfaction with life in Bletchley and Fenny Stratford. It is very interesting to note that 47% of respondents are either unhappy or very unhappy with things as they are. Less than 1 in 4 of respondents are happy or very happy. It is important that the neighbourhood plan addresses the underlying reasons for the high level of dissatisfaction - these will be examined further in this report.



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*“Rundown buildings, rubbish and cars parking wherever they want.”*

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*“Large parts of the town are shabby, particularly Bletchley high street.”*

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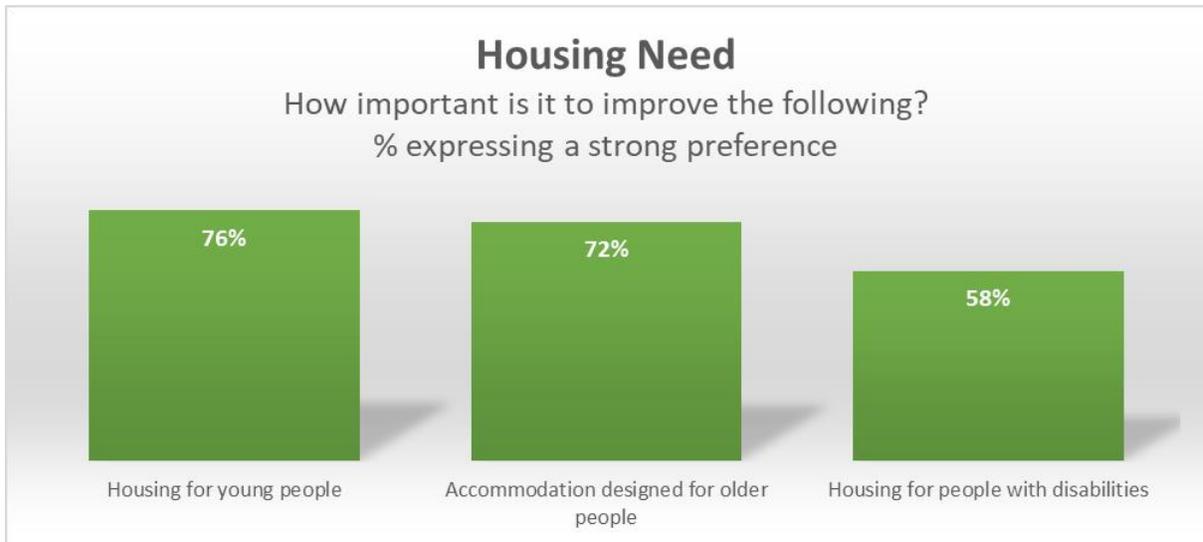
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*“Covid has had an impact, but the area was very rundown before the pandemic.”*

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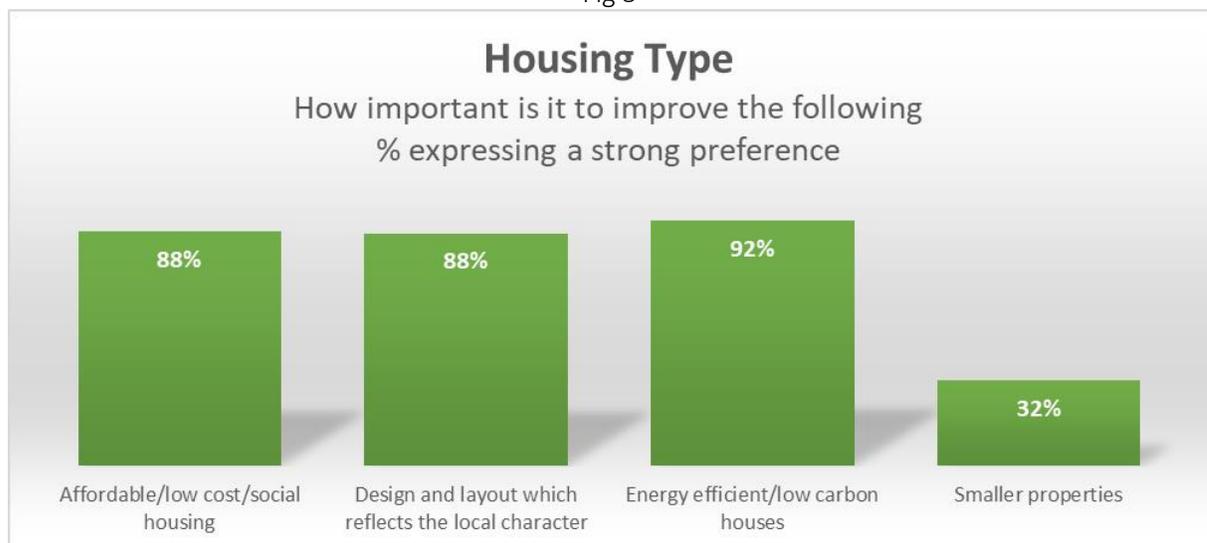
## HOUSING

The next chart (Fig. 4) looks at the housing needs of different sections of the local community. The responses show strong support for accommodation aimed at young people, older people and people living with disability. The neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity to address these housing needs in the future development of the area.



The next question looked at housing types. The most striking finding is the very strong demand for energy efficient low carbon homes - 92% of respondents rated this as a priority. This reflects other findings in the survey indicating a high level of climate change awareness in the Town. The survey was undertaken during a period of steeply escalating energy prices, and this may also help to understand the strong response. This emphasis should be reflected in the neighbourhood plan and help shape future development. There is also strong support for more affordable housing options and high-quality design (88% of respondents rated both issues of high importance).

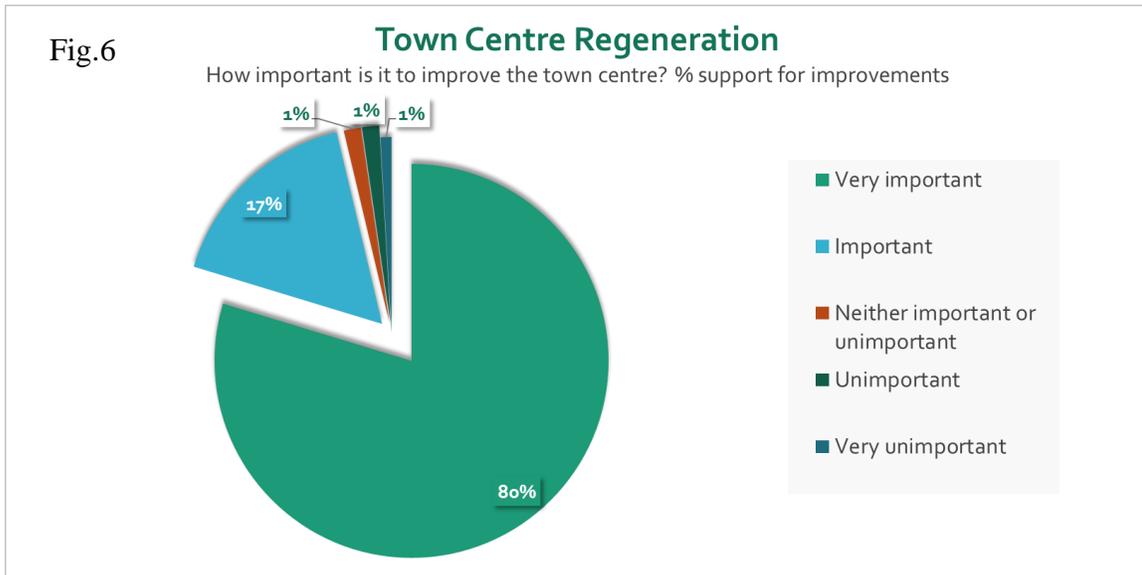
Fig 5



## TOWN CENTRE

The next section of the survey focused specifically on the regeneration of the central shopping and commercial area of Bletchley. Fig. 6 shows the strength of feeling about the decline of the shopping centre. The very large number of the comments and suggestions received that address this issue suggests the town centre is a key

driver of local dissatisfaction. 97% of respondents feel it is very important (80%) or important (17%) to improve the town centre.



The survey focused-in on the town centre, to understand the improvements local people want to see. Fig 7 below shows strong support for an improved shopping experience (73%); the reuse and repurposing of existing premises (70%); the diversification of uses (80%) and greater support for local producers and artisans through produce and craft markets (69%). 48% of respondents supported improvements to make the town centre more accessible. 9% of respondents supported improvements to make the town centre more accessible.

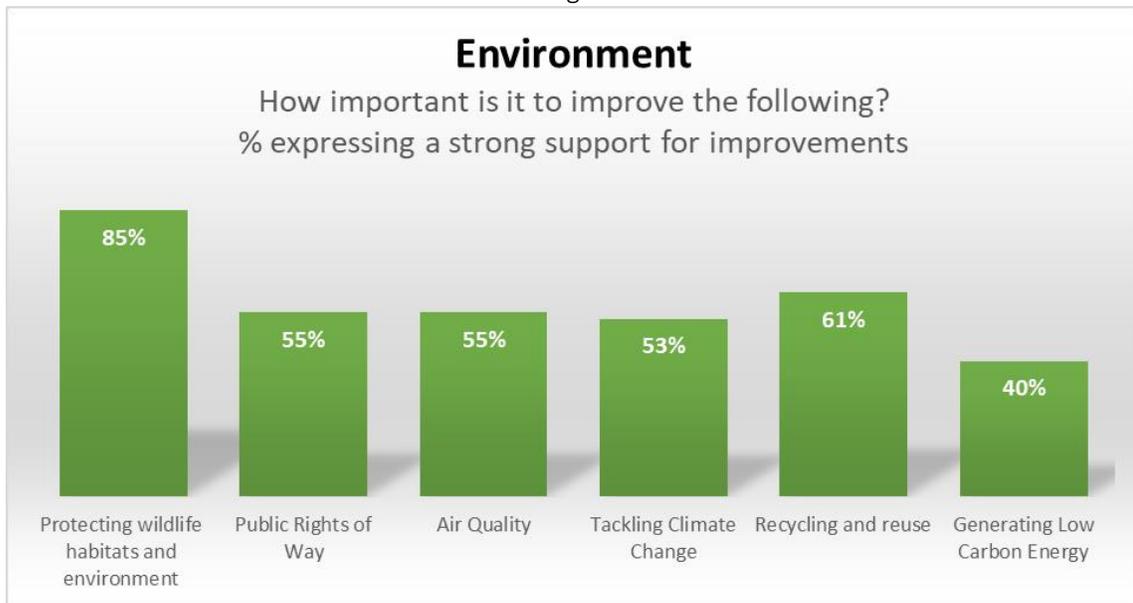
Fig 7



## ENVIRONMENT

Respondents were asked about the importance of protecting the local environment and the impacts of climate change. Fig 8 shows how important these issues are to local people, with 85% expressing strong support for measures to protect and enhance wildlife habitats. There was also strong support for enhancing rights of way; improving air quality, tackling the impacts of climate change and improving recycling facilities. More than one in three respondents expressed strong support for low carbon energy generation schemes.

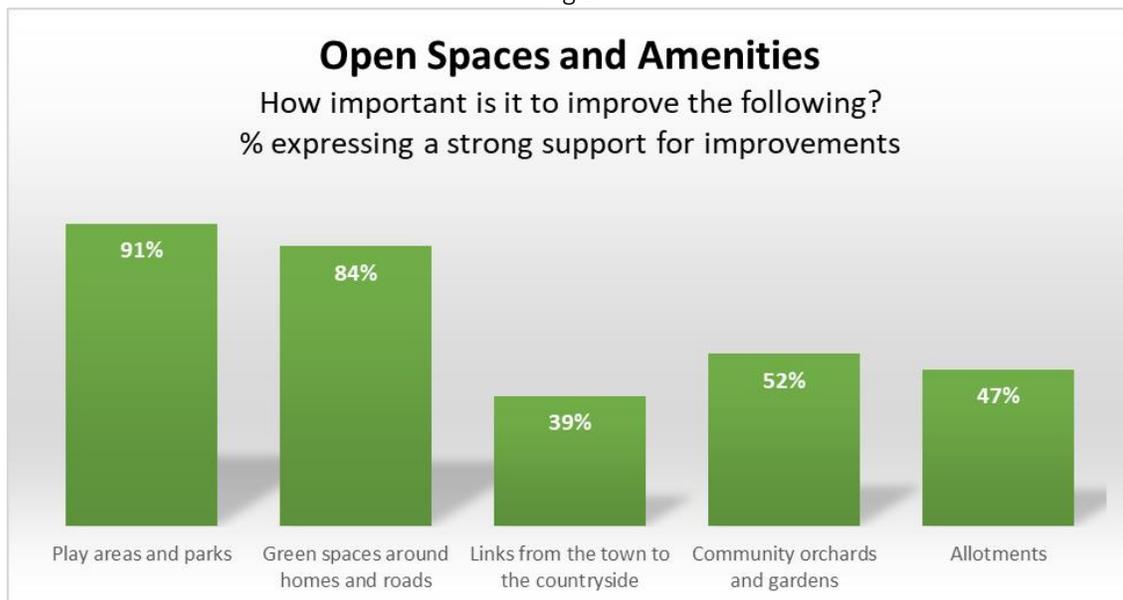
Fig 8



### OPEN SPACES AND AMENITIES

The survey shows the value local people attach to open spaces and green areas within the urban environment. 91% of respondents strongly support the need for improvements to play areas and parks. 84% want to see more green spaces. 52% of respondents would like to see more wild areas of orchard and wildflower gardens. There is strong support for allotment provision (47%) and this can be seen in the context of a strong emphasis on sustainability and low-carbon living that runs through the survey results. Improving access to the countryside was strongly supported by over a third of respondents. See Fig 9 below.

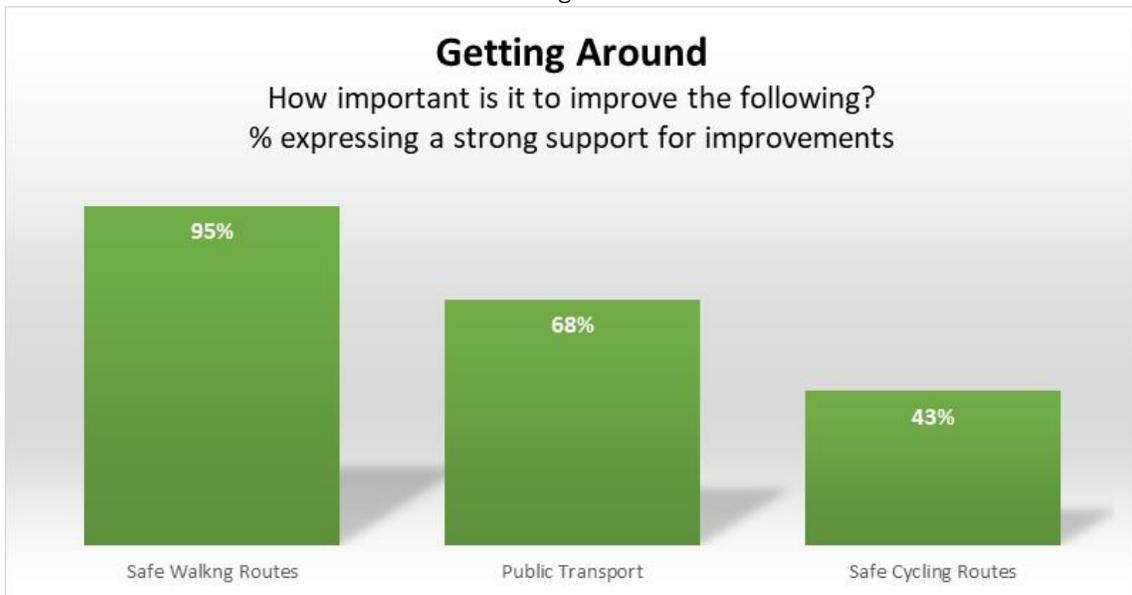
Fig 9



### GETTING AROUND

The survey gives us some insight into local transport priorities. Perhaps unsurprising in an urban area, improved and safer pedestrian access was the strongest priority with 95% of respondents supporting safe walking routes. Improved bus services (68%) and better facilities for cycling (43%) also received strong support.

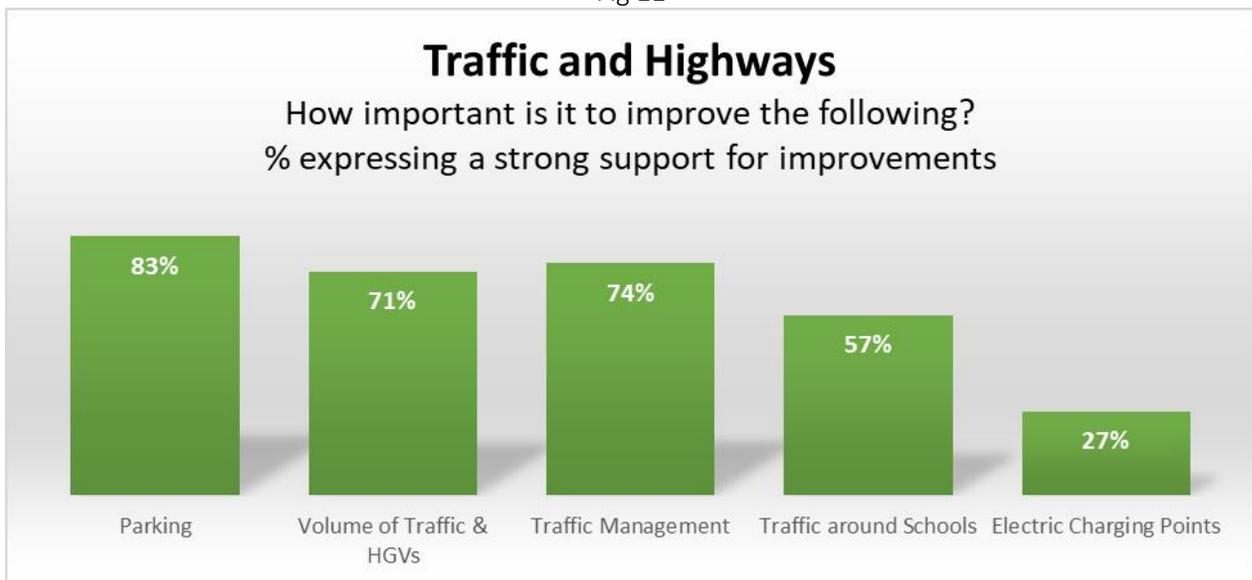
Fig 10



### TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS

It is clear from the number of comments received about parking, traffic and roads that this is a major concern for local people. Car parking was cited repeatedly as a frustration and 83% of respondents identified this as an area where improvements are required. 74% of respondents would like to see improved traffic management and from the supporting comments this seems to be of most concern in the town centre area. Reducing the amount of traffic and HGVs also featured highly (71% of respondents) and again the town centre features heavily in the comments. Well over half of respondents want to see cars reduced around schools and just over a quarter support more EV charging points.

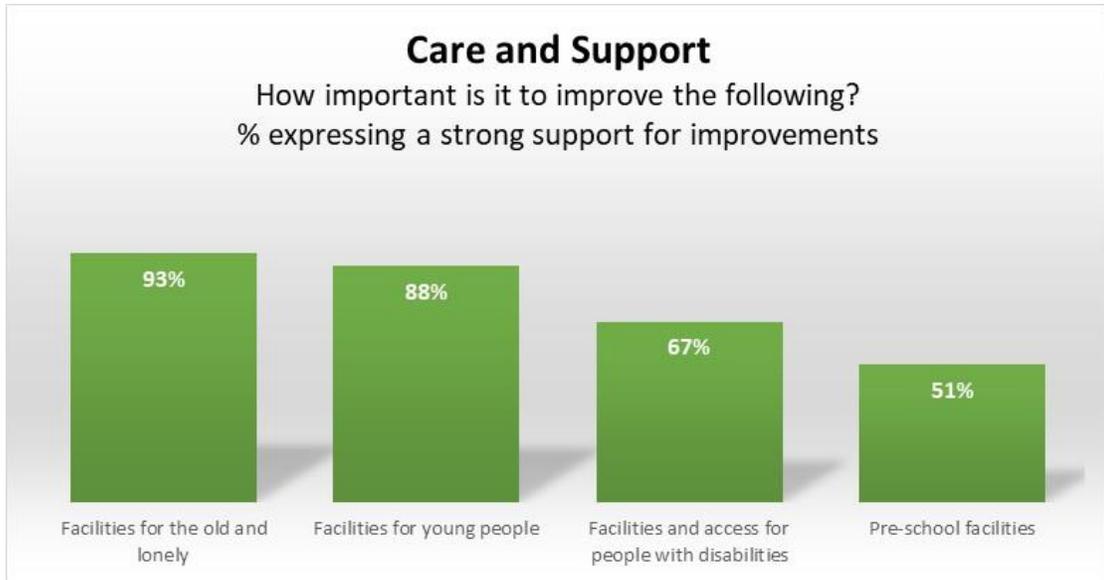
Fig 11



### SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Often planning policies focus most on commercial and housing development because this is where the market tends to drive demand. However, accommodating the social needs of the local community is equally important within the context of a neighbourhood plan. Certainly, the survey results point to local demand for improvements in this area. 93% of respondents expressed strong support for improved facilities for older and more isolated residents. 88% of respondents strongly support improved facilities for young people. 67% want to see better

facilities for those living with disability and over half support improved pre-school provision in the town.



The survey also revealed the extent of concerns around public safety with 94% of respondents calling for improvements. 86% want to see improvements to health facilities. 59% of respondents would like better leisure facilities. 43% felt there was a need to improve meeting spaces and just under a third of respondents would like more investment in arts and culture.

Fig 13



## INTERPRETING THE RESULTS – THE CO-PRODUCTION CAFE

Armed with the views of local people as expressed through the survey, it was necessary to consider how these issues and priorities might inform the development of the neighbourhood plan. The survey had invited respondents to provide their own ideas and suggestions, and these formed the basis of the ‘co-production café’ workshop on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2022. 29 participants attended the event held in the at Water Eaton Church Centre. The event followed the following format:

### Introduction and context

Gavin Bedford, Chair of the Bletchley & Fenny Stratford NPG, welcomed everyone to the event. Steve Milton from LGRC then ran through the results of the survey. He explained the workshop process, stressing the importance of linking the workshop activities with the views expressed by the wider community.

### Task 1 – issue weighting

Participants broke into four groups, each focused on a theme – housing, economy, transport and living. Each table had a facilitator, a copy of the community survey results, a priority sheet (tablecloth), and a pack of ‘idea cards’ that featured the ideas and issues arising from the survey. The group worked through the cards, discussing each and agreeing a ranking based on how well each reflected community priorities. After 20 minutes, the tables rotated, and the process continued in this way until all the cards had been allocated a priority rating and every participant had visited each theme table.

### Task 2 – issue assessment

Back in groups, the priority issues were assessed against the following questions to determine whether the issue could be included within the neighbourhood plan (ensuring it is a spatial planning issue).

- **BUILDING:** does the issue require new buildings or structures? (Shops, business units, cycle paths, etc.)
- **LAND:** Does the issue need land allocated or a change of existing land use? (New housing sites, etc.)
- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Is this needed to serve new development? (Community or health facilities, roads, etc.)
- **PLANNING GAIN:** Can the issue be delivered by new development? (Cycle paths, open spaces, play areas, etc.)

This information was captured on the café worksheets (tablecloths).

It is important to emphasise that each stage of the process has been driven by the views of the community. The priorities, ideas and actions came from the community and the priority issue lists were assembled by the community itself at the co-production café workshop. At every stage this has been led and developed by local people. This important phase of the neighbourhood planning process will now inform the work of the Group’s newly appointed and highly respected planning consultants – O’Neil Homer.

The following tables show the issues prioritised by the community at the co-production café workshop.

**Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan**  
**TRANSPORT PRIORITIES**

<b>Community Issue</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Improve pedestrian links to the station and central transport hub.	1
Additional off-street car parking provided as part of the regeneration	1
Adequate secure bike parks to be provided in the town centre	1
Improved and safer road crossings	1
Create safe routes for cyclists	1
Reduce buses in Queensway	1
Review/reduce on-street parking in Queensway	1
Provide a new multi-story car park on a brown field site (sympathetic and eco-friendly)	1
Make Princes Way more pedestrian friendly	1
One way and traffic vehicle flow improvements to route traffic away from town centre	1
Improve pedestrian and cycle routes to Queensway, particularly from N and S	1
Create spaces accessible to all with mobility and health challenges	1
Sustainable transport plans for larger housing developments	1
Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations	1
Provide an eastern entrance to Bletchley railway station	2
Increased pedestrianization	2
More people friendly streets and open areas	2
Rationalise existing bus routes to reduce buses in the town centre	2
Improved bus stops with real time passenger information	2
Provision of a mass rapid transit system linking Bletchley with	2
Improve signing and access to car parks to reduce traffic in the	2
Introduce 'smart signage' for car parks based on capacity	2
Traffic calming measures introduced in central areas	2
Introduce a low emission zone in the town centre	2
Develop travel to school plans to reduce the school run traffic	2
Diversify transport modes to reduce traffic	3

**Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan**  
**LIVING IN BLETCHLEY & FENNY STRATFORD - PRIORITIES**

<b>Community Issue</b>	<b>Priority</b>
New development should deliver necessary community infrastructure	1
New developments to incorporate facilities for young people	1
Increased housing diversity and choice for both new and existing residents	1
Give Bletchley back its sense of place and character	1
Improve signposting, maps and legibility	1
Improved street and environment lighting to create a safe and inviting places	1
Improved housing options for young people	1
More shared ownership and self-build housing schemes	1
Ensure provision of supported and specialist housing	1
Provide access to outside healthy spaces - jog trails, walking routes, bike routes, etc.	1
Ensure adequate health facilities are available to serve new development	1
New development designed to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour	1
Enhance the range of children's play opportunities	1
Affordable social housing provision should be increased	2
Provide opportunities for low carbon-community self build schemes	2
New housing to facilitate connected homeworking	2
Public art and performance spaces in the centre	2
More architectural focus points and heritage features	2
More public seating and meeting places	2
Ensure adequate school and pre-school places are available to serve increasing population	2
Improve local schools and pre-school provision	2
Develop a heritage centre or museum	2
Provide adequate community facilities to meet increasing and changing demands	2
Break down the divide between East and West Bletchley	3
Improve the library	3

**Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan**  
**ENVIRONMENT - PRIORITIES**

<b>Community Issue</b>	<b>Priority</b>
New housing to deliver low carbon lifestyle: solar, heating composting, greywater, etc.	1
Balance regeneration with green spaces to mitigate effect of climate change	1
Invest in high quality low-carbon urban regeneration schemes	1
Increase access to high quality open spaces.	1
New developments should protect and enhance existing ecology	1
Loss of habitat and ecology to be strongly resisted	1
Provision of new wild spaces (meadows, woodlands, ponds) to offset impact of new build	1
New green, low carbon, affordable and connected development to encourage young people	1
Ensure new development is in accordance with sustainable construction principles	1
Ensure redevelopment of existing buildings reuse and reclaim materials in accordance with sustainable development principles	1
Develop renewable energy schemes - solar powered signs, residential heating schemes, EV points, etc.	1
Make more of a feature of the waterways (mooring for Electra?)	1
Avoiding increased flood risks associated with new development	1
Improved access to and management of the Blue Lagoon nature reserve	1
Preserve and celebrate local heritage	1
Green corridors and watercourses to be protected and enhanced.	2
Provision of bat boxes, swift bricks, bird boxes in new housing	2
More floral planters and grassed areas	2
More distinctive and high-quality dog and litter bins	2
Space for community gardens	2
Plant more trees across the town	2
New housing and commercial development to include EV charging points	2
Retrofitting of carbon reduction features to existing housing stock	2
Use the low carbon commitment as a focus for a new community identity.	3
High quality and varied paving to delineate routes and places	3

**Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan**  
**ECONOMY PRIORITIES**

<b>Community Issue</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Target regeneration at brownfield sites	1
Regeneration of Queensway	1
Higher quality of design for new development in the town centre	1
More shops and retail spaces	1
Local food and artisan markets	1
Queensway as the flagship project to attract further investment	1
A new supermarket	1
More bars, cafes and restaurants in the Town centre	1
Stronger planning policy to deliver a revitalised Bletchley	1
Smarten up existing frontages and bring back civic pride in the place	1
Subsidised start-up business units to encourage innovation	1
Provide high quality public realm schemes to attract visitors to the town centre	1
Improved sense of arrival - improved urban gateway to the town from public transports hubs	1
Open up Queensway to reconnect with Buckingham Road for pedestrians	1
Build on the Oxford Cambridge Arc to regenerate local economy	1
Invest in the low carbon economy and jobs	1
Increase the diversity of the retail and leisure mix in the Town centre	2
Improved pedestrian and cycle links between town centre and residential areas	2
Redevelopment of the Fire and Police Station sites	2
Improve the evening and nigh-time economy in the town centre	2
Improved shop fronts with more outdoor seating	2
Improve the design and layout of Saxon Street	2
Provide a focus and stimulus for tourism.	3
Improve the quality of the environment and range of activities and events within Stanier Square	3
Upgrade digital communications infrastructure	3