

# The Walton Manor Residents' Survey, March/April 2018



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## The Purpose

- To elicit key local issues on a totally independent basis, free from any party-political involvement
- To provide residents and politicians with statistically valid data on local opinion

## The Project

- To conduct a survey among Walton Manor residents
- To ask residents for their unprompted thoughts about the local issues most important to them
- To return the findings back to residents of Walton Manor
- To communicate the findings to all candidates in the upcoming local council election

## The Survey

- Conducted by Paul Lindsell, member of the Market Research Society and the British Polling Council
- Total pool of households in Walton Manor = c.500
- Survey sample of 105 responses, of which 100 usable
- Survey sample therefore ~20% - very strong in opinion research terms
- Response channels – email, mail, face-to-face
- High value responses because of unprompted, unstructured, single open question
- Representation:-
  - Age/Situation – new attainers, young professionals, families, empty nesters, retired, sheltered accommodation
  - Geography – Farndon, Warnborough, Tackley, Leckford, Kingston, Plantation, Longworth, Southmoor, Rutherway, Merrivale, Plater.
- Period – 18 March – 30 March 2018

## Was the survey welcomed?

- 100 respondents welcomed the survey
- 5 respondents felt the survey to be not welcome



## Overview

- Across the 100 usable responses, residents were keen to express their satisfaction with many aspects of the Council's work
- Areas of concern were felt to contrast sharply with important areas of achievement by the Council
- Most respondents were pleased to have a mechanism for consultation which was independent from political parties and from the Council's administration
- Most respondents felt there was a lack of ongoing community consultation
- Many respondents expressed a desire to be more involved in their ultra-local community and for there to be more easy mechanisms through which to do so

"There is much to praise about the City Council's work. The issues we are raising are urgent and critical, and should be attended to with action now, but they contrast to the many things our council does very well."

"I don't think our council is particularly more or less effective than any other. In fact, some initiatives – like the electrification of the bus fleet are really leading the way, and are much appreciated. Nevertheless, there are a number of glaringly poor areas which must be dealt with – actions not just words."

"At a ward level, can more be done to create a sense of community? Can I do more to support my neighbours? Can we encourage people to come together, share knowledge and skills, collaborate, support each other, even cook, garden or grow food together?"

## The Results

- Responses identified clear agreement across 9 areas of concern
- These areas of concern also clearly divided into two tiers
- Tier 1 – cited by two thirds of respondents or more
- Tier 2 – cited by one third of respondents or more (up to two thirds)

## Tier 1 Areas of Concern

### 1. Council Services – Strategy, Prioritisation, Efficiency, Communication

- Better co-operation between City & County
- Shared long-term all-party vision for Oxford
- Development of ‘brand Oxford’
- More community consultation
- Easier, accessible methods of consultation
- Local notices and information actively ‘pushed’ to citizens
- ‘More genuine desire’ to communicate from the Council

“We need to see more overt co-operation between political parties and stakeholders over a proper strategy that defines the priorities over twenty years, is supported by all parties, gets away from piecemeal (often ineffective) actions, and delivers long-term benefits for everyone in Oxford.”

“The way we are failing to manage our city centre well – whether congestion, pollution, greedily high rents forcing out independent shopkeepers, badly maintained infrastructure, failing those poor folk living on the street... what message does that send to the rest of the country?”

“We need to work out what we value as a city and support it consistently – not keep chopping and changing. There is an essential set of social provision that makes us a civilised community – from libraries, to affordable housing, to night shelters, to women’s refuges.”

“Why are we not seeing policy development based on proper data and analysis?”

“These are the things that matter to us and it is dismaying that efforts and funds are being put into grandstanding schemes such as the vision for Oxford in 2050 or electric vehicle only city centre while the basics are so obviously not right.”

“The culture on the City Council needs to change so that elected representative actually represent the interests of their constituents rather than simply voting on party lines.”

“We need better information about important issues before decisions are taken by the Council so that residents can have some input.”

“It is simply no use the Council publishing public notices about policies, initiatives, works and disruptions in the local paper, or posting on the website, or telling the local civic societies – this is not how the modern world works and just looks like a box-ticking exercise rather any real desire to inform citizens effectively. Affected households must be individually informed. Today that can be a very low cost activity.”

“It was a high-handed move on the Council’s part to install [charging] points for electric cars without consulting residents or forewarning us.”

## 2. Road Condition

- Potholes
- Confusion between County & City responsibility
- Suspicion why no clear definition on website
- Contrast with in-City surfaces – why?

“The City’s roads is the other [major priority]. Being a County responsibility [sic], City councillors may well feel helpless, but this is just one case where dialogue and collaboration between the two levels of government needs constant nurture.”

“It’s like cycling and driving in the poorer parts of Greece and certainly never used to be like this.”

“Why is Frideswide Square constantly having extra work when they can’t even mend the holes in our roads? What’s going on? Seems that priorities are the wrong way round.”

## 3. Road Safety – Congestion – Pollution

- Cycling safety
- Speed limit enforcement
- Traffic calming
- Hire/Internet cycles
- Commercial vehicle access/size

“One of the key issues the city faces (should face) is how to improve cycling within the city. I cycle every day, but it’s a battle field, without proper cycle lanes on the main roads into the city, buses disregarding cyclists, etc. I would love to send my kids to various destinations in the north of the city on a bike, but at the moment it’s just not safe enough to do that.”

“What’s the point in having a 20mph speed limit if traffic calming is not effective enough to enforce the speed? St Bernards Road layout manages to achieve this without expensive speeding cameras. Kingston Road is quite the opposite. And we all know that being hit at 20mph might hurt someone (particularly thinking of children) whereas at 30-40mph, they’ll be crippled or dead.”

“Internet cycles on pathways are left irresponsibly obstructing access to wheelchair users on pavements and disabled pedestrians around city centre streets. Will there be a limit on these cycles as we see more and more cycles on the pavements in our historic city.”

“The companies (I believe they are Chinese) need to take more responsibility and remove bikes much faster. I suspect that the council are not policing them well enough and penalising them for non-compliance to their responsibilities.”

“Big vehicles (not school buses) whether large delivery lorries or commercial coaches, have no need to use our minor roads.”

“Why is there not a regular maintenance programme for faded road markings which lead to dangerous parking, as well as better regulations by schools over pushy parents illegally & dangerously parking to drop off their children?”

## 4. Preserving our Environment

- Green spaces
- Better tree protection
- Keeping recreational spaces usable all year round
- Preserving the built environment
- Clearer planning rules/policies
- Better management of University expansion
- Noise/air pollution
- Effective web-services and access

“We must ensure our parks, green spaces and remaining patches of nature are protected and will not be threatened by pressures on Oxford to constantly expand.”

“We have a great recreation on our doorstep – it’s hugely valued and valuable... but half of it is unusable for half the year. Surely the municipal people can get the draining right – it’s been done several times and simply hasn’t worked. I hate to think how much money has been wasted.”

“We would like to see clear policy from the council limiting ‘iceberg’ property development.”

“Dealing with the rubbish on Port Meadow and Walton Well car park is a priority. We need more bins and more regular collections and some warden presence on the predictable evenings of Summer.”

“We need tighter, clearer planning controls that everyone can understand. I attended a planning meeting where the planning committee cited a policy on development which he said “we had voted on recently”. To our astonishment, the planning head contradicted him to say no such policy had been agreed. This is ridiculous and disorganised and frankly daft.”

“The University is seemingly being tardy about its promise to ameliorate their buildings on the edges of Port Meadow. They have promised to deal with the monsters, but there seems to be no sign so far of any impact reduction. The Council, who many, including us, feel have been [weak in their protection of] Port Meadow should appoint an Officer to monitor and direct the University’s work.”

“Fix the planning website so that it can be accessed easily. The function allowing one to sign up to have applications sent automatically does not work.”

“More pressure is needed on the railway people to reduce train noise....”

“...ongoing maintenance work instead of installing new silent-track creates ongoing noise pollution”

## 5. Effective Care for the Homeless

- More joined-up activity and co-operation between the Council and agencies/charities providing services to help the homeless
- Better/co-ordinated information on homeless services/facilities
- Involve the community more – the community wants to help
- The Council as a mentor and enabler of homeless care by third parties

“We can find and help the genuinely needy, and we shouldn’t skimp the resources for them.”

“...I’ve been to meetings where the fragmented collection of charities and service providers for the homeless spend all their time arguing about which of them is more expert, or right, or worthy, rather than clubbing together and getting the job done. All parties involved are doing great work individually, but any lack of co-operation is frankly pathetic.”

“The council should act urgently to help (not victimise) rough sleepers and the homeless...”

“Professional begging - which is distinct from homelessness. I know one person who will not use the Coop due to harassment outside it. There are bylaws... and they should be enforced.”

“...Why not involve the community more, perhaps giving us information over a website about the facilities available for the homeless? Different providers can keep their bits up-to-date. It’s low cost and would help us help them.”

“We know that local authority budgets are squeezed, but there must be ways or facilities which the Council can deploy at no real cost to help enable charities to look after the homeless more effectively.”

## Tier 2 Areas of Concern

### 6. Key Workers and Affordable Housing

- Growing problem/area of concern for Oxford
- Worries over too little action affecting essential social services

“We love living (renting) in Walton Manor but we can’t afford to buy a house here. My girlfriend and I are in our mid-thirties with well-paying jobs but we can only afford a mortgage 33-40% of what it would cost to buy here, even with... savings and a... gift from her parents towards a deposit. We will probably move to Bicester, Kidlington or even further afield like Bristol or the north of England in order to afford a decent-sized 3-bedroom house.”

- Active policy to enforce/encourage co-operation from landowners rather than wait for developer proposals
- Signs of possible net outflow of key workers in education, health, social services, police, etc

"I'm a key worker in education. My partner is in the NHS. But we're going to have to move...we simply can't afford to stay."

"If we look at our essential social services – education, NHS, children's services, elderly care, homeless care, and so on – we simply aren't going to be able to keep these going if we don't invest much more heavily in affordable housing. How are we going to attract the people otherwise?"

"Providing affordable accommodation for key workers is precisely where the Council can make [things] happen. Barton New Village is a good start with over 300 homes being made affordable. But much more is needed if the development of our historic City is not to trip over. Come on policy and planning – let's actively co-operate with private landowners (yes – the Colleges too) and work in proper co-operation with the County Council to open the door to more Bartons."

## 7. Preserving our Independent Retailers

- Rates relief for SMEs?
- Desire for Council policy/plan to retain small independent retailers
- Concern over future health of Covered Market
- The 'Westgate Effect'
- Transparency over policy/support

"Oxford should value and nurture its historic centre. The Covered Market is withering away because of huge rates..."

"Does the City have a retail strategy, designed to preserve and foster a wide range of retailers – preferably the small independents who really give character? We don't want to become a faceless bunch of chains which could be anywhere. There's more to Oxford than the University – in fact for residents, we're not very interested in what's in the Colleges – we don't live in them."

"You know, we all want to support independent local traders, but we can't do that without the council's support. We can vote with our spending, but if their overheads are crippling, they'll go, and we can't spend in their shops if they're not there!"

"Transparency is needed over the scale of and how the windfall from the council's financial interest in the new Westgate Shopping Centre will be spread across the whole city."

"Where's the vision for the Covered Market? It's under council control but traders seem to be leaving almost as fast as the life is being sucked out of the High Street and Cornmarket because of the 'Westgate' effect."

## 8. Tourism Management and Tourist Taxation

- Monetise tourism better
- Tourist tax not a suppressant
- Control tourist effect – especially traffic
- Infrastructure strategy to improve the tourist experience while better managing impact on residents

“Oxford is a fantastic tourist attraction... and there’s so much for visitors to do and see at low or no charge. We should levy a modest tourist tax like they do in every European city – you see it on your hotel bill and no-one objects or stops visiting!”

“If we are to put up with the constant tourist congestion in the centre all year round then they should pay something towards the wear and tear they are causing.”

“It can’t be beyond the wit of man (or the Council) to arrange tourist bus drop-off points in ways that cause fewer bottlenecks.”

“It’s well known that the hotel provision in Oxford is inadequate – and allowing a low-cost hotel to be developed in Summertown is certainly not an answer... this would be a really good area for policy development that would actually develop revenues for the City as well as improving tourist management for us residents.”

“Bus companies and tourism are destroying the environment of central Oxford.”

## 9. Petty Crime

- Drug dealing
- Vandalism
- Graffiti
- More police presence?
- Involve the community

“Vandalism in Southmoor Road – there’s been a lot of very strange vandalism over the last year ranging from the torching of the car/tyre slashing to egg throwing into houses/over cars.”

“Graffiti – it is a question of whose civic space it is – ours or a handful of drug dealers. I think [the Council]... should equip and empower communities to remove it.”

“Get rid of the drug dealers around Aristotle Lane, Walton Well and Burgess Field... young children are exposed and are at risk.”

“Our area could benefit from more frequent policing or CCTV to combat spray-painters and thievery.”

## Conclusions

- Community research, independent from any political party, proved popular and effective in gaining a large sample and clear results
- It is recommended that a mechanism for regular, independent community research be developed, preferably in collaboration with Residents Associations and informal road/area groups
- The Walton Manor community clearly appreciates and expects consultation from its local authorities
- It appears that the Walton Manor community would like to strengthen communication among its residents
- While concerned about ultra-local specific issues, the Walton Manor community also deeply cares about the vibrancy of the city as a whole, the care of less fortunate members of the community, and the long-term economic health of public services and the people who work in them

## Notes

- *Conducted to professional standards*
- *Complete anonymization (verbatim)/confidentiality for respondents*
- *Original transcripts to be erased per best practice and DPA/PECR requirements once original purpose for data capture complete (two months from survey data collection)*