

Mawsley - A New Village

Mawsley is a new village. In 2000 there was nothing here but green fields. Building was completed in 2013, though most of the roads and open spaces are not yet adopted by the relevant Council Authorities; there are 900 houses.

But remarkably, in such a short time, from the bricks etc. of 900 new houses, a vibrant, fun and inclusive community has been created.

This is a community where, despite exclusively new houses and so no history, and contrary to the modern trend of new housing developments where few know who anybody else is let alone speak to them, people are friendly; do say hello when passing in the street; do help each other.

It is a community where remarkably large numbers are made up of extended families. Typically one age group in a family moves in and then recommends the village to their other family members, who then move in.

And the community has been created - by the efforts of many villagers. It is not something that emerged of its own volition but something that took many hours of concerted and concentrated deliberate effort. The start point always was that Mawsley should be a village, not "a housing estate in the countryside". We have strived to make it much more than simply a village; we have strived to make it a fun and inclusive community.

The extent to which this has been a village-wide effort is best illustrated by the list of volunteers that was featured in the Jan/Feb 2014 edition of the village newsletter. It is remarkable that out of an adult population of c. 1750, no less than c. 245 are directly involved with village groups, clubs and activities.

Central also to the development has been the Mawsley Villagers Association (MVA). It was formed when there were only 25 houses in the village and has remained at the core of its social development as a community ever since. This is covered in section 2 Q5 of the questionnaire.

However its role has gone beyond the visible; visible in terms of facilities or events it has created. The MVA has been the inspiration for other clubs and groups to form; it has offered advice to them when setting up, and in some cases provided financial support during times of difficulty to ensure they keep going.

Remarkably, all this has been achieved in a village where the population profile, compared to almost any other village, is unique. Typically one would expect a village population profile to have be biased towards older people; people who tend to have time on their hands, and thus time to organise village life. This is not the case in Mawsley; here we have a very young bias in the population. We have a preponderance of young families; indeed we have almost five times the national average of under 5s. This is why involving children and young people has been so important.

You will see from the completed questionnaire that nonetheless there are many areas where older people are actively involved in village life. This is a reflection of the fact that as the population has slowly aged, so the community has embraced them to ensure our community involves all ages.

Finally what better example of the desire to create a community can there be than The Centre at Mawsley. This was originally intended, within the S106 document, to be a large village hall run by Kettering Borough Council. Villagers came together however and achieved:

- Changing the specification to be a community centre, with social bar / lounge facilities - because that it is what was felt was needed for the village.
- Transfer of ownership and management to the village; ownership to the Parish Council, management to the Mawsley Villagers Association.
- Creation of a trading arm of the MVA, which is a company called The Centre at Mawsley Community Interest Company, to run the business on a day-to-day basis. This was only the second Community Interest Company to be formed in Northamptonshire.

The name says it all.