

THE FUTURE OF PRINCES RISBOROUGH

Public consultation event 19-20th September 2014

Exhibition questionnaire responses

2 October 2014

202 people signed in at the exhibition

107 replies were received: 51 questionnaires were returned on the consultation days, and 56 replies were received online through the survey, by email or as paper copies posted later.

NB: Not all respondents answered every question, and some ticked multiple boxes.

SCENARIO 1: A WALKABLE COMPACT TOWN

1. Do you think that walking distances to the town centre should be a key factor for new development?

a) YES	88%
b) NO	12%
c) Don't know	0%

There were also many comments in discussions about Princes Risborough being a walkable town, which was part of the pleasure of living there.

2. If we reduced the development area, would more intense new development be acceptable?

a) YES	25%
b) NO	68%
c) Don't know	8%

The lower-medium density nature of Princes Risborough today was seen as a good basis for new development to maintain the character, but also to help keep views to/from landscape.

3. Should new local facilities (schools, doctors' surgeries) be provided rather than expanding existing ones?

a) YES	74%
b) NO	19%
c) Don't know	7%

There is seen to be limited capacity in most local facilities and services today, so new facilities were generally welcomed. Some respondents saw no benefits from the potential new development at all however.

SCENARIO 2: CONSIDERING ACCESS TO FACILITIES

4. Where should new school places go?

The majority of responses favoured the new development area, and as shown on

the plan in the exhibition, or close-by within walking distance of new and existing houses. The parking arrangements for picking up/ dropping off at school, and the impact on surrounding streets and traffic are a concern.

There were many references to the closure of Berryfields and Bell Street primary schools (no dates given), and the extent of forward planning for the future for education needs if a new school would now need to be built.

Other locations were also mentioned: Summerleys Road, the High Wycombe end of town, by the station, close to the town centre, in Longwick village, the west side of Princes Risborough to serve people in Bledlow, Longwick and Ford nearby, or at Monks Risborough School.

Secondary school places were seen to be needed at the existing school and by expanding that.

One respondent felt that the existing schools capacity should be the design threshold for the new development area (i.e. under 700 homes)

5. What other community facilities does the town need?

The following facilities were described as needing to help the town and the new development area to become more sustainable:

- Medical/ GP surgeries
- Indoor sports and leisure including a swimming pool and gym
- New community centre/ meeting halls and refurbishing the existing centre
- Dedicated cycle paths, bike parking and networks around the town and to the station
- More and cheaper parking around the town and at the station to encourage better use
- 13-18 year old young people's facilities

Other popular suggestions were:

- NHS Dentists
- Secondary school places
- Nursery places
- Parks and playgrounds
- Wildlife areas for children
- More public transport
- Football pitches and outdoor sports spaces, e.g. for bowling, tennis, netball courts, running track, outdoor gyms, plus a full size floodlit all weather pitch for rugby clubs.
- Improvements to existing places such as Earle Mitchel Ground on Upper Icknield Way, Wade's Park and King George V recreation ground.

- Attractive gardens with seating, water and other pocket parks
- Cinema
- Theatre or performing arts space (or hall with stage - to hold more than 200 people)
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Food bank
- Combined police, town council, district and council offices outreach building.

Longwick's sewage pumping station was mentioned as a major concern as it regularly floods the area with sewage. It was raised as an issue for new development here and elsewhere, and whether this was to be addressed.

6. Would it better to locate these in the new development area or alongside the town's facilities where possible?

a)	In the new development area	23%
b)	In town	29%
c)	Mixed between	49%

There was recognition that many existing facilities could not be expanded sufficiently to meet new demands, but also that facilities should take advantage of the land available across the railway line. Retail facilities should be concentrated in the town centre or a large local centre, as smaller parades have declined due to limited offer.

SCENARIO 3: DELIVERING BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE

7. Would you prefer the wider relief route or the alternative route proposal?

a)	The wider relief route	41%
b)	The alternative route proposal	27%
c)	Neither	32%

The responses and comments received to this question reveal the widespread concern that a new road needs to be very efficient as a by-pass to be worth having. Combining the by-pass role with a local route for people and children was a major concern, as they were seen as incompatible. (The wider relief road was also seen as helping to support investment in the Princes Industrial Area). Several respondents highlighted that emergency vehicles between the hospitals to the north and south need an effective and fast by-pass.

The third route alignment of Shootacre Lane-Summerleys Road-B4009 route was also mentioned, but was not seen as tempting enough for commuters. Another suggestion was running the new road along the railway line to Aylesbury.

Reassurance was also sought that Wycombe town itself can also handle the traffic that the improved route would carry, as public transport to Wycombe is not judged to be

adequate when traveling beyond its town centre. The lack of priority for buses to and around Wycombe means that they are also held in congested areas, offering no incentive to use them.

Some respondents were not convinced of the need for the new road at all if the development did not go ahead.

There was concern about congestion south of Princes Risborough on the approach to High Wycombe, which these proposals would not address; the West Wycombe roundabout was described as a bottleneck, and so additional improvements were sought there. The access from these roads to the major motorways of the M40 and M25 was seen as one of the main reasons why Princes Risborough had not attracted more jobs. Until this is addressed, one respondent felt, the town is unlikely to have a sustainable jobs-homes balance.

8. Of the examples shown, what type of road should that aim to be?

a)	A country road	36%
b)	A new distributor road	30%
c)	A town road with grass verges and setbacks	23%
d)	A town-style boulevard.	11%

The preference for a country lane reflects the concern about the road’s ability to handle traffic efficiently, and not become congested itself if it serves other areas too. Comments were also made about the need for the route to serve the development area to be safe for people to walk along, and how this would be in conflict with providing a major traffic route. (The country lane option also is seen as more in keeping with the traditional character option later).

More needs to be done to explain the traffic levels predicted for the wider relief and alternative routes, and how that compares to existing streets today - to see likely nature of traffic levels and design speeds, and whether this would be suitable as a pedestrian friendly route to serve the development area too.

SCENARIO 4: IMPROVING THE TOWN CENTRE

9. Which town centre streets and areas need to be considered for public realm improvements?

The following town centre streets were identified for improvements, and would all see a reduction in traffic with a new peripheral road: New Road, Horns Lane, Bell Street, and Wycombe Road.

Additional ideas were for Duke Street and High Street where the one way system should either be reduced to pedestrianised areas, or returned to two-way traffic, with bus services stopping on New Road instead. The lanes between the High Street and New Road would need to become better too.

The two-way cycle route through the town centre was also seen as poorly designed and confusing to all users.

Stratton Road (and Church Street) were also mentioned by many with the problem of on-street parking instead of using the car park and around the station area similarly. These were seen as good places for residents' parking schemes to be introduced.

Wellington Avenue was mentioned as it has heavy school traffic as well as all day town centre parking by workers, and needed more time restrictions.

Other locations mentioned were:

- Mill Lane for better pedestrian access to school, etc. Mill Lane-Crowbrook Road junction, Longwick Road, plus Aylesbury Road at the church.
- The Ercol area to access the train station/ Summerleys Road-Park Mill junction area, Place Farm Way Parade.
- The Fields and Red Kite estates were also seen as in need of improvement with poorly maintained surfaces, unkempt open spaces and little thought about parking.

10. What type of improvements should be considered?

Most of the improvements suggested were for:

- pedestrianisation, wider footways, more dropped kerbs, and making safer roads for people
- the traffic calming of New Road in particular, not just zebra crossings
- safe routes to school
- slower speeds on rural roads from 50mph to 30 mph or less
- retaining the character of the market town streets – more traditional materials (e.g. denner hill setts) in key places
- more retail/ commercial space along New Road
- preserving Princes Risborough's heritage and assets comprehensively and having a museum to show the town's growth over time
- better shop and building fronts, and flats over shops
- free 1 hour parking to encourage more use of the town centre shops and facilities (Thame is a preferred destination at the moment and has free parking)
- more parking areas to serve more people – by moving the fire station on Horns Lane to the new development area, and expanding car parking on that site (as a multi-storey car park)
- more trees and green spaces, seating, stream and duck pond
- restricting parking on grass verges where cycle lanes pass through, and on

yellow lines

- pursuing an eco-town theme, to enhance the town's character
- a crematorium, sheltered housing and nursing homes
- more use of existing buildings in the town and brownfield sites
- See Risborough 2035 report!

11. What type of retail and leisure facilities should be encouraged to come into the town centre to attract residents?

Opinion was split on the type of new commercial activities needed in the town centre between:

- more larger national chain stores, the expansion of the supermarkets (M&S) or a new supermarket on Longwick Road (Waitrose), OR
- more smaller scale independent shops to suit its market town character, plus:
 - good quality restaurants, rather than cafes, were welcomed
 - businesses rather than just shops in the town centre
 - clothes shopping and more variety than at present (too many charity shops, estate agents, take-aways, hairdressers and cafes)
 - entertainment for both young and older people (bowling, reopening the Black Prince, late night licensed venues, etc.).
 - hotel or wedding venue, with bed spaces for visitors and Chilterns tourists – walkers and cyclists. (Hostel and camping facilities were suggested at Earle Mitchell playing field).

THE CHARACTER OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

12. Which type of density is most suitable for Princes Risborough?

a)	Low density, mostly houses	54%
b)	Medium density, mixed houses and flats	43%
c)	High density, mostly flats	3%

The majority of views expressed concern about the loss of Princes Risborough's market town character: 'a safe, sleepy country town'. High density development was not welcome as this would need to be carefully designed to be appropriate to this character, avoid spoiling views, have adequate parking, and ensure that a good mix of housing is provided, not just flats. One respondent asked about the success of recent developments in Chinnor and Haddenham, while Danish planning ideas were suggested for the emphasis on liveable densities, walking and cycling.

13. The style of architecture for new homes will determine the development's overall character. Which is most suitable for Princes Risborough?

a)	Traditional	58%
b)	Modern/ traditional	41%
c)	Modern	1%

Views about style were mixed; Fairford Leys was cited by one respondent as a good example, while others preferred a modern interpretation of the traditional. The majority of views favoured more traditional architecture.

14. Should this be the same across all of the development area?

a)	YES	85%
b)	NO	8%
c)	Don't know	7%

Some respondents felt that traditional and lower density development should be located nearer to the town, with opportunities for self-build too.

15. The style of outdoor space will also determine the development's overall character. Which types of open space would be preferable?

a)	Play spaces	26%
b)	Formal open spaces	12%
c)	Informal open spaces	50%
d)	Other	12%

There was a clear preference for informal open spaces or 'natural countryside areas'. The comments under 'Other' reflected the desire to maintain the rural backdrop to the town. The seasonality of the open countryside today and the residential areas' close proximity to rural pathways is an important part of the town's setting and appeal today.

The flatter areas of the land between Longwick Road, Mill Lane and Alscot and the railway line are regarded very valuable to elderly people and dog walkers, as the paths are relatively flat (and hence manageable), and can be reached without using a car first. Maintaining this space and a natural landscape between the development area and the town was seen as important.

OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED:

1. East-West Rail There was concern about the East-West Rail route and its implications for residents living within the area shown as 'Buffer 20m' (2 houses on Mill Lane), as they had had no correspondence from the E-W Rail team itself yet.

2. Reduction in rail services today: One respondent reported that Chiltern Railways had reduced the services to Birmingham, and fast services to London from Princes Risborough.

3. Employment space and the inclusion of proportionate jobs in Princes Risborough was not felt to have been adequately addressed in the overall proposal, given the 2031 timescale. It was felt that there is a need for development space for jobs which did not involving commuting to London or elsewhere by train or road. Concerns about creating a large dormitory town were numerous, and that this was highly unsustainable now and in the future. Aylesbury was already seen as out of balance, and so more strategic transport links would be required to overcome this.

Creating new homes on brownfield sites closer to the existing road network or station (Molins at Saunderton, or along the A4010) was mentioned.

4. Planning for Growth: One respondent questioned the difference between growth figures published for 2014-26 by Buckinghamshire County Council at 2.6%, and WDC's own at 6.8%, and which was regarded as most accurate for future planning.

5. WDC Management Group: there was a perceived need for a Milton Keynes Development Corporation style management group within BCC/ WDC to oversee and run any major development proposals. This was to ensure that it was self-financing, and not detracting from regular council activity and funds, but also to ensuring that the best solution was delivered as planned.

6. Flooding: the issue of the flooding of local roads was also raised, and the extent to which this could be mitigated by new development infrastructure.