



# Sycamore Buildings Consultation Summary Report

A report summarising the consultation process in relation to the future of the Sycamore Buildings in Bletchley, and the related consultation support provided by Breakthrough Communications & Strategies Limited on behalf of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council.  
Report date 3rd April 2024.



**BREAKTHROUGH**  
COMMUNICATIONS  
SPECIALISTS IN CONNECTING COUNCILS WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES

# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council ("BFSTC") commissioned Breakthrough Communications and Strategies Limited ("Breakthrough Communications") to support a community consultation process on the future of town's Sycamore Buildings.

The consultation process was designed to share with the community the council's vision and outline proposals, as they currently stand, in relation to the future of the Sycamore Buildings, following the council's previous acquisitions of the buildings.

The consultation then sought to ascertain the public's level of support for a) the proposals in general, b) the specific proposal to borrow up to £750,000 through the Public Works Loan Board (BWLb), as well as to get feedback on what specific features and services the public would like to see included in any future development.

## 1.2 Process

Breakthrough Communications met with BFSTC officers to better understand what they wanted to achieve through a public consultation process

Following discussion, the council agreed to our recommendations to provide comprehensive consultation support, which included:

- Ongoing and unlimited support to council officers during the consultation period, including unlimited Zoom and phone calls as required
- Provision of artwork for a 12 page printed newsletter
- Provision of a press release to support the consultation
- Provision of social media and other graphics as required
- Provision of written content to support the consultation process
- Creation, hosting and management of an online survey
- Social media geo-targeted advertising to encourage people to take part in the survey

The consultation ran from 31st January through to 22nd March 2024. During the consultation period, the council shared its vision and proposals with the community in various ways, including through a dedicated page on its website, through a printed newsletter delivered to households, through a press release and through its own social media accounts. As well as providing material for the council to use through its own communications channels, we also

supported the council through the provision of geo-targeted social media advertising.

The consultation included a survey that asked the following questions:

**1. What is your Post Code?**

(Open response, with Post Code validation on the digital survey, to ensure only a valid UK Post Code could be entered into this field)

**2. What services and features would you most like to see in the renovated community building?**

(Multiple choice)

**3. Are you in favour of the town council delivering this renovation project to the Sycamore buildings?**

(Yes or No)

**4. Do you support the council's proposals to borrow up to £750,000, through the Public Works Loan Board loan, in order to deliver the planned renovations to the Sycamore Buildings?**

(Yes or No)

**5. Do you have ideas or suggestions for this project?**

(Open text response and optional)

## 1.3 Results and what they tell the council

155 completed responses were received during the consultation window. These included responses submitted via the paper survey, as well as those inputted into the digital survey.

Of all responses received, 155 people stated preferences or ideas for what services and features they would most like to see in the renovated community building ([Q2](#)). Of these 155 responses, 38 responses were 'other ideas'. These included mainly constructive ideas for community group use or suggestions for specific facilities, as well as a small number against the proposal generally. These responses are set out in more detail ([Q2](#)).

Of all responses received, 123 respondents (79.35%) stated they are "in favour of the town council delivering this renovation project to the Sycamore Buildings, whilst 32 (20.65%) stated they are not in favour of the council's proposal ([Q3](#)).

Of all responses received, 115 respondents (74.19%) stated they "support the council the council's proposals to borrow up to £750,000, through the Public Works Loan Board loan, in order to deliver the planned renovations to the Sycamore Buildings", whilst 40 (25.81%) stated they do not support the council's proposal ([Q4](#)).

Of the 123 respondents who supported the overall concept ([Q3](#)), 115 (93.45%) supported funding this through a Public Works Loan Board loan, whilst 8 (6.50%) did not support the idea.

64 people (41.29%) provided open-ended ideas, suggestions or feedback in relation to the project ([Q5](#)). As with Q2 'other ideas', these responses included a range of specific suggestions and ideas for the project, as well as more general feedback and whether or not they supported the project's aspirations.

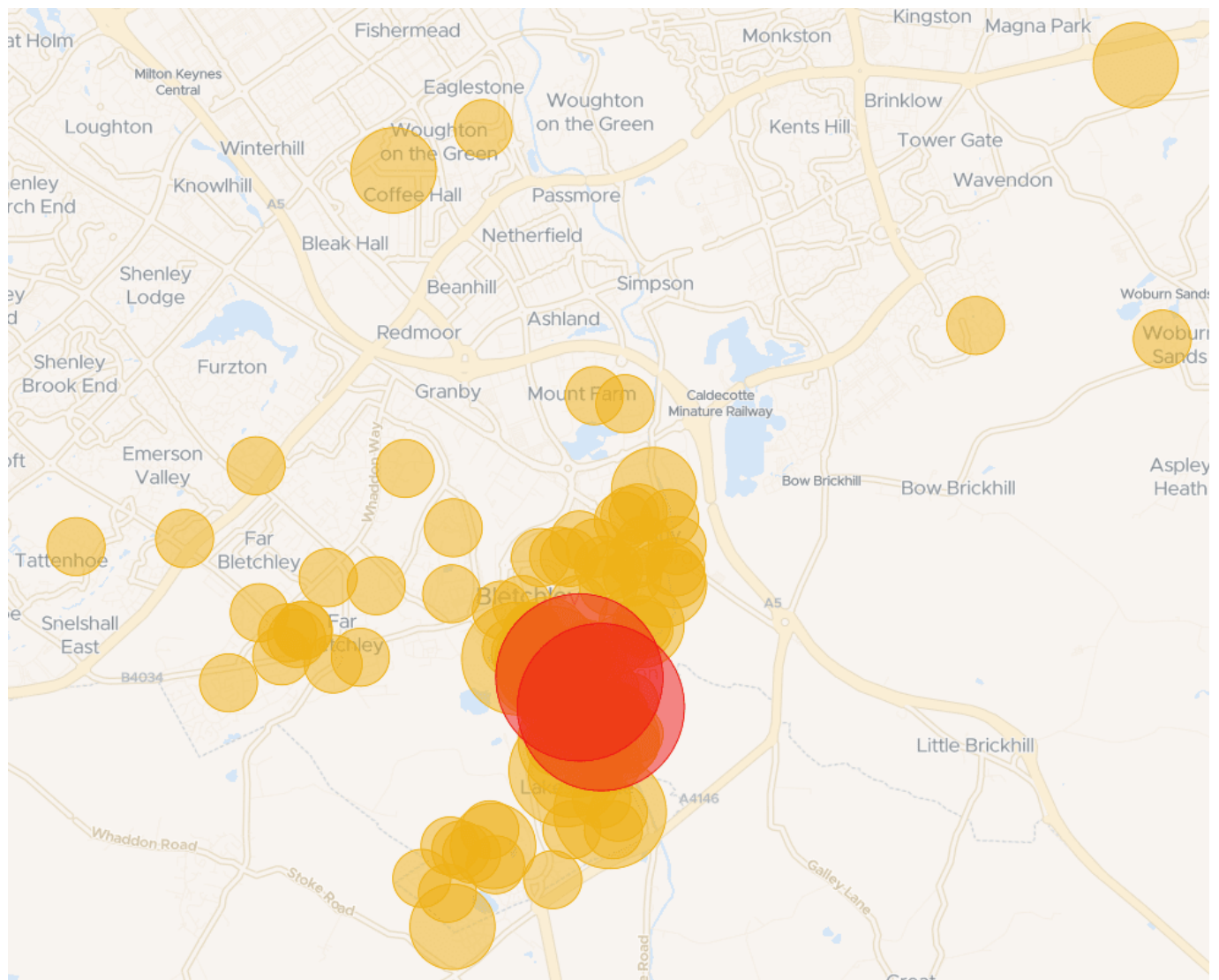
The results of the survey are set out in [Section 2](#). The results provide the council with a clear narrative as to the views of residents as to how to take forward to the future of the Sycamore Buildings.

## 2. Results by Survey Question

**Q1 Please provide your Post Code, so that we can understand which responses have come from residents living within the parish, as well as from outside of the town.**

155 respondents answered this question.

As visualised by the heat-map below, of the 155 responses, the vast majority came from people living within the boundaries of the town council boundary, along with residents living in neighbouring parishes and some further afield.



### Heat Map Legend

**Yellow circles** = Fewer than five submissions from this Post Code sector

**Red circles** = Five or more submissions from this Post Code sector

## Q2 What services and features would you most like to see in the renovated community building?

155 respondents answered this question.

This was a multiple-choice question, whereby respondents could select multiple options for pre-defined responses, as well as optionally providing their own additional ideas. The results of the pre-defined choices are set out below.

	Response Count
Multipurpose event spaces	104
Private hire for parties and social events	98
Meeting rooms for community groups and businesses	71
Childcare facilities	62
Educational programs and classes	67
Art and cultural activities	59
Community outreach and advocacy services	53
Family support services	78
Activities for seniors	90
Activities for children and young people	93
Exercise and sporting activities	71
Councillor surgeries and community meetings	55
Other idea (Please specify)	38

The 38 'other ideas' are set out as follows and included a range of specific ideas and suggestions, as well as general comments and feedback:

- All the above are suitable uses
- A theatre venue
- Youth services for teenagers
- Affordable community spaces for charity groups
- CAB. Money advice service. Tennant's advice clinic
- Banking Hub, CAB
- Slimming programs e.g. Dietary healthy eating, etc.
- Potentially a gym
- Coffee mornings, bingo over 55s
- Faith groups
- Community hub for young people to advance skills
- Foodbank and a community fridge
- Winter night shelter facilities, mental health services, less chat more action for the local community
- Youth workers and community centre for the teenagers
- Community cafe drop-in winter warm space
- As so many banks closing, make it have a Banking hub
- A safe temporary place in the winter especially, for the homeless whilst they can get helped and sorted out for permanent housing
- Consult with the community
- Not a full time holder
- Don't use
- Do not use or renovate
- We have enough halls
- Not require we have a few local halls under used
- Knock it down
- Knock down
- Accommodation for homeless
- No use knock down
- Why did the council take it on totally mad
- Eid festival (x2)
- 'Nothing' or 'none' or 'no other ideas' (x8)

### Q3 Are you in favour of the town council delivering this renovation project to the Sycamore buildings?

155 respondents answered this question.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I am in favour of the council's proposal	79.35%	123
No, I am not in favour of the council's proposal	20.65%	32

### Q4 Do you support the council's proposals to borrow up to £750,000, through the Public Works Loan Board loan, in order to deliver the planned renovations to the Sycamore Buildings?

155 respondents answered this question.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I support the council's proposal	74.19%	115
No, I do not support the council's proposal	25.81%	40

### Q5 Do you have ideas or suggestions for this project?

64 respondents answered this question.

The 64 responses were generally detailed in nature and included a range of specific ideas and suggestions, as well as general comments and feedback. A summary of the responses and their thematic areas of concern are set out as follows:



## ***Specific suggestions for use and other ideas in relation to the existing proposals:***

Comments included:

- It would be great if the design brief includes the concept of a creative way to preserve some of the character of the existing internal area. Some ceiling cladding (looks like aged pine) could be reused in creative ways in the new interior finishes, the exposed masonry finishes on the inside can also be kept in some areas just to serve as a window to the past. This may also be a useful way to save on the embodied carbon of the project, by reusing existing materials. Whatever can not be reused should be recycled .
- I think any work you do to the building should allow the building to stay future-proofed, to be adaptable for any future use. Making the plans, functionality of the different rooms and the HVAC system / plant rooms adaptable to change will allow the council or other clients to make financial and carbon savings in the future.
- Social events, community events
- I do support borrowing to fund the renovations as I assume that the money isn't available from grants or other funding sources.
- I think it should be returned to its original use with updates for disabled access. Then to use it for parties, Wedding receptions again like it used to. Also youth club for 10 - 16 Yr olds and slimming club meetings.
- There's so much it could be used for as we have nothing this end of Bletchley/Fenny Stratford anymore. I had my own 18th & 21st Parties when it was a good hall many a wedding reception I have also been to there. A great Dance floor and space for food and people to sit that dont want to be in with the music.
- Given the complete lack of inclusive activity spaces for teens in MK, I would like to see spaces for activities for them. I know that The Pits in Woughton had its problems, but for my teens growing up, it was a great space to hang out in an environment that was safer than the city centre clubs.
- Some form of stage/backstage facilities would be useful to allow drama and performance arts to be staged in Bletchley/Fenny
- I support the project for community activities my reservation would be parking.
- I would love for there to be exercise classes on here, walking distance from my house. I would also love for there to be an outdoor garden space that could be used with the hire - AND some playground equipment there. This would enhance the hall offering greatly for local residents.

- Regarding the space, it would be wonderful to have a local space with parking for private hire events. Currently we hire Deanshanger Memorial hall for our daughter's birthday parties, even though it is far away, due to the affordability of it and the good parking for guests.
- This is a great achievement. Cannot wait for this to be delivered!
- I would like to see language opportunities for residents who do not have English as a first language.
- It would be good to have a venue for all events to be a community hub for activities for young folk
- More community activity for family in holiday season for working people.
- Bingo night for pensioners
- Some of the finance perhaps could be sourced from grants, e.g Lottery Fund, Government Community funding. N.B Although I've ticked the box in agreement I do not consider Sycamore Hall in the "centre of Bletchley" . It's a distance from the Queensway where people come to shop & meet for coffee.
- Function rooms for meetings and weddings and other family occasions
- I would like to see the hall used for more events like weddings, childcare, activities for younger children. It would be nice to be able to hire it for private events like wedding receptions or parties.
- Solar panels on roof areas that will not be seen from the front of the building so they don't infringe on the listed building rules. This would aid in the running costs of the council offices and Sycamore hall.
- Green space open plan community gardens for all. Project for the local community to get involved with sport social events, Youth project for local young people. Event days with fun raising activities for all to enjoy.
- There is so much potential here, salsa classes , boxing classes, keep fit, food bank, Good sound system/pa system would be essential with Bluetooth for headphones/speakers etc.
- We have parts for the little ones and elder ones have jobs etc but what about those children in the middle yr 7 +. Youth workers have always offered a good role model to kids bring them back and give the kids a space that is for them. Games nights art clubs sports bring sexual health advisors planning the future advisors etc. these teenagers are

our future and they are left not quite a child not quite a adult with nothing to do

- More kids clubs such as arts and crafts, performing arts clubs which you can showcase talents in a show providing more income to help with the development of the building.
- Make it into a really family friendly hub filled with activities and services for local families.
- Make hall hire prices affordable and reduced costs for local residents.
- Make sure there is enough parking space around the hall with good disabled access
- Sycamore hall used to be a very popular venue. Over the years I've been to many sessions there ie: Tia Chi, Yoga, self defence, dancing plus family parties. It was a popular venue with easy access & plenty of parking. It needs to be back in full use.
- I want to see the hall to be used for events and childcare facilities to be held there. More private events to be held like parties, weddings etc.
- To be a good community asset. Multi-functional asset to bring the community together.
- Food bank point, creche afternoons, health and wellbeing groups, senior coffee mornings/afternoons
- It would be good to put this space to good use. I would like to see the hall available for community functions and open to young people to help keep them off the streets and have a safe place to go.
- Just that once completed that the hall remains clean and the decor fresh as that's what lets a lot of community halls down over the years.
- We have used the Sycamore building for a fashion show and like to be able to use it for functions, parties etc. Looking forward to be able to use it again.

### ***Suggestions that the project is too expensive or funds should be spent elsewhere or that other halls were still usable***

Comments included:

- I feel it would be better for all the facilities to be available in the centre of Bletchley, but it looks as though that has already been explored and isn't possible. I wonder if the new flats on the corner of Saxon Street and Princes Way have any meeting rooms? Still the current location is handy for my area and not so far for the Lakes estate.
- It could be a great community asset if accessible and affordable to all. Not happy about the borrowing levels. Simple economics - debts have to be repaid with interest. You need to work within your budget or it will be the very people you say you want to support that

will end up paying.

- £1.5 million is too much money on a hall when others are available and under used
- Many halls and community space close by and in local area, just don't need it and not worth that amount of money. So much can be done with nearly 2 million which will be overall price with house purchases and repairs
- Funds should be raised before the project starts or have plans for repayment of loan
- Too much money use instead on high street which on its last legs
- The sum being borrowed is substantial and it's typical for building costs to soar far beyond their initial planned budgets.
- What happens when the project costs inevitably rise during the project? As much of the building is going to be glass, it seems at higher risk of vandalism, so is there budget available for ongoing building repair works should someone vandalise the glass panels? (Potentially regularly). Has the Council scoped the ongoing costs of running an additional community venue? For example, costs associated with staff to manage bookings, cleaning, utilities, and maintenance in and outside of office hours?
- Space for faith groups or for religious activities

### **Other comments**

Comments included:

- I suggest success or failure can only be judged by occupancy levels following the works. If the council has been given sufficient indication of demand then communities need facilities.
- Do nothing
- Demolition
- The house is listed so limited scope but why not do something for homeless local people there is a lot on the streets