

Watermead Regeneration Framework

Stakeholder Workshop Summary Report

Prepared for
Charnwood Borough
Council
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Draft

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1.0

Introduction

Alan Baxter Ltd is developing a Regeneration Framework for the Watermead Area, focused on Watermead Country Park and its relationship with the adjacent communities of Thurmaston, Birstall, Wanlip and Syston. The project has been commissioned by Charnwood Borough Council.

On Wednesday 1st June 2016 a stakeholder consultation workshop was held in the Old School Room in Syston with the aim of identifying key issues that currently affect the Watermead area and subsequently generate a number of ideas for overcoming these issues.

The workshop was organised and facilitated by masterplanning consultants Alan Baxter Ltd together with GL Hearn and TEP, with the support of Charnwood Borough Council.

This report summarises the outputs of the day and is intended to be used by the local authority and residents to inform decisions and spread knowledge about issues in the area and how they should be addressed. The outputs are also invaluable for providing local knowledge which will directly inform the development of the Regeneration Framework.

A clear message that came out of the workshop was that Watermead Country Park is a missed opportunity. It has the potential to become a great resource for leisure, education and a wide range of other activities but is currently underutilised and not well known.

The identification of key issues, priorities and a vision for the area is a first stage in planning for a series of coordinated long term projects, and helping to secure their funding. In order to do this, joined up thinking is required, which was the impetus for inviting representatives from a wide range of relevant stakeholder groups including local communities, landowners and local interest groups, to provide a variety of perspectives. Representatives from the following organisations attended:

- Charnwood Borough Council
- Leicester City Council
- Birstall Parish Council
- Syston Town Council
- Thurmaston Parish Council
- Leicestershire Police
- Leicestershire Local Access Forum
- Leicestershire Footpaths Association
- Environment Agency (Leicestershire)
- Thurmaston Old School Management Committee
- Thurmaston Action Group

- King Lear Model Boat Club
- Leicester Sailboard Club
- Leicester and Rutland Ornithological Society.
- Raynsway Properties
- The Charles Street Group

As well as a good geographical spread, attendees included representatives from local government, businesses and residents with interest and expertise in different areas which contributed a wide range of expert knowledge to inform ideas and discussions. (See full attendance list in **Appendix 1.**)

In the next section the workshop proceedings and outputs are summarised. Further background information is provided in the appendices.

2.0 Stakeholder Consultation Workshop

The workshop ran between 1-4 pm and was structured around two introductory presentations, followed by two discussion sessions with attendees split into five smaller groups. Each group was given the opportunity to feed back at the end of each session. The agenda and attendance list are provided in **Appendix 1**.



2.1 Introductions

Richard Brown, from the Plans, Policies and Placemaking team of Charnwood Borough Council, opened the workshop by welcoming everyone and giving a brief background on the context of the project and why the workshop was being held.

This was followed by a presentation by Clare Coats from Alan Baxter Ltd, who expanded on the project, its brief and connections to the wider areas, requesting attendees to think broadly with different 'hats' on.

Clare Coats then presented a summary of the issues and opportunities which Alan Baxter Ltd has so far identified, from heritage assets to the mix of uses and their utility, to the car dominated Melton Road and poor gateways into the country park. The question of how well Thurmaston is performing as a waterfront to the canal, river and country park was discussed, together with opportunities for new development to improve this relationship. Bridge Business Park and Pinfold Industrial Estate were discussed in a little more detail with the view that these two sites could potentially be redeveloped in the long term. (See full presentation in **Appendix 2**.)

The group discussions were then introduced by Clare Coats, who explained their format and what was asked of the attendees.

2.2 Workshop 1: Issues and Vision

The following questions were asked of the groups to focus discussion in the first session:

- i. **Strengths & weaknesses**
Do you agree with our summary of Watermead in 2016?
- ii. **Vision – finish the sentence**
In 2031 the Watermead area will be.....

Group 1

Strengths

- Open space
- Links especially to the Leicester City and Loughborough
- Cycling – Sustrans, well signed
- Wildlife
- Focal point - hub
- Floodplain
- Leisure opportunities
- Health and wellbeing
- Large catchment
- Reputation
- Disabled friendly
- User groups

Potential

- Good spread of access
- Potential for play facilities
- LCC staff

Weaknesses / general

- User group conflicts
- Not enough play (adventure)
- Not enough staff and lack of volunteers
- City/country cycle link
- Toilets
- Facilities, visitor centre/café (lack of)
- Lack of resources
- Dog bins

- Promotion and advertising
- Seats
- Advisory group
- Private marina

Vision Statement

2031 BALANCED CO-EXISTENCE

- Well maintained
- Destination for leisure
- Health/Leisure/Welfare
- Popular with residents
- Vibrant
- Good wildlife space

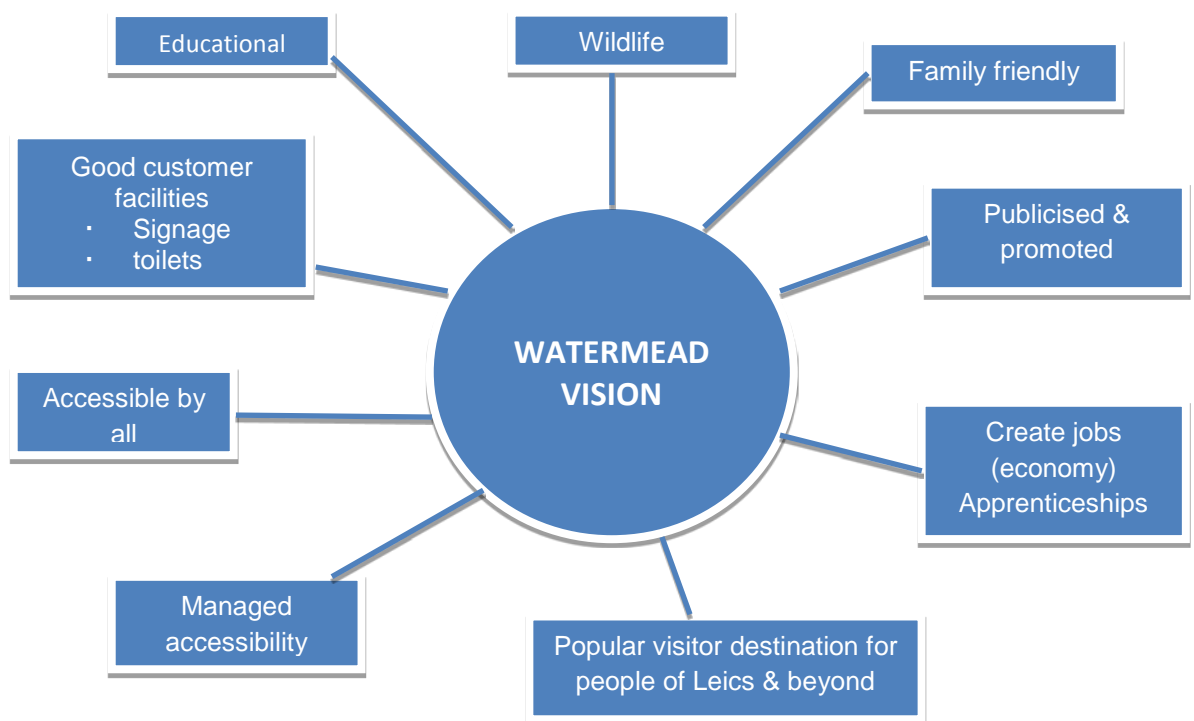
Group 2

Strengths and Opportunities

- Adventure playground/tree based children's attraction
- Improve access to existing
- Encourage some further uses within the park – needs balance with wildlife
- Public art/educational attraction could be encouraged
- Encouraging voluntary groups to use
- Try to encourage private land owners in Watermead to allow some public use
- Cultural event to attract visitors and boost profile
- Boat trips
- Running track
- Open up the centre of Thurmaston – Melton Road
 - Take out/demolish some buildings?
 - Move some key areas – war memorial?
 - Community building/old school
 - Regeneration of shopping area
- Improve access to Watermead Park
 - Open up embankment/access on Mill Lane
 - Improve communication of access – maps and information, better signage
 - Improve amenities in park – toilets etc
 - Improve access from Hallam Fields

- Access from park and ride?
- Improve access from Wanlip
- Investigate areas of underused land for alternative uses balance wildlife/access
- Areas for families to self-cater
- Manage litter/anti-social behaviour resources?
- Expansion of Park – need to consider budgets for management
- Volunteer hub – leisure
- Better signage/accessibility
- Unused land near memorial – see map
- Large scale visitor centre Club house /+for user group such as wind suffers, dry water, model boaters, running event
- Visitor centre if located in Thurmaston would have large local population to support

Vision Statement



Group 3

Strengths

- King Lear and John Meyrick Lake etc. have historical identities which can be made more of, using information boards around each one etc.
- History of Thurmaston should be used as an attraction – could incorporate into visitor/information centre
- There are different themes within WCP as it is so vast – different zones to market
- It is a hidden gem – currently a missed opportunity/ untapped resource
- The Mammoth sculpture and carbon footprints should be made more of
- Old pub by the southern car park is closed but it is a good location next to the car park and open space – good opportunity (although just outside our study area)
- The old school is ripe for development in Thurmaston Village, owned by Thurmaston Church, which owns the land all the way down to the river – good opportunity for a link to the river side from the village centre
- There is opportunity to do more in Thurmaston Village e.g. Tea Rooms. The little shop next to the Church in Thurmaston Village is becoming an Angling Shop
- Opportunity to promote events in sport, orienteering, park run etc.
- WCP is good for accessibility in terms of wheelchairs, buggies etc.
- Wildlife in WCP is a good opportunity to bring in schools for education, which will then spread the word of the park through parents and communities

Weaknesses

- Parking in Thurmaston Village along Melton Road – overall shortage of adequate parking
- Use of Public Transport to get to Watermead Country Park (WCP) is poor – rather than focusing on parking provision, consideration should be given to how visitors might be encouraged to use public transport
- There is no signposting to WCP making the park suffer from having a low profile, few residents are aware of its existence due to the lack of a clear brand, information boards and publicity material
- No visitor centre/ café. Proposals had been developed for a facility, partially floating, on a site to the west of John Merrick's Lane but it was understood that those proposals had been shelved
- Issue of different ownership of different parts of the park, issue for policing of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) as no one knows who to contact – need to have an overarching management group/ unified management structure
- BBQ area creates mess, attracts drinking and ASB. A visitor centre would provide an on-site presence to discourage ASB and vandalism
- Dog bins are too small for the footfall – park is popular with dog walkers

- Dogs let off their leash have been known to attack wildlife
- The land between the lakes (to the east of the Grand Union Canal) had been a missed opportunity to enhance the park. Raynsway had promised to build a high quality hotel on the site but had not progressed the scheme. Instead it was to be developed for employment land but there was already too much employment land in Thurmaston.
- Need more signage and facilities for the canal users
- Need new moorings
- Need hotel facilities for people to stay overnight
- Need cycle hire – good opportunity to encourage more people to visit, good way to see the park as it is to big
- Need multiple facilities (at different points around the park)
- Need to ‘turn Thurmaston around’, changing the backs of Melton Road to create a waterfront facing WCP
- Whilst there are good pubs in Birstall (White Horse) and at the north of the park (Hope and Anchor) there is no good pub in Thurmaston – gap
- Water-ski jump is beached – no money to maintain?
- The heart has gone out of Thurmaston, butcher gone etc.
- Easy to get lost in the park – needs signage, promotional literature

Vision Statement

- Thurmaston will be turned around to face Watermead County Park
- Watermead Country Park will have a visitor centre with improved access, parking and toilets together with a full programme of events

Group 4

Strengths

- Location: the park sits at the heart of 4 communities (Thurmaston, Birstall, Syston and Wanlip) and at the edge of Leicester and serves all these communities
- It is an asset for the whole county and has diverse appeal: cycling, walking, facilities for less able bodied, children.
- There is a strong community spirit in the local area and passion to see improvement.
- Wildlife / biodiversity of the park and its ‘natural’ landscape character. Largest reed bed in the County and heronry.
- Lots of potential for enhancement and improvement.
- It is a venue for exercise and a safe, traffic free place for cycling.

Opportunities

- Old School, Thurmaston on Melton Road has potential for community/park related activities (re-orientate and invigorate).
- Wetlands, wildlife and flood management
- Visitor centre
- Educational value of the park – (heritage / culture).

Weaknesses

- The park is 'hidden'. Many local people don't know it's there. It feels segregated from the surrounding communities and suffers from anti-social behaviour.
- Thurmaston needs to face the park.
- Lack of publicity about the park.
- Lack of sign posting.
- Lack of visitor facilities/information and loss of funding.
- Poor access from surrounding communities, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Disabled access is a strength, however entrance from Wanlip Lane is poor – barriers to wheelchair access.

Threats

- Meadow Lane, Birstall is main route into the park, but is an unadopted road.
- Discrepancy in parking charges with some free car parks and others charging £2.50.
- Absence of an overall management strategy which could deal with issues such as parking charges.
- Potential risk of inappropriate development which will encroach on the park to the detriment of wildlife and landscape character.
- Watermead phase 2/3 used to be a sports club but now more employment uses planned.

Vision Statement

- A protected natural area / a green oasis
- A leisure and cultural, educational asset – multifunctional
- A protected and natural environment at the heart of our communities.

Group 5

Key points

- Access a major weakness, just trying to get through the area at peak times is difficult and Syston is cut off by the bypass
- Accessibility across the bypass is a key requirement.
- Country Park is a good local resource, although tricky to get to on foot, especially from Syston, and not many local people know it exists. Uninviting entrance to the Country Park.
- Functional floodplain limits opportunities; any development would need to be put on stilts with safe access and egress. Car parking also needs to be carefully considered in terms of flood risk issues.

Strengths

- Major employment area – including retail areas
- Country Park – as a destination for Syston/Thurmaston
- 250,000 visitors a year
- Sub regional attraction, but with local access

Weaknesses

- Syston Connections pedestrian/cycling access to County Park.
- North to South connections through Country Park.
- East to West connections also needs improving.
- A607 – barrier
- Functional floodplain
- Transport movements
- Lack of facilities at the Country Park

2.3 Workshop 2: Project Opportunities

Clare Coats gave a short presentation to introduce the second workshop. Within this, she explained the four key areas on which the different groups would focus:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Watermead Country Park | (Groups 1 and 2) |
| 2. Connecting Watermead | (Group 3) |
| 3. Thurmaston village centre | (Group 4) |
| 4. Watermead waterfront | (Group 5) |

Clare then presented some examples of other successful country parks to encourage thinking from the attendees around the issues, proposed solutions and other ideas. The question of how people will travel to the country park was raised and where or how new connections could be made. The role and aspirations of Thurmaston Village were also discussed alongside the development of the waterfront and the business parks.

The following tasks were set to focus group discussions in the second session:

- i. **Objectives**
Set 5 objectives for the area
- ii. **Plan**
Create a spatial plan of project ideas

Group 1 – Watermead Country Park

Cross cutting themes

- Health
- Wildlife
- Education and interpretation
- Sustainable business planning

Objectives

1. Establish working between landowners in order to create a whole entity.
2. Engaging schools in education and wider interpretation
3. Cohesive management plan
4. Unlocking and improving access for all
 - Secure accommodation hub.
 - More adventure type play facilities.
 - New toilet block in more accessible area (hub)
 - Private facilities publicly accessible
5. Funding consortium trust
 - Business model

- Links that influence the parks development
- Phased plan
- Partnership groups currently in place.
- Importance of Delivery Partners
 - CRT
 - Natural England
 - EA
 - Wildlife Trust
 - Raynsway
 - River Soar and Grand Union Partnership

Spatial Plan

- Primary hub next to King Lear's Lake (robust or 'bullet proof but welcoming' design to hub; to include toilet, café, interpretation; scope for extending hub)
- Secondary hubs at Thurmaston waterfront; Raynsway site & Watermead (South)
- Car access – North, South & Thurmaston waterfront
- More play areas, particularly encouraging 'natural' play

Group 1 Spatial Plan



Group 2 – Watermead Country Park

Objectives

1. Visitor Centre incorporating User / Volunteer Hub
 - Education
 - Hub - could be large scale/scope – incorporate commercial users
 - Could be within Thurmaston – e.g. Old School or within Park
2. Underused Land should be investigated for public use / access or wildlife use, but this needs to be balanced.
3. More attractions for Watermead Country Park including,
 - Fishing
 - Adventure play group
 - Public art
 - Running track
 - Sporting activities
 - Cycling
4. Camping/caravanning
 - Near Watermead but not within
5. Cultural Event/Strategy boost visitors/profile of area
6. Better use of P&R site improve access to Country Park
 - Better public transport access
 - Better car access



Group 3 – Connecting Watermead

- There was discussion as to whether the park is more of a local facility (Leicester/ Loughborough) or a regional or sub regional attraction
- The river/ canal is a key access – the attraction of the whole corridor might be improved through the provision of additional mooring facilities and improvements of towpath/footpaths
- To consolidate its position and improve the quality of the attraction a visitor centre is needed together with educational facilities (an outdoor school room). Schools cannot presently take children to the park for study visits due to the lack of facilities – toilets and sheltered space.
- NCN route is poor between Leicester and WCP, particularly north of the Science Centre – cyclists are obliged to use sections of carriageway and poorly surfaced paths (The City Council is understood to be investing in improvements to the cycle network). This needs to be improved and properly connected. Cycle linkages to the north are also poor despite the implementation of the “Connect2” project. This should also be linked to cycle hire.

- The division of the park into two elements by an intervening area of land in private ownership (Pinfold “Island”) was recognised as a major impediment to the integrity and consistency of the park. The park would be improved by the provision of enhanced access between the “City” part and the “County” part – improvements had been made to the path beside the marina but there were opportunities to create a link through the privately owned “island” to the west of the marina. The City Council had investigated the viability of providing such a link but the costs had been prohibitive – a bridge over the soar would be required with sufficient clearance to avoid obstructing the navigation.
- A bridge into the Country Park had been proposed within the approved Raynsway scheme (off Wanlip Road) but it was not known whether that scheme was likely to go ahead
- There is some conflict between cyclists and walkers in the park
- Poor signage for cars and complicated routes to get into both the northern and southern car parks – cars travelling from the north cannot turn right off the A607, having to loop through the industrial/retail park south of Syston. There should be better signs in more prominent places (not necessarily more signs – confusing, unnecessary)
- There are boating facilities at Quorn, north of WCP – opportunity for trips, connectivity
- Car parking is best provided in a limited number of key sites for reasons of management and security – natural surveillance being a key aspect. The two main sites at Wanlip Road and Alderton Close are considered adequate although in need of more welcoming entrances. However a third facility was needed with the optimum location being off Mill Lane, Thurmaston. The other access points would benefit from a comprehensive gateway and branding strategy to raise awareness and encourage greater usage
- Lots of people currently walk between Birstall and Thurmaston for both leisure and utility purposes
- There is poor access from Redhill, south of Birstall – no pedestrian provision along road
- There should be a branding strategy with gateway signage and signage through the park united through this branding, needs recognisable logo. “Tufty,” the drake Tufted Duck, used in earlier publicity material as a logo appears to have been abandoned in current publications and is not recognised as a brand.
- The underpass under the A607 bypass of Thurmaston is dangerous/ unpleasant at night. Should be a crossing/new bridge instead
- Signage in particular might be used to encourage communities from the east of the A607 Newark Road to visit the country park. Existing crossing points for the A607 were considered; the underpass at Brook Street was considered unattractive – should be improved or changed to a bridge – but the pedestrian bridges were considered adequate for the purposes of crossing the A607. There was little enthusiasm for the prospect of an at-grade crossing at Churchill Road. The consensus was that current provision for crossing the A 607 is adequate

Objectives

1. To develop a comprehensive signage strategy for both cars and pedestrians
2. To improve or provide consistent landmark gateway features at each of the main entry points to the park – signage, sightlines, welcoming, announcement, archway, branding
3. To improve access by bus – announcement on buses to ‘alight here for WCP’, map at the bus stop for how to access the park, brand bus with WCP?, create dedicated WCP bus stop in Thurmaston/ Birstall?
4. To improve cycle links – NCN is there but poor quality and there is conflict between cyclists and pedestrians
5. To encourage boat access and associated leisure/ tours usage – more landing stages, ferry services, boat trips e.g. from Abbey Park to WCP, hop-on-hop-off etc.

Spatial Plan

- Delivery of a new car park off Mill Lane with gateway off Melton Road, Thurmaston
- Development of a themed gateway design to raise the profile of the park and provide a consistent and welcoming entry.
- Develop a co-ordinated, branded signage and marketing strategy to raise awareness and aid navigation.
- Work with bus service providers to develop an integrated marketing campaign with routes flagged and announced as servicing the Country Park.
- Improve the wider cycle routes linking the park to both Leicester and Loughborough.
- Deliver a connection between the southern and northern elements of the park by securing an access route through the intervening private land (“Pinfold Island”).
- Raise the level of attraction provided by the park through the provision of a visitor centre / café / education facility while maintaining the overall balance of interests across the park.
- Review bus routes with operators to investigate the prospects for enhancing access by public transport. Potential for a circular bus: Leicester-Thurmaston-Birstall-Leicester to link up east-west
- Improve access by vehicles (i.e. the junctions where southbound traffic can’t turn right, filter lane or signalisation could be provided)
- Create/ enhance trails around the park – heritage (to incorporate Thurmaston heritage and Birstall conversation area (there is a VC fighter bomber buried in Birstall churchyard)), wildlife, running, Ale trail between pubs etc.

Group 4 – Thurmaston Village Centre

- Thurmaston village centre has too many employment sites and this is to the detriment of its cultural heritage.
- Canal moorings already in place to the rear of Melton Road, which could be enhanced/expanded to increase activity. But nowhere to get a decent meal when you've stopped.
- Need to think realistically about funding from developers perspective – how can community benefits be delivered which also support developer objectives? e.g. provide a footpath link between the marina/residential development and village centre to encourage activity in both locations.
- Church is already a heritage attraction with visitors researching family history/visiting significant windows.

Objectives

- To increase visitor access between Thurmaston and the Country Park – this needs to work in both directions and include better signage to direct people to Thurmaston and the proposed visitor centre/café
- Create a hub of activity along the canal edge at Thurmaston.
- Provision of visitor/education centre at the Old School as a starting point for the regeneration of Thurmaston.
- Maximise access to and along the waterfront from Thurmaston
- Reclaim Melton Road for people and green the street.
- Connect major development (ie. Bridge and Pinfold Business Parks) back into Thurmaston village centre and identify community benefits which should be provided.
- Start in the next 2 years.

Spatial Plan

- Create a cluster of heritage / cultural destinations in the centre of the village around the canal/Old School/Church.
- Increase canal moorings around the islands/on land to the rear of the Old School.
- Sequential development of the Old School
 - Potential to start with reuse of school building as a community/visitor centre/bike hire with café fronting onto canal and public access to the Park.
 - Look at potential expansion or linked development on adjacent Leicester Office Equipment site (relocate use – difficult to service; poor quality building). Investigate adjacent sites which could be unlocked through redevelopment.

- Ideas for the green space (floodplain) to the rear of Melton Road - create a play area fronting the canal?, additional car parking?, additional canal moorings and linked activities?
- Investigate potential relocation of Parker's garage to create a wider entrance to the Park from Melton Road. Site is adjacent to former Methodist church (vacant) and Memorial Hall – could form a further community cluster.
- Create linear footpath along the canal edge. Potential for additional bridges connecting the islands.
- Residential development at Bridge Business Park fronting the canal.
- Green the edges of existing business uses to improved frontage to park eg. Arriva depot off Canal Street.
- Potential to signpost the Country Park from the bus routes through Thurmaston.
- Public realm improvements to Melton Road: Ideas ranged from introducing street trees/parking bays, to pedestrianisation of the central section of Melton Road except for buses.
- Opportunities for crossing points over A607 – Lea Close (to replace the nearby subway) or a connection between Hadrian Road / Cemetery Road connecting the two parks either side of the A607.

Group 4 Spatial Plan



Group 5 – Watermead waterfront development

- Interest in creating new connections through the Park to join the City Council owned land to the County Council owned land.
- Interest in utilising landfill site and the empty warehouse adjacent to the Marina to provide a new café for the Marina and the Country Park in the south.
- The expansion of the Marina would not be on the landfill site, as it would cost too much to remediate the land and remove the contamination.
- The redevelopment of the industrial estates is a long term prospect and landowners would only consider it if it made commercial sense i.e. the occupancy falls, and the buildings near end of life. It was considered that a timeframe of 12-20 years was realistic for the potential redevelopment, although this would require landowners working together to bring it forward and relocate any viable businesses.
- The focus of any redevelopment at the industrial estates should be housing with small-scale supporting uses, such as cafes, pubs etc.
- It wasn't felt that car parking was necessary in this location to serve the Country Park, as most people would use the main entrance and car park.
- Marina would need to remain a secure site, even where it is expanded.
- Need to offer better parking at Melton Road, which is suffering from a lack of retail, and something is needed to boost this. The food van at the Methodist Church provides food in the mornings and lunchtime, together with the Pub (Harrow Inn).
- To the north at Watermead Business Park phase 2 and 3, the landowner is seeking to change the proposed mix of uses to increase the amount of industrial buildings and remove the hotel. A public footpath was previously offered, but this was not acceptable to the County Council.
- Some pedestrian access from Syston needs to be explored.
- Maybe an opportunity around the Charles Street Buildings lake, but this requires access from the north across the Raynsway land. The lake is currently used by the water-skiing club.
- Car parking regime needs to change to allow people the flexibility to park as long as they want
- An attraction in the Country Park is needed.

Objectives

1. Access:
 - Sustainable
 - Car parking
 - Inclusive
2. Parking – rational approach
3. Long term development framework
4. Leisure based – water/ecology
5. Visitor Centre (S)

Spatial Plan

Pinfold / Bridge Business Parks

- Long term plan: Economy, Lease, Tenants, 12-20 years
- Related schemes: Marina

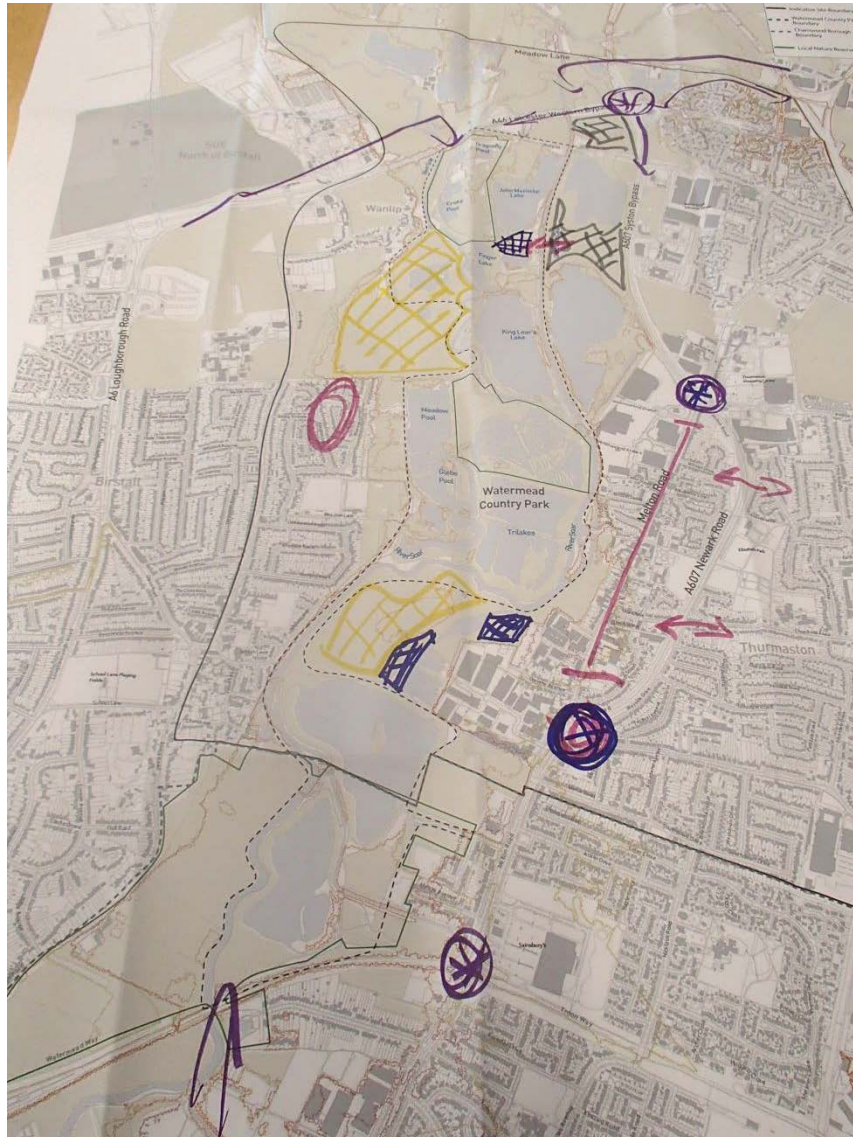
Melton Road

- Parking/movement
- Local business opportunities
- Scale of development

North

- Pedestrian access
- LCC parking regime
- Northern visitor attraction

Group 5 Spatial Plan



3.0 Overall Summary

3.1 Group discussion summary

There was a considerable amount of overlap between the strengths and weaknesses that were identified by each of the groups in the first session. The key points were:

Strengths

- There is a range of existing activities and attractions in the Country Park and the opportunity to expand these and create events here and in Thurmaston.
- The park is an educational asset which local schools should be encouraged to use.
- There is a wealth of heritage and culture linked to the park and surrounding settlements.
- The river and canal are wonderful resources which are well used but should be made more of in relation to the park and its uses.
- The park is used for exercise and could better promote health and wellbeing.
- There is an abundance of wildlife and biodiversity in the park.
- The park is in a good location at the heart of four communities and at the edge of Leicester.
- The park should be viewed as a county asset for walking, cycling and children's play and a family destination.

Weaknesses

- Poor access and connectivity are significant weaknesses. Entrances are hidden and unwelcoming; some local residents are not aware that the Park exists.
- Poor public transport access to the park.
- Poor pedestrian and cycle access from surrounding communities.
- Thurmaston village has its back to the park, creating a poor relationship.
- The park lacks facilities. It needs a visitor centre and café to encourage visitors.
- Use of the park should be increased but balanced with wildlife conservation.
- Parking congestion is an issue along Melton Road and there is a discrepancy in parking charges at car parks serving the Country Park.
- A lack of signposting, branding, information boards and publicity material gives the park a low profile.
- The park is under different ownerships and lacks an overarching management strategy.
- Issues of litter, including dog bins being too small, and anti-social behaviour

- Need more facilities and signage for the canal users and additional moorings.
- Not enough good pubs or places to eat in the park's immediate surroundings.
- User group conflicts.

Vision

There was also a clear overlap between components of the group visions, which together see Watermead Country Park in 2031 as:

- A park with a visitor centre, which incorporates facilities, information, food and drink;
- Having good access and is well promoted;
- A protected natural area;
- Providing a leisure, cultural and educational asset for the county, at the heart of the local communities, and
- Having a co-ordinated overall management structure.

Objectives and Projects

The main objectives and project ideas from each group discussion have been summarised in the table below:

Watermead Country Park (1)	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To establish working between Country Park landowners to create a whole entity. 2. To engage schools in education and wider interpretation. 3. To achieve a cohesive management plan. 4. To unlock and improve access for all. 5. Establish funding consortium trust 	Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary hub next to King Lear's Lake • Secondary hubs at Thurmaston waterfront, Raynsway site and Watermead South • Car access – North, South & Thurmaston waterfront • More play areas, particularly encouraging 'natural' play
Watermead Country Park (2)	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create a visitor centre incorporating user and volunteer hubs. 2. To investigate underused land for public access or wildlife use, whilst ensuring these are balanced. 3. To create more attractions within the Park. 4. To facilitate and encourage camping and/or caravanning. 5. To plan cultural events and strategies to boost visitor numbers and the profile of the area. 	
Connecting Watermead	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop a comprehensive signage strategy for both cars and pedestrians 	Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of a new car park off Mill Lane with gateway off Melton Road

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To improve or provide consistent landmark gateway features at each of the main entry points to the park 3. To improve access by bus 4. To improve cycle links 5. To encourage boat access and associated leisure/ tours usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a themed gateway design to create a welcoming entry, along with a co-ordinated, branded signage and marketing strategy to raise awareness and aid navigation. • Work with bus service providers to develop an integrated marketing campaign, enhancing access by public transport. Potential for a circular bus: Leicester-Thurmaston-Birstall-Leicester to link up east-west. • Improve the wider cycle routes linking the park to Leicester and Loughborough. • Connect the southern and northern elements of the park with an access route through the intervening private land. • Provide a visitor centre/ café/ education facility while maintaining the balance of interests across the park. • Improve access by vehicles (i.e. the junctions where southbound traffic can't turn right) • Create/ enhance trails around the park – heritage, wildlife, running, Ale trail between pubs etc.
Thurmaston Village Centre	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To increase visitor access between Thurmaston and the Country Park 2. To create a hub of activity along the canal edge at Thurmaston. 3. To provide a visitor/education centre at the Old School as a starting point for the regeneration of Thurmaston. 4. To maximise access to and along the waterfront from Thurmaston. 5. To reclaim Melton Road for people and green the street. 6. Connect major development back into Thurmaston village centre 7. Start in the next 2 years 	<p>Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a cluster of heritage / cultural destinations in the centre of the village around the canal/Old School/Church. • Increase canal moorings around the islands/on land to the rear of the Old School. • Sequential development of the Old School, Melton Road and adjacent sites for visitor/community uses • Use green space (floodplain) to the rear of Melton Road e.g. for play, car parking, canal moorings, linked activities • Relocation of Parker's garage to create a wider entrance to the Park from Melton Road. Could form a further community cluster with adjacent sites of former Methodist church and Memorial Hall • Create linear footpath along the canal edge and additional bridges connecting the islands. • Residential development at Bridge Business Park fronting the canal.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green the edges of existing business uses to improve frontage to park e.g. Arriva depot off Canal Street. • Signpost the Country Park from Thurmaston bus routes. • Public realm improvements to Melton Road e.g. street trees, parking bays, pedestrianisation of central section except for buses. • Create new crossing points over A607 at Lea Close (to replace the nearby subway) or a connection between Hadrian Road/ Cemetery Road connecting the two parks.
Watermead Waterfront	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To improve access. 2. To achieve a rational approach to parking. 3. To form a long term development framework 4. To promote leisure based activities 5. To create a Visitor Centre. 	<p>Projects:</p> <p>Pinfold and Bridge Business Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term plan: Economy, Lease, Tenants, 12-20 years • Related schemes: Marina <p>Melton Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking/movement • Local business opportunities • Small scale development <p>Northern area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian access • LCC parking regime • Northern visitor attraction

3.2 Next steps

This report will be circulated to the workshop attendees and other local stakeholders who could not attend, for comment, prior to issue of a final version.

A feedback presentation will be held on Wednesday 13th July 2016, 1pm-4pm, to present the key findings of this report, discuss the emerging Regeneration Framework project ideas and collect any additional comments.

This will all feed into the final Regeneration Framework and Business Case which will be available later in 2016 and will detail the agreed project areas, timescales and costs, to feed into funding bids and provide evidence for future planning policy.

Appendix 1

Workshop Agenda & Attendance

Watermead Regeneration Framework**Stakeholder Workshop****1-4pm, 1 June 2016**

Old School Room, Syston LE7 1HN

Agenda

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 12:45 pm | Registration
Tea and coffee will be provided on arrival. |
| 1:00 pm | Welcome by Charnwood Borough Council

Introductory presentation by consultants Alan Baxter Limited explaining the background to the project and initial findings of the study. |
| 1:30 pm | Facilitated group discussions and feedback sessions covering issues and project opportunities within the Watermead area. |
| 3:45 pm | Concluding presentation summarising the findings of the session and next steps. |
| 4.00 pm | Close |

Watermead Regeneration Framework
Stakeholder workshop, 1 June 2016
Attendance list

	Delegate	Group	Representing
1	Amey Rayns	5	Raynsway Properties
2	Bill Carter	1	Leicestershire County Council
3	Catherine Voyce	4	Syston Town Council
4	Clare Coats	4	Alan Baxter Limited
5	Cllr Brenda Seaton	1	Charnwood Borough Council
6	Cllr E Vardy	4	Charnwood Borough Council
7	Cllr Mal Carnall	5	Syston Town Council
8	Councillor Ali Asmal	1	Syston Town Council
9	Councillor E Marshall	3	Birstall Parish Council
10	Councillor G Green	4	Birstall Parish Council
11	Councillor J Howe	2	Birstall Parish Council
12	Councillor Robert Davies	4	Thurmaston Parish Council
13	Councillors A Marshall	1	Chair of Birstall Parish Council
14	Dave Hankin	3	Charnwood Borough Council
15	David Beale	5	Leicester City Council
16	David Jaeckels	3	Leicestershire Police Beat Officer for Birstall
17	David Pendle	4	Charnwood Borough Council
18	Gerry Bowman	4	Thurmaston Action Group
19	Graham Taylor	2	King Lear Model Boat Club
20	Hugh Murphy	5	Chairman - The Charles Street Group
21	Isobel Knapp	3	Alan Baxter Limited
22	Jenny Allen	4	Leicestershire County Council
23	Jo Freeman	1	Leicestershire Police
24	Jonathan Vann	1	Environment Agency (Leicestershire)
25	Julie Parker	3	Thurmaston Parish Council
26	Ken Price	1	Thurmaston Council, Leicester Wildlife Trust
27	Kirsi Asmal	5	Syston Town Council
28	Marie Burdett	1	King Lear Model Boat Club
29	Nick Wakefield	5	Environment Agency (Leicestershire)
30	Patricia Watson	5	Thurmaston Old School Management Committee
31	Paul Gilding	1	Charnwood Borough Council
32	Paul Hern	2	Syston Town Council
33	Paul McKim	5	Charnwood Borough Council
34	Peter Williams	4	Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society
35	Richard Brown	2	Charnwood Borough Council
36	Rosie Dymond	3	Leicester City Council Development Team
37	Roy Denney	3	Leicestershire Local Access Forum
38	Sara Arefaine	--	Alan Baxter Limited
39	Sheila Langley	2	Thurmaston Old School Management Committee
40	Stan Warren	3	Leicestershire Footpaths Association
41	Suzanne Gamble	1	Thurmaston Old School Management Committee
42	Terry Kirby	2	Leicester Local Access Forum
43	Tim Johns	1	The Environment Partnership
44	Tony Richards	1	Leicester Sailboard Club

Appendix 2

Introductory Presentations

Alan Baxter

INTEGRATED DESIGN

Watermead Regeneration Framework

Stakeholder Workshop
1 June 2016

Introductory Presentation

Alan Baxter

Welcome

Richard Brown
Charnwood Borough Council

Alan Baxter

Introductions



landscape, ecology

Alan Baxter
INTEGRATED DESIGN

masterplanning, urban design,
transport, heritage



property, planning,
regeneration

Alan Baxter

Programme for the afternoon

- 1:00 Introductory presentation
- 1:20 Workshop 1: Issues and vision**
- 1:50 Feedback
- 2:10 Opportunities presentation
- 2:20 Workshop 2: Project opportunities**
- 3:20 Feedback
- 3.45 Conclusions
- 4:00 Close

Alan Baxter

Your input today

- Wear several hats
- Respect diverse inputs
- Be creative with ideas
- Think across generations

*Chatham House – non
attributable*



Alan Baxter

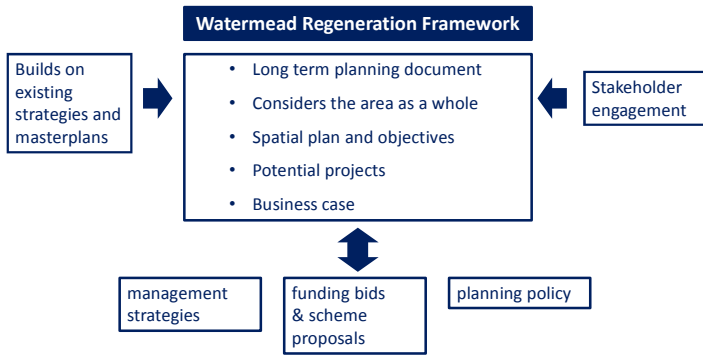
Project brief

- Study area:
 - Watermead Country Park,
 - Thurmaston (Melton Road)
 - Links to surrounding communities
 - Links to wider green network



Alan Baxter

Project brief



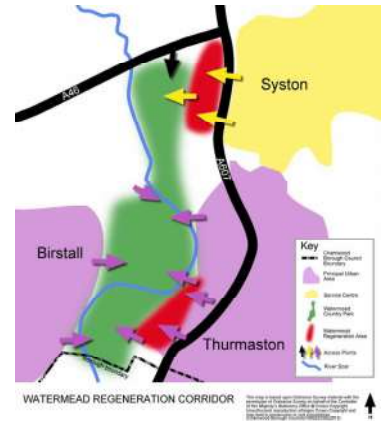
Alan Baxter

Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 - 2028

Policy CS21: Watermead Regeneration Corridor - Direction of Growth

- Regeneration of Thurmaston village centre, waterfront and Grand Union Canal
- Connectivity improvements
- Mixed use redevelopment of Pinfold Industrial Park & Bridge Business Park
- 16ha employment site off Wanlip Road
- Protect & enhance wildlife corridor, tranquil park setting

Leicester North East & Broadnook Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE)



Alan Baxter

Regional landscape asset



- Green wedge
- River Soar and Grand Union Canal Partnership Action Plan
- River Soar and Grand Union Canal Strategy
 - Watermead hub
 - Needs a USP

Alan Baxter

Watermead today

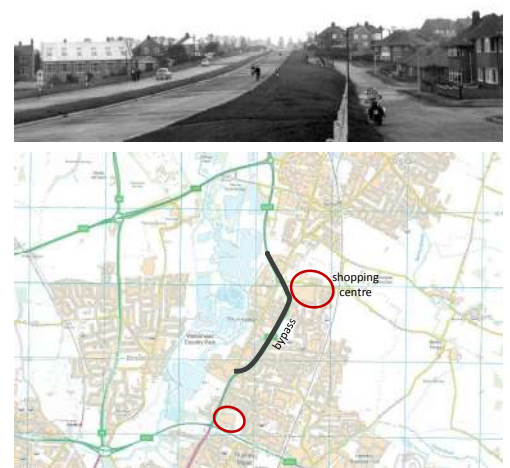
Alan Baxter

Evolution of Watermead



Alan Baxter

Evolution of Watermead



Alan Baxter

Thurmaston Village Centre – heritage assets



Alan Baxter

Mix of uses



Alan Baxter

Car dominated public realm



Alan Baxter

Gateway to Thurmaston?



Alan Baxter

Watermead Country Park



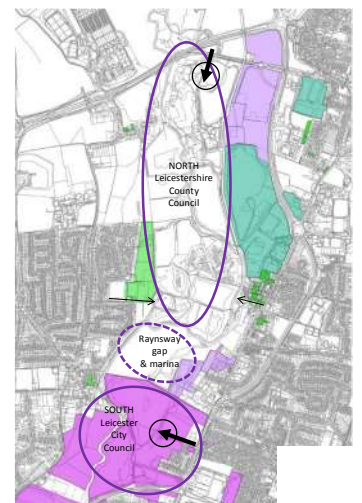
Over 250,000 visitors a year



Alan Baxter

Watermead Country Park

- **Ownerships:**
 - North: Leicestershire County Council
 - South: Leicester City Council
 - Gap site: Raynsway, historic landfill
 - Marina: Raynsway, secure site



Alan Baxter

Access

- Vehicle entrances & car parks
 - Wanlip Road
 - A607 Melton Road
 - Mill Lane, Thurmaston
 - Meadow Lane, Birstall
- National Cycle Network: 6 & 48
- Footpaths: poor quality sections
- Bus routes



Alan Baxter

Watermead Country Park - challenges



- Unwelcoming entrances
- Lack of visitor facilities
- Hidden from view
- Anti-social behaviour

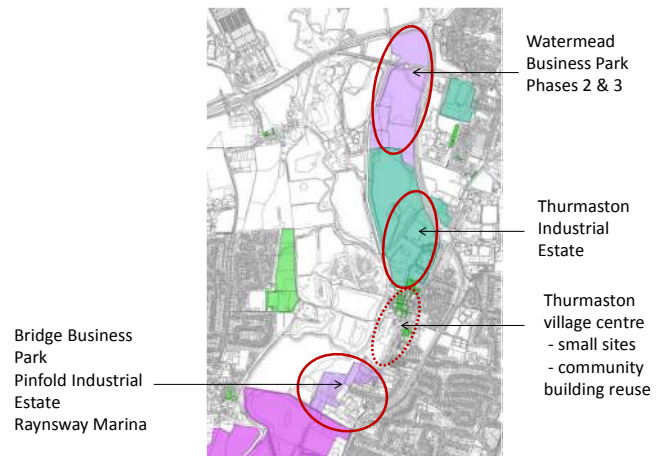
Alan Baxter

Thurmaston waterfront?



Alan Baxter

Waterfront development opportunities

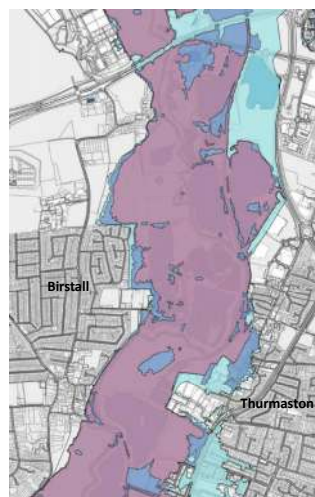
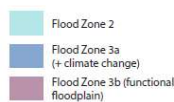


Alan Baxter

Flood risk

Country Park within functional floodplain

Edge of Thurmaston within zones 3a and 2



Alan Baxter

Bridge Business Park

- 3.4 ha, ~165,000 sq. ft. ~700 jobs
- Significant offices – Bridge Park Plaza/Riverside House/674 Melton Rd
- Key occupiers – Leicestershire NHS/MSA Engineering/Driver Education Leicester/Vexgold
- Raynsway own majority
- Leases to 2021-2026



Alan Baxter

Bridge Business Park

- Generally modern buildings within Raynsway's ownership
- Ageing properties at Assured Drive and Modern Classics Premises
- Attractive waterfront location
- Low vacancy
- Large area of surface car parking



Alan Baxter

Pinfold Road Industrial Estate

- 9 ha, ~450,000 sq.ft.
- ~est. 900 jobs
- Significant manufacturers
- Key occupiers – Advance Tapes/Chapman Fraser/Label Apeel/Premier Grow/HAC Pipelines/Roofmaker
- Leicester Marina
- Mix of ownerships
- Raynsway leases expire 2021 & 2026



Alan Baxter

Pinfold Road Industrial Estate

- Low vacancy
- Modern buildings, including Raynsway Properties and Roofmaker
- Ageing properties at Rookery Lane and at Pinfold Road
- Marina lacks prominence



Alan Baxter

Other significant developments



Broadnook SUE



Watermead Business Park phase 2 & 3



Leicester North East SUE

Alan Baxter

Workshop 1: Issues and Vision

Group discussions:

- Strengths & weaknesses**
Do you agree with our summary of Watermead in 2016?
- Vision – finish the sentence**
In 2031 the Watermead area will be.....

**Identify a spokesperson to feedback
3 minutes per group**

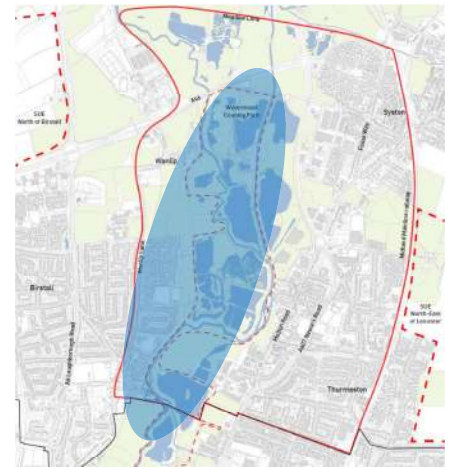
Alan Baxter

Alan Baxter

Watermead 2031

Opportunity areas:

- Country Park

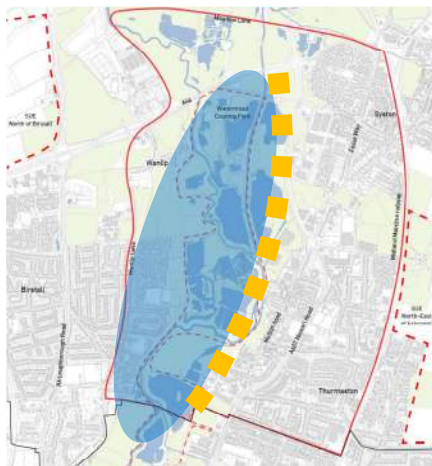


Alan Baxter

Alan Baxter

Opportunity areas:

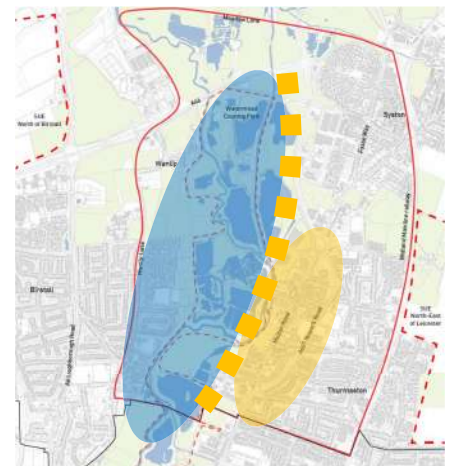
- Country Park
- Waterfront corridor



Alan Baxter

Opportunity areas:

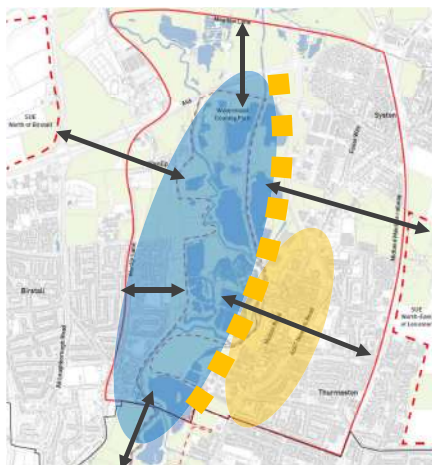
- Country Park
- Waterfront corridor
- Thurston village centre



Alan Baxter

Opportunity areas:

- Country Park
- Waterfront corridor
- Thurston village centre
- Access and connections



Alan Baxter

Country Park

What is the ambition?

- Visitor numbers?
- Facilities?
- Access / ecology balance?

How will it relate to other destinations?



Alan Baxter

Country Park

What is Watermead's USP?

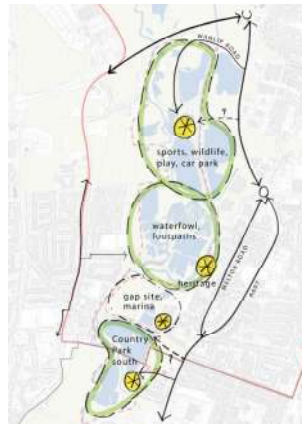
- Watersports
- Waterfowl
- Play
- Events
- Canal boat trips
- Cycling
- Something else?



Alan Baxter

Visitor facilities

What and where?



Alan Baxter

Connectivity

Travel to the Country Park

- How do we encourage non car based travel?
- Days out by bus, train, boat?
- Park entrances – new and improved?



Alan Baxter

Connecting communities

- Where should improved connections be made?
- Where / how to get over the A607?
- Reducing dominance of the highway



Alan Baxter

Thurmaston village centre

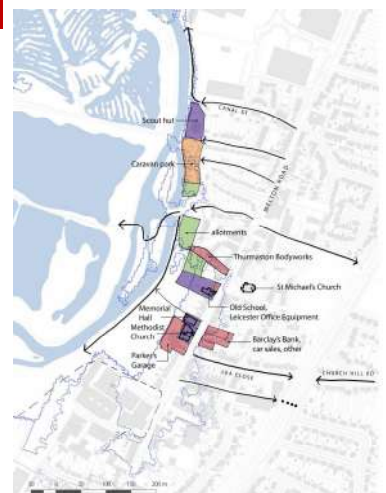
- What is the role of Melton Road?
- What uses should be encouraged for vitality?
- What are the opportunities for redevelopment / reuse?



Alan Baxter

Thurmaston village centre

- A long term plan:
 - Community clusters
 - Watermead gateways
 - Waterfront edges
 - Redevelopment of poor quality buildings
 - Public realm



Alan Baxter

Thurmaston village centre

Invest in good design

- Raise quality of new build
- Local distinctiveness
- Greening the street
- Reclaiming space from the car
- Stitching into wider Thurmaston



Alan Baxter

Waterfront development

What is appropriate to local character & the Country Park?

Canalside

- living?
- working?
- leisure?
- tranquility?



Alan Baxter

Waterfront development

Pinfold and Bridge Business Parks and Marina:

- Long term phasing
- What is the right mix of uses?
- Marina – public or secure site?



Alan Baxter

Workshop 2: Project opportunities

Alan Baxter

Group discussions:

- 1 **Watermead Country Park** (Tim)
- 2 **Watermead Country Park** (Richard)
- 3 **Connecting Watermead** (Isobel)
- 4 **Thurmaston village centre** (Clare)
- 5 **Watermead waterfront** (Chris)

Alan Baxter

Group discussions:

iii. Objectives

Set 5 objectives for the area

iv. Plan

Create a spatial plan of project ideas

Identify a spokesperson to feedback
4 minutes per group

Alan Baxter

Next steps

- Report back workshop findings
- Outline framework and business case
- Stakeholder feedback session (13 July 2016)
- Framework and business case (Autumn 2016)
- Funding bids, evidence for future planning policy

Thank you!

Appendix 3

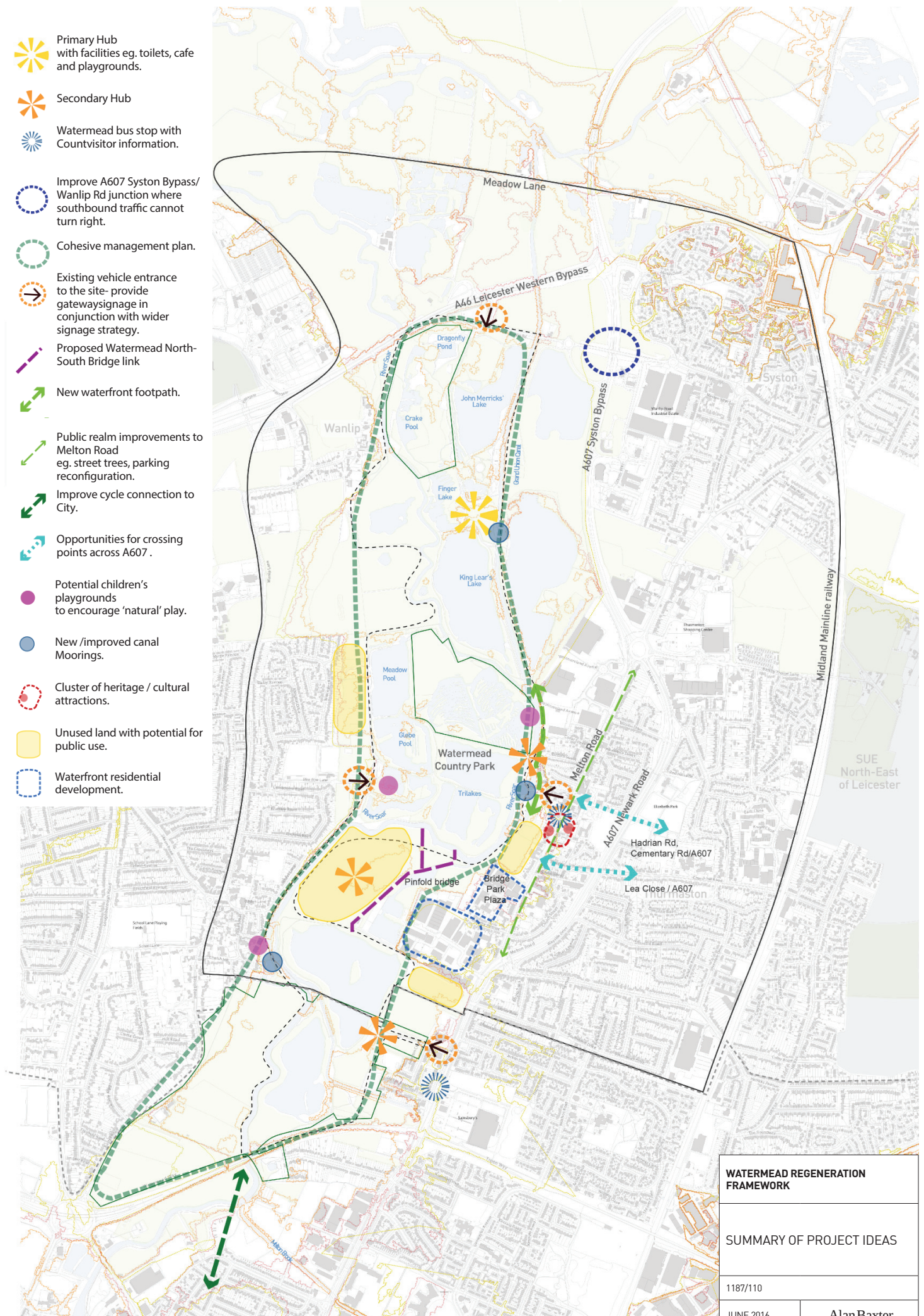
Workshop Photos



Appendix 4

Workshop Summary Diagram

-  Primary Hub with facilities eg. toilets, cafe and playgrounds.
-  Secondary Hub
-  Watermead bus stop with Countvisitor information.
-  Improve A607 Syston Bypass/ Wanlip Rd junction where southbound traffic cannot turn right.
-  Cohesive management plan.
-  Existing vehicle entrance to the site- provide gatewaysignage in conjunction with wider signage strategy.
-  Proposed Watermead North-South Bridge link
-  New waterfront footpath.
-  Public realm improvements to Melton Road eg. street trees, parking reconfiguration.
-  Improve cycle connection to City.
-  Opportunities for crossing points across A607 .
-  Potential children's playgrounds to encourage 'natural' play.
-  New /improved canal Moorings.
-  Cluster of heritage / cultural attractions.
-  Unused land with potential for public use.
-  Waterfront residential development.



WATERMEAD REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

SUMMARY OF PROJECT IDEAS

1187/110

JUNE 2016

Alan Baxter