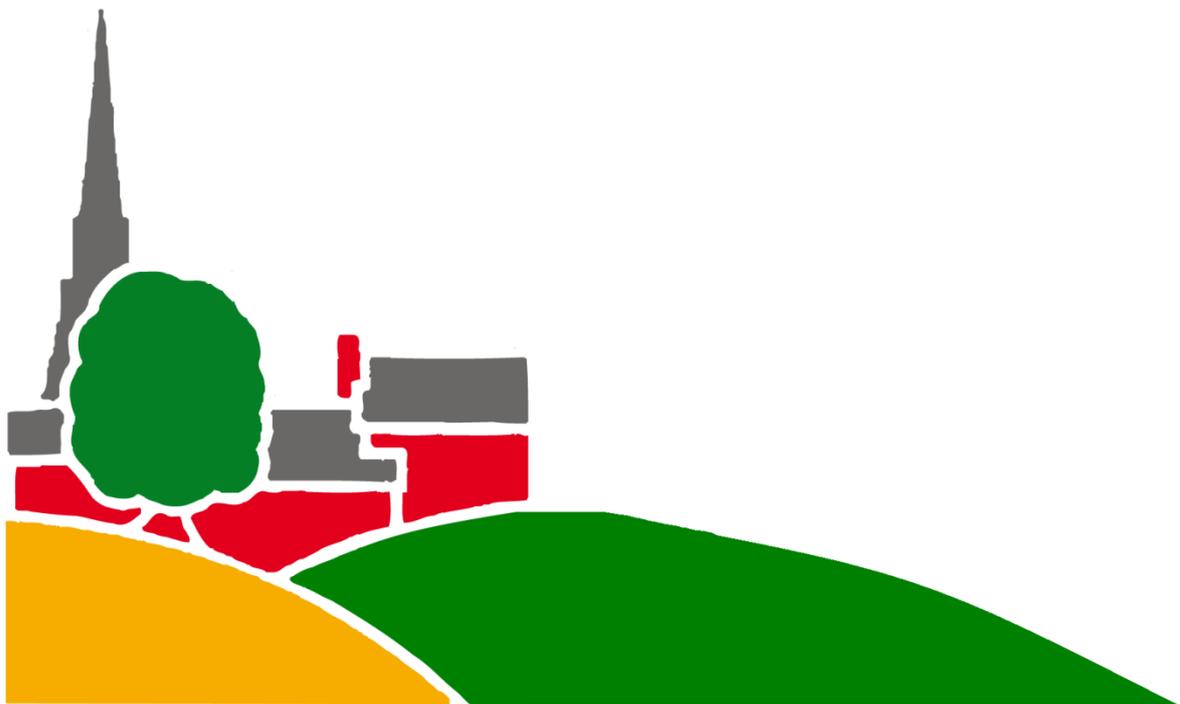


# Results of 'Planning for Real®' event at Hugglescote Community Primary School and open event on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012

On behalf of

Hugglescote and Donington le Heath  
Parish Council.





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## Introduction

The RCC were commissioned by Hugglescote and Donington le Heath Parish Council to conduct a 'Planning for Real®' project with the Hugglescote Community Primary School and facilitate an open event in early 2012. The objective was to raise the profile of the newly formed parish Council within its first year of office. The Parish Councillors wanted to discover what residents considered to be the priorities for the Parish Council and to create an 'Action Plan' of short term, medium term and long term goals.

Having discussed the different consultation methods offered by the RCC, the Parish Council decided that the most appropriate method was 'Planning for Real®'. It is an eye-catching and fun process that is enjoyed by all and gives stakeholders who have an interest in the future of the area an opportunity to get involved. 'Planning for Real®' enables local people to engage hands-on with issues that affect them in their area.

In order to initiate the project, the RCC organised two community walks with classes 5 and 6 (school year 4) on 26th March 2012, after which, the children were asked to complete a short questionnaire in which they were invited to state the top three things they liked about the area, their top three dislikes and three proposals for improvement.

On 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April, two of the RCC's Community Development Officers spent time with the same children painting and making a 3D scaled model of the Parish, 26 boards in total, each measuring 600mm (24") x 800mm (32").



Children in Class 4 painting 1 of the 26 boards.

The open event was advertised widely using local media, and leaflets were also distributed via the primary school, a large banner advertising the event was prominently displayed outside the Hugglescote Community centre in the lead up to the event. Service Providers, County and District Councillors and all local interest groups (of which the Parish Council were aware) were also sent invitations. A special edition of the village magazine 'Local Voice' was distributed to every household explaining the aims of the open event and the day's programme, and in addition to this, a reminder flyer was also distributed.



The open event venue, the community centre

The event was held between 2pm and 4:30pm on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012 at the Hugglescote Community Centre to coincide with the Parish Rogation Day. A well attended church service was held at St John the Baptist Church Hugglescote, followed by a walk of the Parish boundaries, attended by approximately 30 people. Rogation Day traditionally was a solemn procession to invoke God's mercy; the faithful typically observed the Rogation days by fasting in preparation to celebrate the Ascension, and farmers often had their crops blessed by a priest at this time. This Rogation event was a light hearted family occasion and included the blessing of prominent features including the 'Hugglescote Bear' and Donington le Heath Manor house.

The focal point of the event was the 'Planning for Real®' model created by the children at Hugglescote Community Primary School. The event attracted 74 residents (excluding children, exhibitors and the Parish Councillors); disappointingly there were only 2 residents from Donington le Heath who attended. All who attended were able to chat informally to the Parish Councillors about their aspirations for the Parish. Attendees were also given the opportunity to place cards with their ideas on the 'Planning for Real®' model and topic boards. The cards placed by residents have been sorted and will be prioritised to establish an action plan for the Parish Council.



The map of display to the public

This report captures comments from the open event and the responses from questionnaires returned by the school.

From the responses it is apparent that there is some confusion about the responsibilities of the different tiers of Local Authority, there are also some strong views from residents on the various topics.

We have tried to keep the report to the specific topic headings; however some responses overlap different topic headings.

## **Development**

NWLDC core strategy agreed by Councillors in April this year, includes proposals to build 9,700 homes in the North West District of Leicestershire up to the year 2031 (the Coalville Urban Area will accommodate at least 4,950 dwellings) it was therefore not surprising that the most popular topic was land development and more specifically, the lack of support for it from residents. The majority of residents would be unhappy to see the physical extent of the parish enlarge, there were many references to

*“No more houses, we don’t want to lose our identity”*

*“Stop Hugglescote joining up with Ellistown through housing developments”*

*“Keep our village identities; we do not want to be ‘one’”.*

For those resigned to the fact that some development will go ahead, there is strong public opinion in favour of the development of former industrial or commercial sites, over ‘green field sites’, comments such as

*“Keep our fields and countryside open”*

*“Do not build on high quality agricultural land, use brown field sites”.*

There is a general concern about the lack of infrastructure to support the allocation of development and that current resources such as the school and doctors surgery are apparently already at capacity.

*“Stop the housing off Grange Road, schools are over full now and traffic is too busy already”.*

Some responses recognised that possible development could generate more community facilities:

*“When houses are built, thought needs to be given to community needs also, and amenities alongside”.*

However, some respondents believed they need more affordable houses as opposed to ‘executive’ type developments, because they are concerned that the parish is already dormitory, with residents driving to work elsewhere and in most cases also going elsewhere for leisure and shopping.

*“We do not want or need large housing estates for commuters”.*

## **Recommendations**

Under the localism act the community ‘right to bid’ will enable Parish Councils or constituted groups, to register a community amenity. The recreation grounds have been identified as important open spaces during this consultation and could be put on the local authority register of community assets. Some attendees of the open event suggested that the “Council should compulsory purchase the ‘Gate Inn’ for a municipal parking instead of more houses”.

There seems to be a misconception in the term ‘rural affordable housing’ as opposed to low cost housing. The RCC work closely with the ‘Leicestershire Rural Housing Association’ who conduct rural housing needs survey to establish whether homes are required for individuals and families to live in an affordable home in the village where they have a connection through their family or work.

## **Transport**

A lot of concern was expressed about the increase of traffic on the roads through Hugglescote brought about by the increased housing developments in neighbouring parishes, and the capacity of the current road system in general. There’s a perception that cars have precedence over people in the parish, with numerous complaints about inconsiderate parking and speeding.

*“Discourage traffic from using Grange Road/ Ashburton Road as a rat run”.*

*“Enforce 30mph speed limits past the school”.*

*“Dennis Road is a ‘rat run’ for traffic. Would be better as one way or a ‘dead end’ at club end”.*

Both adults and children made reference to badly or illegally parked vehicles

*“Cars parked across entrances/ driveways”*

*“Better parking on Dennis Street”*

*“Yellow lines ignored in Ashburton Road, traffic is a nightmare at times”*

*“Parking dangerous on Crescent Road”.*

Traffic related issues affected many, with people complaining about traffic congestion in Hugglescote, as well as noise pollution and fumes. Parking improvements were suggested at Ashburton Road and Fairfield Road junctions. Attendees to the open event also requested safer routes to the schools.

Pedestrian crossing problems were mentioned on numerous occasions in the children’s responses. Adults also have concerns about crossing the road and there were requests for a School Crossing Patrol Person or lollipop person at the junction of Ashburton Road and Central Road and reinstating a SCP on Grange Road.

*“Traffic control at Grange crossroads at school time (has now gone) so children can walk to school unaccompanied”.*

*“More time to cross at traffic lights- disabled lady”.*

There were few references to bus services, but those that there were included:

*“Better bus service (in addition to main route Station Road/ Central Road”*

*“Put bus to M & S back on please?”*

*“Bus route (circular) Hugglescote- King Edward- Whitwick Leisure Centre”.*

The most notable specific request was to reinstate the bus service to Fosse Park.

### **Recommendations**

Suggestions for installing traffic calming measures for Dennis Road and Grange Road are one way of reducing speed, but can create additional problems for residents living in close proximity, who could be affected by noise as vehicles negotiate the speed humps. Community Speed Watch (Be a Local Hero) is a partnership initiative operating in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland using the combined efforts of the local residents and supported by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Road Safety Partnership. Community Speed Watch is a scheme to help people reduce speeding traffic through their community. The scheme enables volunteers to work within their community to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding and to help control the problem locally. Community Speed Watch incorporates poster campaigns and a pledge system linked to direct action using radar speed guns and Vehicle Activated Signs, all under the supervision of the County Council.

The siting of the Hugglescote Doctors surgery on the edge of Hugglescote does cause some issues for older or infirm residents or those without their own transport, the RCC’s ‘Good Neighbours Scheme’ could be a solution? The scheme is a voluntary initiative which is organized and run by local residents and is based around a pool of local volunteers who offer their time to help support others within the community with a range of tasks and activities. Any resident in need of genuine help of the kind offered can request assistance from the duty officer and contact a suitable volunteer.

The Parish Council could also investigate the possibility of additional School Crossing People in the parish with the School Crossing Patrol Department at County Hall.

## Leisure and recreation

There were a number of requests for a Cinema/ Film Showings

*“A cinema part time or permanent (in an existing venue)”*,  
*“Coffee bars, cinema, more leisure activities generally”*.

12% of the children’s suggestions for improvements were for new play ground equipment for the local parks. Older children would like to see a bike track or a woodland themed adventure area in the area of open land between Hugglescote and Donington le Heath or a ‘nature trail’ north of Standard Hill.

*“More recreational areas for school age children, with more than just swings and roundabouts”*.

There were numerous leisure related ideas for the disused railway line or ‘mineral’ line as some referred to it, including:

*“Re-open the old mineral line as a bridleway/ cycle track”*.

*“Use for cycling route/ walking/ bridleway”*.

The Year 4 children suggested natural habitat improvements including more grazing for animals, attracting more animals and more bird boxes.

There were two adult suggestions for something along the lines of a youth cafe or a youth club:

*“Non alcoholic cafe/ bar for teenagers (& older)”*

*“Opportunity for ‘youth’ to meet, somewhere to get drinks etc”*.

## Recommendations

Whilst the likelihood of a permanent cinema coming to Coalville is remote and totally unlikely to happen in the Parish itself, it would be worthwhile considering a community cinema. ‘Centre Stage’ has proved to be very popular throughout Leicestershire, and brings blockbusters or archive films to rural venues. Volunteers within the community select a film, book the venue and sell tickets, Centre Stage provide the technician and equipment to run the screening. In addition to evening performances, the RCC are aware of community groups that have hosted matinee performances for younger children and ‘classic’ film afternoons for the elderly residents.

With regard to provision for youth, the RCC have worked with the ‘Sorrel Youth cafe’ in the Charnwood District. The Sorrel Youth Café offers a unique learning environment for young people aged between 11 and 21. As a charitable company limited by Guarantee the company is supported and managed by non paid Trustees and volunteers, supported by one part time youth officer.

The café was established to provide a safe alcohol free environment for young people living in Mountsorrel to meet and socialise with their friends. Additionally however the café is providing live training environment where young people can develop their personal, practical and employment ready skills- could this be feasible in Hugglescote or Donington le Heath?

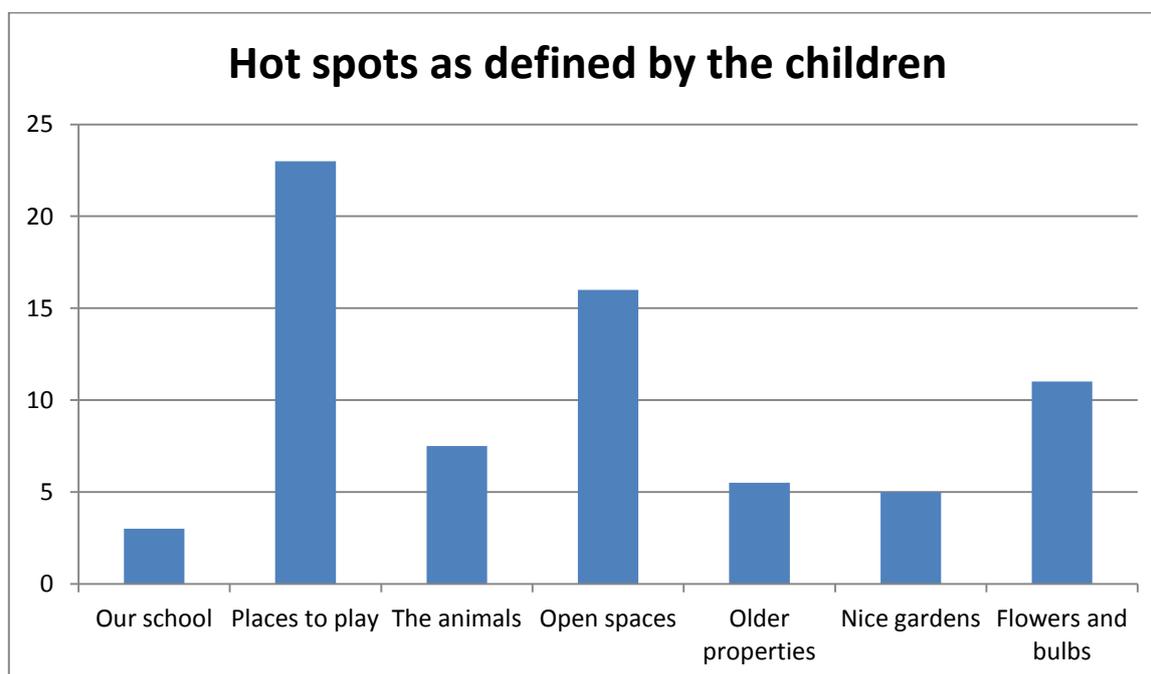
The RCC has worked with a number of parishes who have used a 106 agreement (monies paid by developers to Local Planning Authorities in order to offset the costs of the external effects of development) to fund MUGA's (multi use games and activities) and playground equipment.

The Parish Council could pursue the construction of a cycle link from Hugglescote jointly with District and County Councils, it would also help provide links into the wider cycle network between Leicester and North West Leicestershire.

## Environment

The strengths of the parish from the children's perspective are considered to be attractive countryside, the green spaces within the parish and its historical buildings. A number of the issues raised by the young people surveyed were the same as those identified in the adult responses, including retaining green spaces, improvements in facilities at the parks and improved sports and leisure facilities.

The younger children genuinely seem to value the open spaces, 16% listed 'Grass/ open spaces/ fields/ Country life/ Mother nature/ countryside nature' and this was the second most popular response!



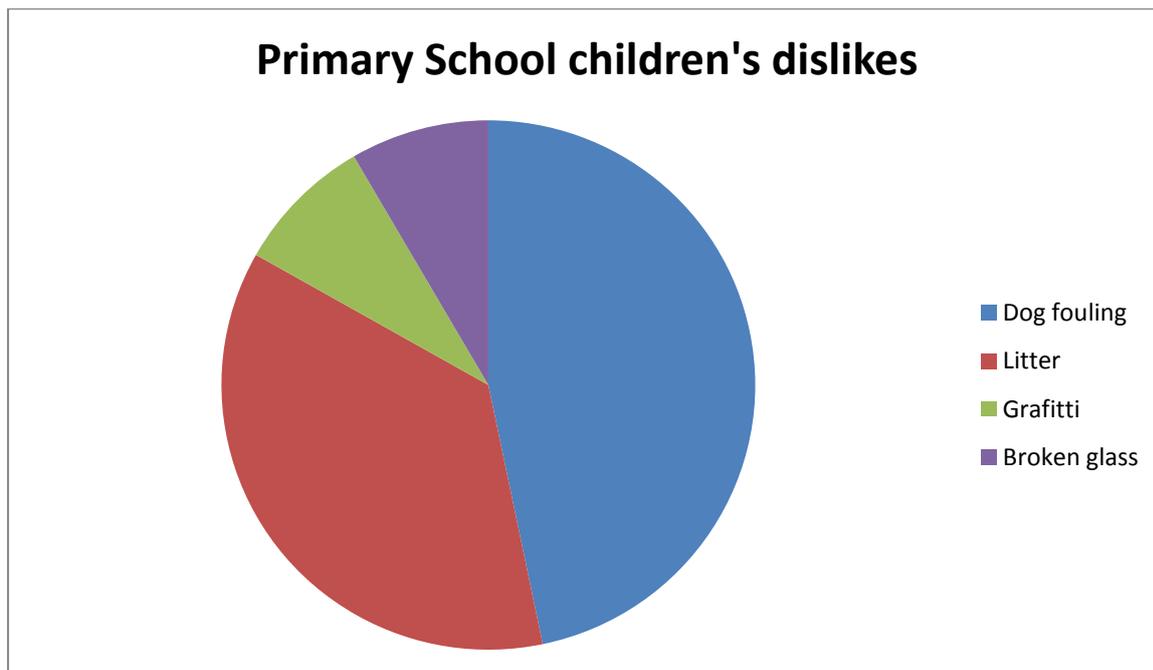
There are extensive concerns from adults and children about litter, and the general appearance of the parish. The overwhelming majority of complaints related to dog fouling and litter.

*“Overflowing bins- empty more frequently”.*

*“More doggy bins”*

***Put methods in place to stop dog fouling and heavy fines for those who leave mess!"***

The worst areas for dog fouling seem to be in the vicinity of St John's the Baptist Church on Grange Road, the Wainwright Road area, Ashburton Road (near the primary school) and Station Road near the shops. From the children's responses, 25% thought dog fouling was the biggest problem in the Parish, 23% thought that litter was a problem, followed by broken glass on the recreational ground adjacent to the primary school, chewing gum, and discarded cigarette ends. The children also thought that graffiti was a big issue, 11% of responses made reference to the youth shelter near the primary school. A number of children would like the youth shelter to be redecorated because of the graffiti.



The young children are very aware of the issues relating to dog fouling and litter and hold very strong views on the subject, interestingly their responses imply that it's the adults that are responsible for creating this problem, where as one adult response stated that the 'youngsters' were to blame:

***"Follow the youngsters after they have been at the recreation ground of an evening. Drinking cans and litter everywhere".***

According to cards placed on the 'Planning for Real®' maps, a clean up is required to the area between 'The Green' in Donington le Heath and Manor brook in the vicinity of The Corner Pin Public House. Incidentally, both groups of children on the community walk sited this area as a 'grot spot' because it was overgrown and the water appeared to be contaminated.

***"Better facility for bin collections, better ways to deal with recycling bins to reduce the amount of litter blown out of the bins and bags on windy day, which then stays cluttering the streets for weeks to follow".***

There were many references to natural habitats from adults and children including

*“Nature survey, we have orchids and grass snakes- both rare”, “Use the old railway line as a nature walk”.*

Responses also imply that there are air quality concerns relating to the volume of traffic using the roads in the area

*“Minimise CO<sup>2</sup>”*

The most popular ways to improve the appearance of Hugglescote and Donington le Heath included more flowers/ bulbs, more trees and hanging baskets:

*“Hanging baskets full of flowers on lamp posts, example Ibstock”.*

Interestingly, 11% of the children’s responses said they liked the bulbs and flowers around the parish, and 15% of the children thought that more trees or fruit trees would improve the environment. 5% of the children’s responses made specific reference to the gardens that were looked after’ and ‘nice gardens no rubbish’.

*“Hugglescote does not have any ‘National Forest’- why?”*

*“Reduce litter lying around more bins emptied regularly, more litter patrols in hedges/ ditches”.*

*“Litter picks & litter collection from roadsides & hedges. It is bad”.*

*“Some sort of scheme to encourage people to keep the village & countryside tidy”.*

## **Recommendations**

In terms of litter and dog waste, the RCC have contacted NWLDC, who informed us that all their bins can accept dog waste. They are apparently heavily oversubscribed for bins in the district and have twice the national average which is a massive resource issue! The RCC proposed a bin sponsorship idea, possibly approaching pet shops or canine charities, which NWLDC said they would be open to conducting an operational trial with, possibly two or three bins to see how it goes and see what issues would need to be overcome if it was to be introduced on a wider scale. This could be explored by the Parish Council?

The children suggested that a parish handyman/ man could be a solution to a lot of the environmental issues in the Parish. The RCC currently work with another Parish Council in North West Leicestershire who employ someone in this role. He works 10 hours a week, 48 weeks a year. The Parish Council provides his consumables, protective clothing, rubbish bags and tools such as strimmer, barrow and shovel and brushes etc. His job description is very fluid and he is literally a handyman, clearing rubbish and dog mess, trimming overgrown hedges and verges, painting and repairing Parish property and equipment etc.

It may be worthwhile pursuing a ‘Hugglescote in bloom’ sub-committee to the Parish Council or hanging baskets could be installed in partnership with Traders Association or local business sponsorship?

## **Business and employment**

Wider provision of retail is seen as key, with most people not in favour of more supermarkets in Coalville.

*“Improve shopping opportunities in Coalville to keep people shopping locally; we don’t all want second hand goods”*

*“No more charity shops encourage local independent stores/ businesses”.*

This is exacerbated by the number of empty shop units and the lack of local employment opportunities in Coalville.

Many would like to see a coffee shop in Hugglescote as well as a wider range of smaller independent shops.

Strengthening the local economy and providing more local employment opportunities also emerged as a key factor in combating the role of Hugglescote and Donington le Heath as a dormitory area.

Opportunities identified through the consultation event included incentives for business, such as reduced business rates or shared facilities

*“Do up the Coalville Town Centre. Reduce rents to encourage small local businesses”.*

*“As part of the National Forest, generate ‘country’ type industries and skills, possibly a business park/ industrial estate aimed specifically at this type of industry”.*

Alternative suggestion for the disused railway line which could boost the economy was:

*“Open up train line for public or to move minerals so it can boost the economy and so new businesses move to the area”.*

*“Re-open as a rail link to ease congestion on roads, reduce CO<sup>2</sup>”.*

*“For industrial haulage to reduce lorries on parish roads”.*

However, according to a report in 2009, even if grants and funds could be found to enable the requisite upgrades to the infrastructure to be made, the biggest barrier would remain, that of finding a means to subsidise the operating costs.



Children used the finished map to discuss their individual routes to school with their classmates

## **Safety in the Community**

There were two requests for Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the Donington le Heath; in particular Townsend Lane. There is concern for the more vulnerable in the community and their susceptibility to rogue traders.

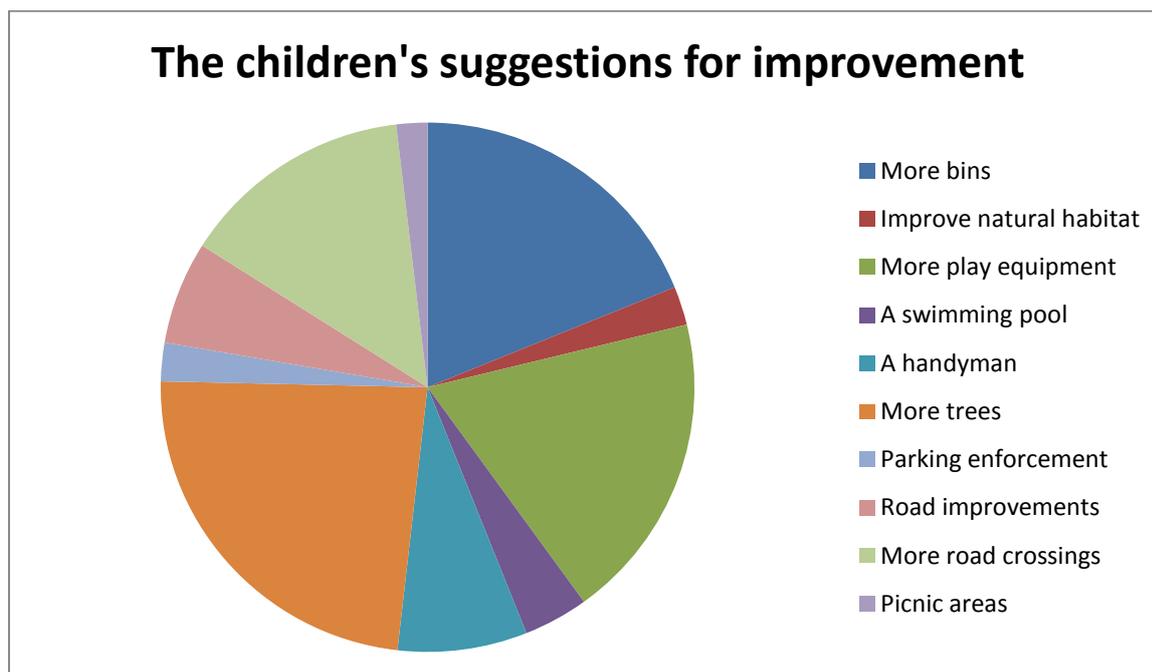
The children's responses implied that there was a problem with anti-social behaviour:

“Vandalism”

“Not safe in the woods”

A number of the children's responses referred to 'People stealing', 'thieves taking people's stuff', 'robbery', 'burglaries', 'gangsters', 'drunk people' and 'mean people saying nasty things to you'.

## Conclusion



The RCC are able to offer advice and guidance to the parish on a number of issues. We can provide the parish council with specialist advice on developing and improving local services and facilities. We are also able to sign post the parish council to other organisations and support services that may be able to provide further support and advice.

In the first instance, it may be worth looking into the following options:

### Tree planting

An exercise that could be carried out in conjunction with the Hugglescote Community Primary school utilising saplings donated by either the 'Woodlands Trust' or 'Groundwork Leicester'

- Woodlands Trust Jubilee Woods, the charity have a 2000 tree packs to plant this autumn. Three different size packs; small (60 saplings), medium (105 saplings) and large (420 saplings). Small packs come in a choice of two themes, either to plant as a hedge or copse, while medium and large packs have four themes to choose from: Wildlife, Year-round colour, Wood Fuel and Wild Harvest. Each pack contains a Royal Oak Sapling, grown from seeds gathered from Royal Estates, to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Trees supplied are young saplings about 20-40cm high. To apply <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/jubilee-woods/what-you-can-do/communities/community-tree-packs> or 0845 293 5680 or [jubileewoods@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:jubileewoods@woodlandtrust.org.uk)
- Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire have 6,250 free trees to plant with community groups that have been funded through DEFRA and the Forestry Commission as part of the 'Big Tree Plant'. They are looking for areas of 1 acre or under which have community access. Trees are native species. Contact Kim Hawksworth at Groundwork on 1006 222 0223 or [Kim.hawksworth@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:Kim.hawksworth@groundwork.org.uk)

## Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are run by their members through a Co-ordinator and are supported by the Police and in many areas a local Neighbourhood Watch Association. Neighbourhood Watch Schemes vary in size ranging from a few houses to a number of streets, roads etc. Large Schemes (e.g. comprising more than 10 households) usually have more than one Co-ordinator with an elected lead co-ordinator. Co-ordinators are responsible for administering schemes and for conveying information between scheme members and the Police.

It is highly desirable, but not essential, that Schemes are democratically based and hold annual meetings for the election of co-ordinators. A volunteer resident co-ordinator supervises the scheme and liaises with the Police; they receive information and messages to keep them in touch with activities. Some have smart water or other marker kits, alarms and other security items which are available to members. It is important to note that a scheme is a community initiative, which is supported by the police, not run by them, so success depends on what the members put in to it. The Police can't deal with the problems and issues arising from crime and anti-social behaviour alone; they need the help of the whole community. Neighbourhood Watch provides a way for local people to play an important part in addressing this balance and making their communities safer.

There is an existing 'Neighbourhood Watch Scheme' at Pegg's Grange, Hugglescote, LE67 2GT; the next closest scheme is in the adjacent parish, on Burgess Road, Coalville, LE67 3PX.

Use the following links to initiate a scheme: <https://www.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk> and <http://www.ourwatch.org.uk> there are a lot of useful contacts and toolkits to get started.

## Speed Watch

- A Parish Council or a Formal Action Group must request to become part of the scheme. Register your interest with the Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator, Mike Wilson, on **0116 305 7336** or [Michael.Wilson@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Wilson@leics.gov.uk).
- There must be a suitable and safe area(s) for the speed checks to be held. The final say is with the Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator after consultation with the local co-ordinator.
- There must be a minimum of 200 signatures obtained or 20% of the village/location population (whichever is the lower) to support the scheme. A [Pledge document](#) is available for downloading: [www.bealocalhero.com](http://www.bealocalhero.com) (in Word .doc format).
- There must be between 6 and 16 people to take part as Community Speed Watch Volunteers. One volunteer should be identified as a co-ordinator and another as a deputy. The co-ordinator should have access to e-mail.
- Identify a site locally for the training to take place, Parish Rooms or Halls have been used and are ideal.
- When all the above is in place the Parish Council or Formal Action Group can apply to go on the waiting list for volunteers to be trained.

## Young people

The RCC have worked with a number of Youth Focussed Groups. They are currently working closely with the Rural Youth Voice Project to develop a Youth Focus group for the Swinford Wind Farm project to ensure that the needs and views of young people are adequately represented throughout the project. 2 focus group meetings have been held since April this year which have incorporated helping to write the criteria for the Community Benefit Fund, organising a field trip to learn about wind farms, and planning wider engagement with other young people across the area.

## Parish Wardens

A Wardens job is to be the eyes and ears of the Parish Council on the ground, these are generally volunteer roles, and the Parish Council may wish to consider the following:

- Wildlife Wardens are people with an interest in wildlife, conservation and environmentally friendly life styles.
- Heritage Wardens are encouraged to carry out a wide range of heritage research and recording in their Parish. They are volunteers who take an interest in local history, the built heritage, social heritage and more. They build up a detailed understanding of the area and can provide the Parish Council with a wealth of knowledge. They are well positioned to highlight issues and threats to heritage. Leicestershire County Council has supported the Heritage Warden Network since it was set up around 2000. This support includes administration, biannual newsletters, training in heritage recording or research skills, special projects, and the loan of equipment to support heritage activities within the Parish.  
[http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/environment/naturalenvironment/heritagewardens/heritagewardens\\_parishcouncilinfo.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/environment/naturalenvironment/heritagewardens/heritagewardens_parishcouncilinfo.htm)
- Litter warden's co-ordinates litter picking groups in the parish, and reports quarterly to the Parish Council. Countryside campaigners CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) want to establish a county-wide network of litter wardens, to help keep the countryside free from litter. Money and equipment is now available to individuals, community groups and parish councils to help establish wardens in local areas. CPRE have secured funding from Keep Britain Tidy and local business sponsors, to supply litter picking equipment to a nominated person in a parish and pay them an honorarium of £100. The litter warden must be willing to undertake a regular litter pick and keep an entry on the Big Tidy Up website updated.
- Tree wardens are involved in planting schemes, surveys, school projects or planning issues affecting protected trees. They volunteer directly for the parish and town councils. District and County Council's support Tree Wardens by providing information about trees, woodland and funding opportunities.

## Good Neighbours Schemes

The RCC has helped to initiate three Good Neighbours Schemes in the County to date, and has recently received enquiries from Ibstock and Coalville. Existing schemes are as follows:

- *Clawson Good Neighbour Scheme* initiated by the RCC aims to support Long Clawson villagers' needs. The Clawson Good Neighbour Scheme has been setup through a partnership between Clawson, Hose and Harby Parish Council, Long

Clawson Medical Practice, Long Clawson Patient Participation Group and the Rural Community Council. The purpose of the Scheme shall be to provide short term help to the residents of Long Clawson Village, including transport, domestic support and household assistance with the help of local volunteers. The Scheme will also endeavour to encourage self help, friendship and neighbourliness with the local community. The community refers to the parish of Long Clawson. Issues already identified include the need for a network of voluntary drivers and a support programme for the recently bereaved. The only charge is for petrol and parking. There is no charge for transport within the village. All the other services are free. <http://www.clawson-gns.org.uk/>

- The *Whissendine Good Neighbour Scheme* uses voluntary effort from local people to provide help for anyone in the village who needs assistance with transport, household tasks, companionship, and practical support following illness, letter writing, form filling, and more. All our volunteers have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau are fully insured and carry photographic identity cards at all times. <http://whissendinegns.org.uk>
- The *Billesdon Good Neighbours Scheme*, launched in October 2008 the scheme provides support and assistance with everyday tasks to local residents via a formal network of registered volunteers. Services include transport for appointments or maybe shopping in Market Harborough, household tasks such as changing light bulbs or moving small items of furniture, companionship to those who would like a chat and a cuppa or maybe a game of Scrabble, support whilst recuperating from illness such as gardening, taking children to and from school or light housework or help with writing letters of filling in non-legal forms; reading to the blind or partially sighted; learning to e-mail.

## **A Neighbourhood Plan**

RCC are currently working with a number of Neighbourhood Plan fore runners, including Fosse Villages, Lubenham and Broughton Astley. The RCC have provided information and advice to Broughton Astley Parish Council to assist with the development of a successful bid to the 5<sup>th</sup> wave of the Government Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners programme. £20,000 has subsequently been awarded to support the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan within the Parish. RCC Officers continue to provide support and advice to Broughton Astley Parish Council with the initiation and progression of a Neighbourhood Plan project within the parish.

# The Singing Ringing Tree

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There was once an apple tree that stood on a scruffy bit of ground not far from a Church. At Rogation-tide, the Vicar would take the whole congregation around the parish to bless the fields and the tractors and pray for a good harvest. The head choirboy always made sure that this tree got an extra special splash of holy water.

He knew that this tree was no ordinary tree. In the autumn the apples were so sweet the children thought they were really toffee-apples. When no grown-ups were looking, if the children stood around it in a ring and sang it a little thank-you song, the tree would bend down its branches so that each child could take just one toffee-apple before running off to play.

One autumn day, the children went to the apple tree, and found they couldn't stand in a ring and sing to the tree. Someone had put a fence in the way. On the fence was a notice saying 'This tree is now the property of the Village Sweet maker. Toffee-apples are available in the shop. One penny each'

Some of the children ran back home to beg a penny. A few children were able to go to the shop. But some children didn't bother. They knew their family had nothing to spare for shop-bought toffee apples.

At Rogation-tide the next year, the procession didn't get near the tree. Time passed. Most of the children forgot the tree and each autumn it bore fewer, smaller, sourer apples.

One Rogation-tide, as the procession went past, the children saw that the singing ringing toffee-apple tree had been cut down.

After the Church Service, the head choirboy and a couple of the other children went back to see. The head boy climbed over the fence. He helped his friends until all three stood in a ring around the stump. Feeling sad, the head choirboy reached into his trouser pocket and found three rather old and sticky toffees. He handed them round. They stood and chewed the toffees in memory of the tree.

When they had finished, they stuffed the sticky silver wrappers into a gap between the roots of the tree, wiped their sticky hands and snotty noses on the tree stump, climbed over the fence and ran off to play.

Some people say it was because it was Rogation-tide. Some people say it was magic. Other people say there is something special in children's tears. But the next morning, one of the parishioners called the Vicar to come and see a marvellous thing.

Where the toffee-apple tree had been, another tree was growing. By the time the Vicar and the Churchwardens arrived it was tall and strong. But it wasn't an ordinary tree. It was made of silver, like toffee papers. The leaves were the shape of children's hands.

'This tree is here to remind us that, in God's Kingdom, the sweetest things are always those we share' was what the Vicar said.

# The Manor House

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The Lord of the Manor lay dying. He was not afraid to die. He had lived a good life. He had three grown up daughters. But as he lay in his hospital bed, he wondered what would happen to his beautiful Manor House. It had been in his family for generations. He wanted to leave it to one of his daughters. But which one?

One of the nurses, a wise woman said 'Give your house to the one who will fill it'

He thought about this but it didn't help. All three daughters had children, but they too were growing up and leaving to make their way in the world. He decided to set his daughters a challenge. 'I am not so ill that I cannot come out for a few hours to visit my house,' he said. 'Whichever of you can fill it best will inherit it when I am gone.'

The eldest daughter was a successful businesswoman and a parish councillor. When it was time for her father to visit she called on all her friends and invited them to the Manor for a party. When her father arrived, the house was buzzing with activity. He looked around his beautiful house and thought to himself 'My eldest daughter has done well. I could leave this house to her'. But as he looked further, he saw that although people were milling about in the Great Hall and the Solarium and the Kitchen some of the smaller rooms were not filled with people. His study felt empty and cold, and that made him feel sad.

A few weeks passed and the old man was fit to visit the Manor House again. This time it was the second daughter's turn. She was an artist and decided that she would fill her father's house with light and beauty.

When her father came to visit, it was evening. The house was a blaze of light. The walls were covered in pictures; the mirrors had been polished to reflect the light from a thousand candles.

The old man was pleased and thought to himself 'My middle daughter has done well. I could leave this house to her'. But as he looked further, he saw that even in the brightest rooms there were dark corners where the light did not reach, and that made him feel sad.

The old man went back to the hospital to rest. He was becoming increasingly frail. When, a few weeks later his youngest daughter heard he was coming out for a few hours she had no idea how she could fill the house for him. She was not a successful businesswoman or a clever artist. She had always been a quiet, rather mousy person. Besides, unlike her sisters, she couldn't afford to put on a big party or buy thousands of candles as she was not very well off.

'How can I fill the Manor for my father so that he will be pleased with me?' she wondered.

When the old man came to visit the Manor House for the last time, the house was very quiet. There were only a few lights burning. He felt very tired. A nurse had helped him into the house and as he sat alone in the hall and waited for his daughter to come, he felt sad that the house seemed so empty.

As he waited he heard a beautiful sound. He realised then that his daughter had brought her harp to the Manor House and was playing it softly in another room. Very slowly he got up to look for her. As he walked around the house, he realised that, wherever he was, the sound of the harp followed him. His youngest daughter had filled every corner of the Manor House with music.

The old man felt very happy. 'All three of my daughters can fill this house, but my youngest daughter's music is the one thing that fills it completely'.

When he lay in his hospital bed that night, he knew what to put in this will and he was content.

So, when the time came, the youngest daughter did inherit the Manor House and looked after it well. But whenever her eldest sister needed to put on a big Party, or her middle sister needed to put on an Art show, they would use the Great Hall at the Manor House.

While her sisters were milling about being busy and famous, the Lord of the Manor's youngest daughter would retire to a corner and play her harp so that the music spilled and trilled into every room, filling the Manor House with sound.