

The Malpas Plan

Social Issues

Focus Group Meeting

13th July 2005

Present:

Steering group Members:

Organisations & Community:

Peter Howell (PH)	Ray Dodd (RD)	Cheshire Community Council
Eric Barker (EB)	Roy Crump (RC)	Cheshire Fire Service
Margaret Barker (MB)	John Proudlove (JPr)	Bowling Club
Anna Patten (AP)	Cynthia Nelson (CN)	Cheshire Community Council
Laurie Crump (LC)	Graham Bibby (GB)	Bishop Heber High School
Mike Patten (MP)	Sally Buttifant (SB)	Chester City Council
Sally Sharp (SS)	Stephen Cox (SC)	Chester City Council
John Pierson (JP)	Grahame Andrews (GA)	Malpas First Responders
	Ruth Jacks (RJ)	Malpas Parish Council
	S.M. Eddies (SE)	Local Resident
	D.P. Eddies (DE)	Local Resident

PH gave a brief introduction to the Malpas Parish Plan and the purpose and scope of the meeting. The Plan will be a document representing the views of the people of Malpas the community as it is now and what they want their village to be. This public consultation on the future of Malpas will be used as evidence of the will of the people when trying to tackle the issues raised. Participants were told that their comments would help to inform the process and steer the focus of the questionnaire which will be sent to all households.

The social dimension of the community covers a wide range of areas, all of which overlap into an integrated whole, but can be seen to include such things as: - housing, development, social housing, medical facilities such as GPs/Health centre, dentist, opticians, alternative therapists; social facilities; educational facilities; care facilities for the elderly, young, and disability groups. It could also include policing, transport, traffic, shops, and pubs - the whole infrastructure of the community. Communication and new technology, working from home, voluntary groups, sport or culture based groups, churches, community spirit or involvement and contact with other neighbouring communities. To begin, he asked those present to comment on what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses in the social life of Malpas.

LC - One of the strengths is that we are well served with sports clubs, 3 bowling clubs and other sorts of clubs like gardening, horticulture, ladies flower club, bridge and a well organised day centre for elderly people

? - Certainly the 40+ age group are well served. Lower down the age group we have scouts, guides ...

RJ - I have 3 small children and there's no toddler group or playgroup. Not everyone has a car and can get out to Edge. The tots miss out a bit

LC The hope is to get another classroom at the Alport School. We have just been turned down on an application for funding for this year but we are hopeful for future years. Perhaps a mention of this in the Parish Plan will help us to succeed.

GB - There's an incredibly strong social cohesion

CN - Traffic congestion is a weakness, especially on the Chester Road. It is very difficult to find anywhere to park. I don't shop here because of the traffic and the HGVs

GB - We worry about traffic outside the Heber, particularly at home time. Both the parking and the standard of driving. We're keen to see more traffic calming.

SB - Your geographic location means that you have to be self contained. Therefore the social cohesion and the clubs but also the parking.

GB- Inconsiderate parking by locals

RC - One of the problems is the lack of off road parking. This can cause the fire brigade difficulties in getting through, it's particularly bad in Well Street and Springfield Avenue. We need to find alternative routes when we are responding to a 999 call and need to get through to No Mans Heath.

CN - Old Hall Court, where I live, there are too many cars there for the available number of parking spaces. Parked cars block spaces which should be kept available for emergency services.

GB - A strength for me, as an outsider, is the surrounding environment - the countryside

CN - And the charm of the buildings in the village itself.

PH - Does that have a consequence socially?

CN - The weaknesses are spoiling the strengths - the village location is endangered by the weaknesses traffic

SC - What's the public transport like?

CN - The A41 corridor bus has been very successful and the county council is committed to keeping it

SS - Even though it doesn't go to Tesco in Whitchurch? People struggle to catch it up by the railway station, going uphill with all their shopping.

CN - Details like that can be looked at and reviewed but the service itself has exceeded all expectations

GA - There is no public transport into Malpas from outlying places like Bickley to connect with the A41 bus

PH - Outlying areas regard Malpas as a local centre

CN - There is a needs assessment underway and we are getting a second vehicle. We are hoping to have something in place in autumn

SB - Do you have pubs and restaurants in the area

RJ - The pubs cater for a certain clientele but are not popular with the majority

SC - What about fresh food?
There's good grocery shopping, a good butcher but no market

LC - Where would we site one?

SC - Do you have a farmers' market?

MB - There's one in Whitchurch but not in Malpas. Malpas used to be a market town. There's been moves over the years to set up one but nowhere to site it

LC - If we had a market it would cause a lot more traffic

SC - What about faith groups
? There are 3 churches, who are very strong and active

GB - There's a good library, ICT centre (No Limits), adult learning, we've already mentioned the sports facilities

SC - How about post offices?

MB - Yes we have a post office. Good medical facilities

RJ - Both the Heber and Alport schools have good reputations

GB - There's no cashpoint machine - other than a fee charging one

LC - If the bank had a cashpoint they'd close the branch
? Don't overlook the wonderful community building you're in here (5 rooms for public use) and the scout hall, High Street church, Heber main hall and sports hall, young peoples' centre

PH - That's 10 halls and in a town the size of Malpas. That's quite a lot isn't it, yet no space for a toddler group

SC - What about policing? Is that a strength or weakness

RC - There's a police room in the fire station but its never been used

GB - I was amazed when I came to Malpas that the police were based at Dragon Hall not in Malpas

SE - I reported a serious incident outside my house last Saturday, the second time in 18 months my car has been hit. The police have still not attended. I got the number of the car, which left the scene but there is no policing. No-one seems to care. The local garage owner says he is 98% sure he knows the identity but he's not prepared to say for fear of reprisal. It's no good having all these good things if your life is a misery. I love the village, but I just wish that we had more policing. You need to be able to contact a local bobby, not talk to someone in Ellesmere Port or somewhere

PH - So its difficult to contact the police, hard to get hold of them by phone.

LC - I see the police house has been sold - it even had a cell in there

GA - If the Plan is for the future, I suspect the number of children in Malpas is rising, if there are more children there will be more problems. We'll need to ensure that children are controlled

GB - Numbers of children are falling nationally

GB - There are lots of facilities but there will always be marginalised kids who don't get involved in organised activities

SE - We used to have lots of problems with children's parties at the sports club, we did get the police involved with that and it has got a lot better. Parents were giving them alcohol to take in with them

SS - We are doing a lot at the Young Persons' Centre but we are dependent on volunteers we could do with some more volunteers

GB - People need reminding that community engagement is needed to maintain these things.

JP- People will sometimes not volunteer because of all the need for police checks, insurance and general bureaucracy

SC - Demographic information shows that it is often people of 50+ who volunteer. It's a social trend

SE - I find that the 16-18 year olds are the real problem. Children who are well behaved by day are

awful by night, urinating in the streets, doing atrocious things

SC - How are you off for public conveniences in the village

MB - The public toilets are locked at night. They have to be because of vandalism, broken windows, there have been several incidents

GB - An automatic loo would deal with these problems, self cleaning, vandal proof.

SC - What does vandalism mean to you? Are we talking graffiti, smashed buildings, arson?

RC - Very little arson, the odd torched cars but they have been brought into the area from outside then torched

PH - That's an interesting strength - lack of arson!

GB - The school has very low levels of deliberate destruction.

SC - Litter?

MB - Litter is very bad

SC - Dog fouling?

PH - We don't have much time left but would anyone like to say anything about what sort of place Malpas could become?

GA - I'm from Malpas First Responders, we cover Malpas, Threapwood, Farndon, Tilston, Bickley and No Mans Heath. We respond to 999 calls and life threatening situations. It's obvious that with an ambulance station in Chester - from Chester to Malpas it takes at least 14 minutes. Time is of the essence in things like heart attacks. Traffic problems do make it difficult to get through to Malpas

MB - There's an ambulance station in Whitchurch. Why doesn't an ambulance come up from Whitchurch?

GA - They do sometimes but if they turn out it leaves the north part of Shropshire without cover.

Although they have an ambulance station it doesn't mean that there is always an ambulance sitting in it. The Tattenhall ambulance station must be moved from its present location. It still hasn't been decided where its going to but it will remain within the A41 corridor. Sometimes ambulances have to come from Crewe or Ellesmere Port

PH - Would it be fair to put ambulance cover down as a weakness?

GA - To some extent it comes down to government targets putting pressure on the ambulance service to get good result. This means that they often concentrate resources on urban areas because they can meet their target times. The Mersey Ambulance Service is classed as an urban authority.

For the future there are other ways of tackling the problem, we need emergency care practitioners based at local GP surgeries who can respond very quickly. Emergency out of hours service need

PH - This is Malpas, from our perspective what should we put down to get the best facilities for our community

GA - Government targets shouldn't be the overriding rule for response in Malpas. The priority must be patient care. The idea is to get there quickly

CN - What happens if I need something, what sort of service should I expect

GA - At the moment it would be about 30 seconds - as long as it takes for me to get across the room to you. In my car outside I carry oxygen, defibrillators, trauma kit

CN - And you're in the village?

GA - I live in Bickley but there are a number of volunteers across the area, the idea is to get there quickly knowing that the are paramedics coming along behind. We are not paramedics but we can start work on people until they get there

CN - I feel quite vulnerable living in Malpas, knowing that it could take so long for an ambulance

GA - Oh I shouldn't, it's pretty quick, there are responders in the village who would be with you in a matter of minutes

PH - Do you need more volunteers? If you had 40 First Responders there would be a good chance there'd be one close.

GA - Yes, but they've got to have the kit It's the kit that costs £5000. I have a vehicle but we don't have a lot of corporate sponsorship, we cover an area of 21000 population