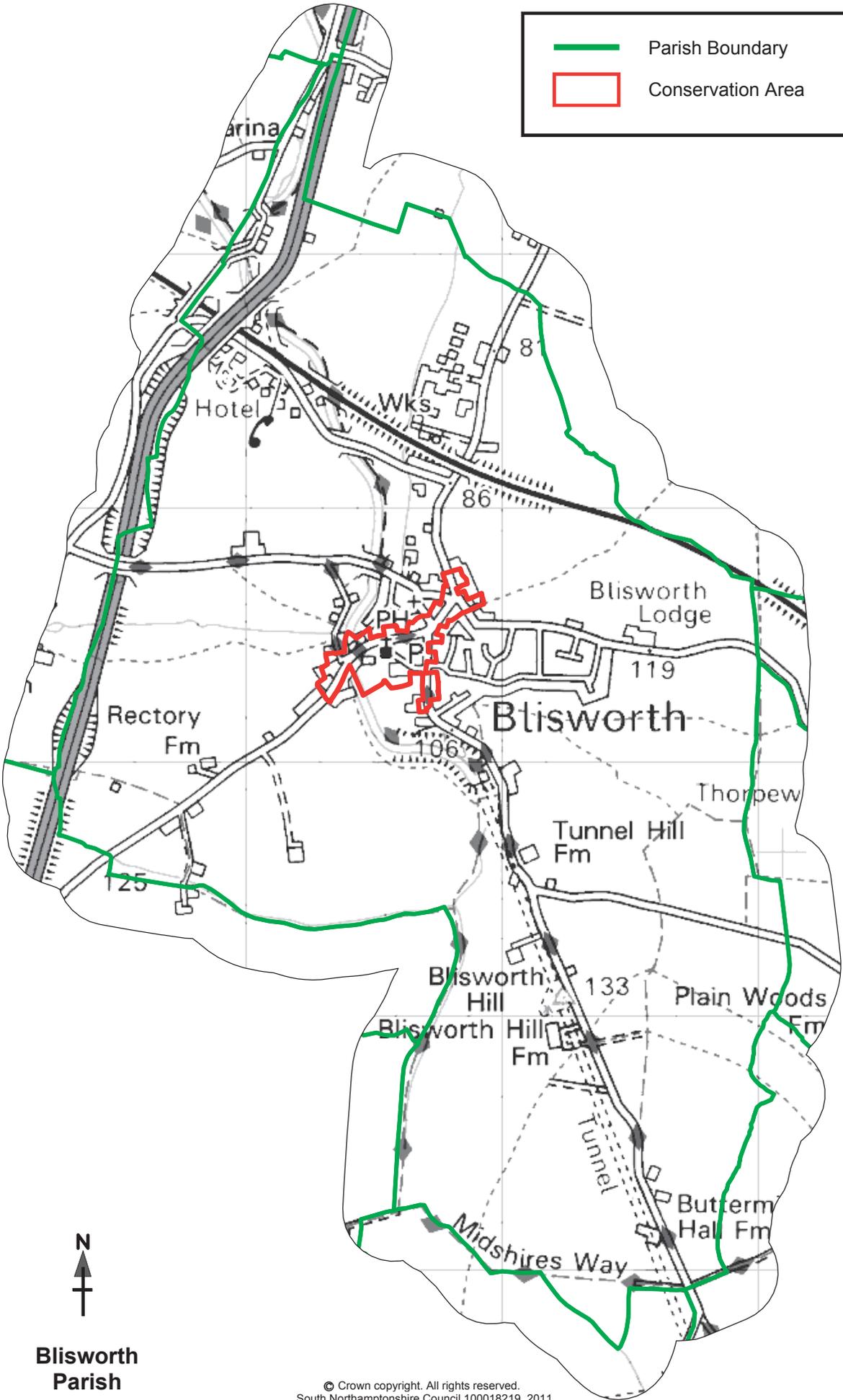


Blisworth Parish Plan



2011 - 2016

	Parish Boundary
	Conservation Area



Blisworth Parish

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Cover photograph: aerial view of Blisworth by Dick Hennessy

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000 the Government launched an initiative to parishes for the development of Parish Plans.

- A team of volunteers from Blisworth, initially led by Jan Andrews, was formed
- The team met continuously during the summer of 2009
- The outcome was the “**Have your Say Day**” held in Blisworth village hall in October 2009
- This enabled the team to collect and subsequently collate a considerable amount of information about the opinions and concerns of the community
- This formed the basis of a comprehensive questionnaire
- Every household in the parish of Blisworth received a copy

The current Action Group would like to thank all of the volunteers who gave of their valuable time to deliver and collect the questionnaire personally to 800 dwellings, often during the adverse weather conditions of January 2010.

- All individuals over the age of 11 yrs were invited to respond completely anonymously
- 600 households responded
- A wonderful response of **over 75%!**
- Many thanks to the 1214 residents who completed them
- Some questions were not answered, hence the differing number of respondents in the results
- A small Youth Survey was also conducted in September 2009
- 83 young people between the ages of 6 and 16 years completed it
- A survey of 45 businesses in Blisworth was conducted in September 2010 with a response rate of 60%

“I love living in Blisworth”

The answers to all of these surveys were collated and displayed in the village hall at the very successful “**This is What You Said Day**” in October 2010.

- Thanks from the Action Group go to everyone who attended and responded to what has been achieved so far
- This was also an opportunity for those who wished to add further comments and ideas to the project
- Copies of the complete results were available as handouts and can be downloaded from the websites:-
www.blisworthparishcouncil.org.uk or www.blisworth.org.uk

The current Action Group feel that all of the information put forward has been incorporated into the “Parish Plan” thus setting out the needs and aspirations of Blisworth residents.

- Information collated by individuals and other organisations within the village has helped to develop an Action Plan prioritising developments for the next 5 years
- You will see that some significant progress has already been made
- The plan will be kept under review, with further progress reported regularly

Every household should have a copy, as well as the Parish Council, South Northants Council and ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). It will also be available for other organisations to assist with decision making, local planning and service provision.

EVOLUTION OF THE PARISH

Blisworth has a long history of habitation – probably back to the Iron Age, being in a substantial production area for iron and only 3 miles south of the Iron Age fort on Hunsbury Hill in Northampton. The Roman occupation from 43AD to 410AD spread to the Midlands and a network of roads was created. We are only 4 miles to the north of Watling Street (now the A5) and the Roman town of Lactodorum (Towcester). Roman artefacts have been found in the parish and further searches are planned. The Anglo-Saxons named the settlement “Blidesworde” and after the Norman invasion in 1066 William the Conqueror gave it to his son William Peverel. It was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 as having land for 9 ploughs implying a population of about 120.

Medieval agriculture was practised for centuries with the cultivation of strips of land in open fields until enclosure was completed in 1815, leaving evidence of “ridge and furrow” still visible today. The manor of Blisworth, with variations of spelling, passed through several families and from 1276 – 1523 the Wakes (descendents of Hereward the Wake who led the final rebellion against William the Conqueror) had their manorial residence in Blisworth.



“Ridge and furrow”

The Parish Church dates back to the 13th century and houses the tomb of Roger Wake who endowed a “free” school in Blisworth in 1504. (The building in Stoke Road burned down in 1798 and the rebuilt school still serves as the Village Hall). Blisworth passed to the Crown in 1542 and Henry VIII incorporated it in the “Honour of Grafton” by Act of Parliament. He visited the area several times as his Grandfather Edward IV had married Elizabeth Woodville of Grafton Regis. The estate descended with the Crown until after the Civil War.



Elm Tree corner about 1920

In 1675 Charles II granted the estate to his son, Henry Fitzroy, who became the first Duke of Grafton. It was well administered and documented and several of the 77 stone houses of that time survive in the centre of the village. Blisworth was a quiet self-sufficient rural community relying on farming and its supporting trades and 3 alehouses, largely by-passed by the industrial advances occurring elsewhere.

However in 1795 it was thrust into the Industrial Revolution with the opening of the Grand Junction Canal to link London and the industrial Midlands. For some years it was the busiest inland port in the country giving access to new goods and materials including coal and slate.

The Blisworth Hill Railway was the first in the county. Horse-drawn wagons pulled goods on rails over the hill to Stoke Bruerne until the tunnel was completed in 1805. During this time Blisworth was an important coaching stop as travel on the Northampton to Oxford road and on to London increased, helped by the turnpike roads. A new coaching inn and redeveloped public house met the needs of travellers.

The Baptists who had come to Blisworth in the 1780s built an imposing chapel in 1825.



Grand (Junction) Union canal



George Freeston's sketch from an etching by George Clarke in the 1840s

The Victorian era saw the coming of the London to Birmingham railway in 1838 with its grand railway arch, designed by Robert Stephenson, at the entrance to the village. The station served all of the Northampton area and was at the top of the embankment until replaced by one in Station Road in 1845. As other lines were developed Blisworth became a railway hub, with goods yards, sidings and a PO sorting office. From 1847 a hotel and pleasure gardens (on the site now occupied by Blisworth Park) proved a popular venue for a day out from Northampton or even London.

Industry developed with new stone quarries opening and from 1852 open-cast ironstone mining changed the scenery for the next century. The population increased from 600 to over 1000 in the 50 years to 1861. The new steam roller mill built by the canal bridge in 1879 used the latest technology to grind corn into flour and traction engines changed the nature of farming.

Blisworth remained part of the estate of successive Dukes of Grafton until 1919 when the 8th Duke had to meet large death duties and increasing costs. The Grafton Sale gave many tenants the opportunity to become home owners.

Blisworth continued to modernise, services were introduced, council houses and new estates were built – especially after the opening of the M1 in 1959. By 1971 the population had reached 2000. The volume of traffic became a major problem and in 1991 the A43 bypass to Towcester restored some of the tranquillity to this thriving village for a while.

The history of Blisworth is depicted in a large Tapestry which was completed by local residents and unveiled by Sir Hereward Wake in the Chapel coffee house in 2010.

BLISWORTH TODAY

Blisworth is a fairly large village comprising about 800 dwellings with 1786 inhabitants at the census in 2001. (The results of the 2011 census should be available for the update of this Parish Plan). It is situated approximately 7kms (4.5 miles) south of Northampton on the old main road to Towcester. The parish includes a small community at the Blisworth Arm of the canal and also a park near the old station with 80 mobile homes. Several old farm premises have been converted to business parks housing 45 businesses.

The 2 main features are the Grand Union Canal forming the western boundary of the village and the West Coast Main Line railway with its grand railway arch to the north east.

The main Northampton to Oxford road, the A43, now by-passes the village.



Grand Union canal and the C19 mill



Stoneacre showing "banding" of stone C18

The historic core of the village was designated a Conservation Area by South Northants Council in July 1991 incorporating the buildings on either side of the High Street and Stoke Road. There are 41 "listed" buildings within the parish including cottages and yeomen's houses, many with characteristic "banding" of limestone and ironstone, farm buildings, the church, the current and a former public house, the railway arch and even a telephone box.

Blisworth also has:

- Parish church & Baptist church + coffee house & leisure hall
- A primary school, a children's nursery and a pre-school playgroup
- Doctors' surgery and pharmacy
- Post office / newsagent / general store / off licence
- The Royal Oak public house
- The Walnut Tree hotel and restaurant
- Village hall (the old school) + Eastfield children's play area
- Playing fields with MUGA (Multi-use games area) and football clubhouse
- Scout hut
- Boatyard and 2 marinas
- Riding centre + 2 livery stables
- 2 areas of allotments
- Several farms
- Garden nursery
- Light industrial estate including a blacksmith



Blisworth marina

Analysis of the Household questionnaires on the 600 collected surveys shows:

- Slightly more females than males 709 : 665

A good spread of ages but a higher proportion of people over 45			
Age groups	People	Age groups	People
Under 5s	57		
5 – 10	79		
11 – 15	57	5 - 24	251
16 – 17	32		
18 – 24	83		
25 – 44	259	25 - 44	259
45 – 59	300	45 - 64	478
60 – 64	178		
65 – 74	193	65 - 84	297
75 – 84	104		
over 85	32		



Old school built 1815, now the village hall

Varieties of house types	
40%	semi-detached
22%	detached
16%	bungalows
11%	terraced houses
7%	mobile homes

- Number of vehicles 990
- Number of bicycles (used weekly) 206

86% thought it very important and another 9% important that Blisworth should remain separate from Northampton and surrounding villages

593 would like to see Blisworth develop as a mixed community while 494 wanted it to stay as it is.

Background

900 people responded to the survey questions relating to the Parish Council with an additional 140 comments made by 132 respondents. Members of the public are invited to attend all Parish Council meetings and are given an opportunity to speak in 'open forum'. In comparison to other villages Blisworth Parish Council is quite well attended by a few residents regularly turning out for the meetings on the first Monday of the month. However the survey indicated that some residents have concerns about the Parish Council and the way the meetings are conducted.

Key Issues

- Many people said they did not know who the Parish Councillors were
- Several were unaware of when the Parish Council meetings are held
- Some didn't know they could contact the Parish Council or how to do this
- Several commented that 'new blood' was needed
- There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the process of co-opting new councillors as opposed to elections

The comments were sent to the Chairman and an 'open meeting' was held during the Parish Council meeting on May 10th 2010 resulting in agreement to the following action points.

- Name badges for Parish Councillors + photographs on wall
- Councillors should face the public rather than sit in rows with their backs to the public
- Members of the public who speak or ask questions at meetings should also say their names
- Dedicated Parish Council notice board
- Minutes on boards and given to the village correspondent for the *Chronicle & Echo*
- Village Directory (green booklet) needs updating every 2 years
- Green booklet given to new residents as part of welcome pack
- Dedicated Parish Council website to be established

Progress so far

- Councillors now sit in a horseshoe formation for meetings and this seems to have met with appreciation by the public
- The new enclosed board on the Village Hall has the agenda and approved minutes from the previous month displayed (copies of these are always available from the clerk)
- The Parish Council website (www.blisworthparishcouncil.org) is an excellent site and provides useful information. It also includes links to many village organizations

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Blisworth Parish Council website. The header features the council's name and a logo. A navigation menu on the left lists various sections. The main content area is divided into three columns: a descriptive paragraph about the village, a 'Noticeboard' section with meeting dates and agendas, and a list of community links such as 'Advert for Parish Clerk', 'WANTED! Parish Councillors', and 'Becoming a Parish Councillor'. A footer at the bottom provides contact information for the council.

At the 2010 May meeting the Clerk clarified the situation about whether there is an election or not. Every 4 years everyone stands down and if more than 11 people are nominated there is an election. If less than 11 people are nominated, those nominated are deemed to be elected unopposed. Following government guidelines the Parish Council is then duty bound to co-opt more members.

Co-opting

- When a vacancy occurs it must be declared ‘by an authority competent to make such a declaration’ i.e. South Northants Council (SNC)
- After the vacancy has been declared it must be publicly notified immediately in the usual manner i.e. notices posted
- If a poll is requested by ten electors (or more) a by-election takes place within 60 days of the notice of vacancy
- The poll must be asked for within 14 days of the public notification of the vacancy (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays, Christmas Eve and Maundy Thursday)
- If no poll is requested in the time (14 days) the vacancy is filled by co-option as soon as practicable
- Power to co-opt is normally passed to the Parish Council by SNC and it **MUST** co-opt if the period of vacancy has six months or more to run
- If less than six months, it may co-opt, but is not bound to do so

The Future

The responses in the survey indicate that very few people have attended a Parish Council meeting or the Annual Parish Assembly. The Parish Assembly is open to all villagers and is an opportunity for all village organisations to advertise themselves and report on the years activities.

At the time of completing this Plan nominations for Parish Councillors will already have been accepted for elections on May 5th 2011. To find out more about how the Parish Council functions and to have your say in Open Forum come to the meetings on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 in the Village Hall or at least attend the Annual Parish Assembly in May.

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Name badges for Parish Councillors	Parish Council	June 2011
Photos of Parish Councillors to be put on board in meeting room or Village Hall entrance lobby to be updated as necessary	Parish Council	June 2011 (updated as necessary)
Members of the public to be asked to introduce themselves during open forum	Parish Council	June 2011
Green Booklet updated every 2 years	Parish Council	July 2011; 2013; etc.
Greater publicity of date & time for Parish Assembly via <i>Round & About</i> , notice boards and all village organisations to encourage better attendance	Parish Council and village organisations	April / May 2011; 2012; 2013

HOUSING

Background

Blisworth has seen many housing developments of various sizes since the 1930's (see map) with the most recent of note being Ladyfield. There is very strong feeling about new homes in and around the village with most people preferring 'infill' or small developments of 10 or less dwellings.



Blisworth Housing Development

The Community Survey results indicated that people are very settled in Blisworth as they tend to stay once they have moved here. This has resulted in smaller homes being extended and fewer homes coming onto the market which are affordable to those just starting on the housing ladder. Much of the information from our survey reinforces the results of South Northants Council's (SNC's) latest Housing Needs Survey completed in June 2009.

Comments from the Community Survey

- "Flats/homes for single people"
- "More affordable housing"
- "Social housing"
- "Warden controlled accommodation"
- "Housing suitable for young adults"
- "Homes for first time buyers to encourage young families to remain in the village"

Recent changes/progress

The Parish Council now has a Planning Sub-group to monitor new applications from the earliest opportunity. This enables more informed discussion at Parish Council meetings particularly in relation to applications from developers. SNC's own housing survey results should be emphasised when developers are submitting planning applications to ensure the housing needs of residents are met. Recent events show that the Parish Council and villagers can be successful in preventing inappropriate developments. The Planning Sub-group is committed to maintaining the heritage and distinctive look of the village when considering applications from properties within, or close to, the Conservation Area.

The Future

The current government emphasis on localism suggests we will all have more influence on changes which affect our local area. Another document to supplement this Parish Plan will have to be produced by the village. A Village Design Statement (VDS) will be vital in ensuring we, as residents, have a greater say in how our community develops.

The Parish Plan will be used to provide the basis for the drawing up of our VDS, which is a practical tool whose content should be carefully considered by SNC when decisions are made relating to design and development. If the community's wishes are over-ruled by the local authority it would need to justify the decision. We could challenge such decisions using the VDS to support our objections.

The wealth of data collected in the surveys for this Parish Plan will enable the production of a comprehensive, effective VDS in the next few months.

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Planning sub-group to remain vigilant regarding planning applications through regular viewing of South Northants Council (SNC) planning website and reporting to Parish Council	Parish Council Planning Sub-group	Ongoing
Village Design Statement to be formulated using data from Community Survey	Volunteers Parish Council	Commencing July 2011 Completed March 2012

Background

Blisworth has been established as a Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) village for some time now. The current co-ordinator has worked to strengthen the liaison at district level within the organisation and with the Towcester Rural Community Police Team for the benefit of the village. Residents continually contact the village's NHW Co-ordinator to report and discuss major concerns.

As a result of villagers' anger with the threat level posed by traffic issues, a splinter group was formed from Neighbourhood Watch, instigated by the co-ordinator, to deal solely with these concerns. This group is named Blisworth Traffic Action Group (BTAG).

Ongoing issues regarding NHW and BTAG have been reported regularly through the bi-monthly Parish Council Newsletter, *Round and About*, and through reporting directly to monthly Parish Council meetings.

Blisworth Parish Council greatly appreciates and fully supports the efforts of BTAG and volunteers. The information supplied by the group is vital to raise awareness with South Northants Council (SNC) and Northampton County Council (NCC) Highways Department to achieve a safer environment for the parish.

Key Issues

- Speeding
- Parking
- Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs)



Recent changes/progress so far

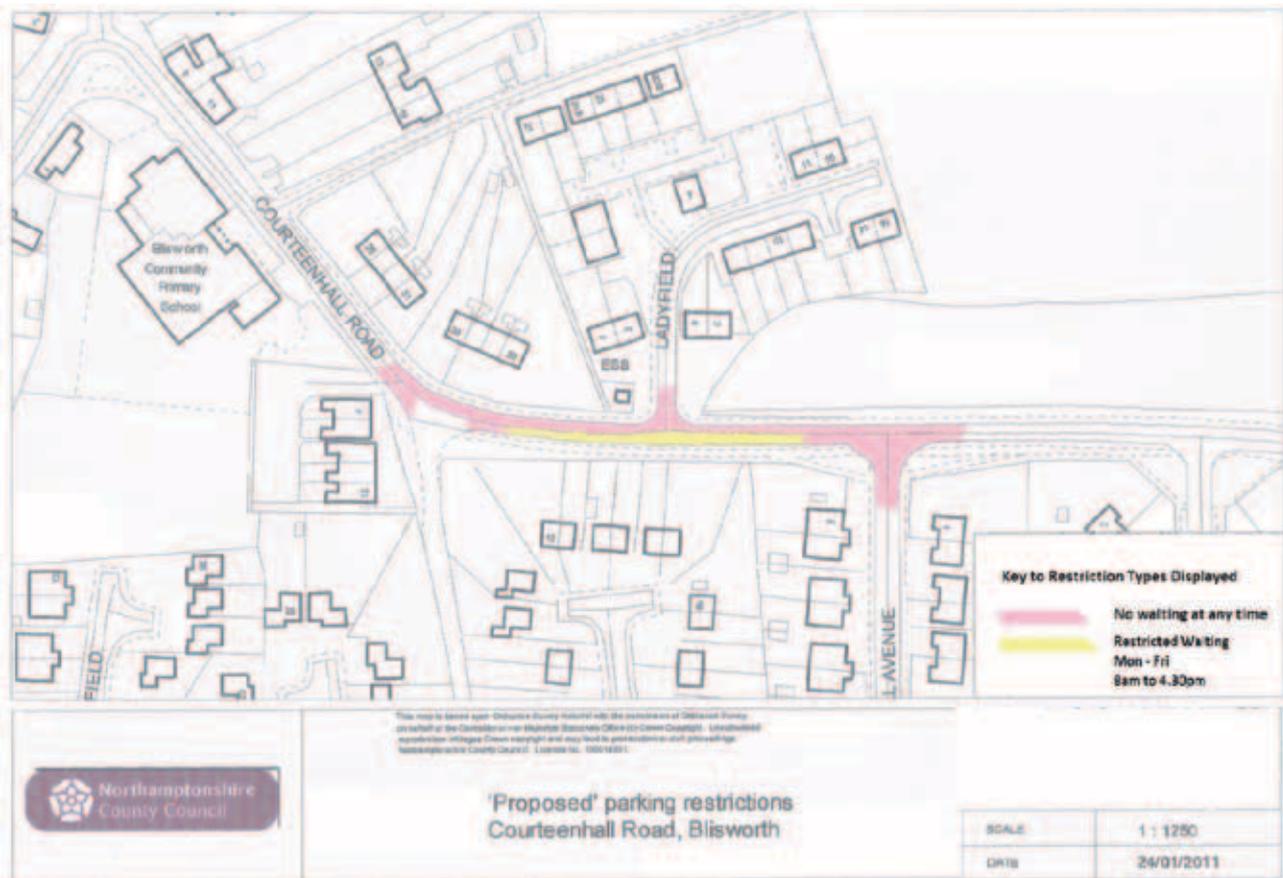
- Formation of Blisworth Traffic Action Group
- Two open meetings held in 2010
- Two walkabouts with SNC's Transport Office, our District Councillor, a Senior Traffic Engineer and a Community Liaison Officer from the NCC Highways Department
- Issues raised documented with the Transport Officer at SNC to be considered for inclusion in the County Local Traffic Plan 2012

Speeding

- In 2009 NHW Coordinator organised volunteers for Community Speedwatch training by the Police Safety Camera Team on recording equipment
- In 2009 and 2010, Blisworth volunteers recorded the highest number of speeders amongst those groups taking part in the scheme across the County
- This, together with information gathered through the traffic survey boxes installed by the Police, served to prove that Blisworth has a problem with speeding vehicles that need to be addressed
- As a direct result of Blisworth's participation in Community Speedwatch, the Police Safety Camera Van is a regular visitor to the village
- Courteenhall Road and Stoke Road have vehicle activated signs
- Towcester Road has 30mph roundel markings on the road

Parking

- BTAG arranged a site visit at school pick-up time with NCC Highways Dept Officers and the Chair of Governors of Blisworth School
- BTAG has secured a proposal by the NCC Highways Dept to put parking restrictions along Courteenhall Road from the school to Windmill Avenue
- Because of the recognised danger posed for pedestrians crossing Stoke Road for the Doctors' Surgery, BTAG has urged the Highways Dept to investigate the installation of a zebra crossing



Heavy Goods Vehicles

- BTAG initiated the latest demand for weight restriction signs placed at all of the village access points and will continue to work hard to progress this towards a successful outcome
- NCC Highways Dept made aware (via SNC's Transport Officer) of Blisworth residents' wish for enforceable weight restriction signs placed at all of the village access points
- Above proposal has full backing of Blisworth's District Councillors
- Until the weight restrictions are in place, villagers report the names of companies whose HGVs repeatedly thunder through Blisworth to the NHW coordinator who in turn writes to the offending company requesting that their drivers use the far more appropriate routes along the 'A' roads that surround Blisworth
- This approach continues to afford success with several groups of HGVs now avoiding the village



Lorry incident

The Future

- Another vehicle activated sign will shortly be erected on Towcester Road
- Further traffic surveys will be undertaken by the Police in 2011
- New village volunteers have already come forward to join the Community Speedwatch team
- At the time of going to print, other solutions such as traffic calming measures and changing road priorities on our main access roads have been put to NCC Highways Dept for consideration

Other traffic issues, such as the need for better signage from the High Street to Towcester, a safer junction to Blisworth from the A43, lowering of speed limit by the school, have been discussed at recent BTAG meetings, and passed on to the relevant agencies. Progress will be monitored.



Chapel Lane at school 'pick-up' time

Cars parked on the path are a more difficult issue to solve, as the Police don't consider a vehicle that is only partly blocking a path as a hazard. They will only act on drivers who completely block a path in this way and thus endanger other users e.g. those on mobility scooters. The only action available to individuals faced with a blocked path is to inform the Police.

BTAG meetings will become a regular feature of the village whilst residents remain concerned about traffic issues. The formation of BTAG was not as a direct result of the Community Survey, although the issues that are being addressed are reflected in the survey results.

The Parish Plan Action Group would like to express their sincere thanks to Alan Andrews for the above contribution to this document.

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Visible support for Blisworth Traffic Action Group (BTAG) by attendance at public meetings of at least 2 Parish Councillors	Parish Council	Ongoing
Support and encouragement via <i>Round and About</i> (<i>R & A</i>) for all residents joining Community Speedwatch	Parish Council	Ongoing
Parish Council liaison with relevant agencies Northampton County Council (NCC) Highways Dept, South Northants Council (SNC) etc. and BTAG as necessary	Parish Council BTAG	Ongoing

Background

Responses to the Community Survey indicated a high proportion of people (639 of 1,086) are concerned about house break-ins. Approximately one third of these respondents indicated that they have concerns about theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, (384, 356 and 344 respectively). Responses also suggest that many people (43% of 1,136 respondents) think police coverage of Blisworth is reasonable although 33% think coverage is poor.

Apart from dangers due to traffic, relatively few (230) respondents to the survey felt there are areas where they feel unsafe. These are alleyways and where there is poor lighting. Several people commented that they do not feel unsafe anywhere in Blisworth.

Crime figures from the website (northants.police.uk) consider the level of crime and anti-social behaviour in this area is low compared with the rest of England and Wales.

Figures for NN7 postal code:

Reported crime/incident	December 2010	January 2011	February 2011
Burglary	2	3	4
Anti-social behaviour	1	4	2
Robbery	0	0	0
Vehicle	0	1	0
Violent	1	0	1
Other	2	2	3



Blisworth has had a well established Neighbourhood Watch service (NHW) for several years with an enthusiastic dedicated coordinator. NHW reports are a regular feature of the parish newsletter *Round and About* and the coordinator gives updates at the monthly Parish Council meetings.

Many Blisworth residents have coded their valuables with Smartwater® (a forensic coding liquid that enables stolen goods to be traced to their owner). This is considered to act as a deterrent to thieves when they see the Smartwater® logos in the area.

Recent changes

Following restructuring in November 2010, the four Safer Community Teams (SCTs) in South Northamptonshire were merged into two to form Brackley and Towcester Town and Rural Safer Community Teams. ‘Beats’ are now known as ‘wards’ in line with councils. Villages are still covered by Police Constables (PCs) and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who also cover for colleagues’ off-duty periods. The table below shows how many villages are covered by our police.

Street Briefings is an initiative aimed at making local officers more accessible, and provide an opportunity to discuss concerns. They are advertised on the local police website: northants.police.uk or residents can contact local officers 03000 111222 (ext 3255) for information.

999 should always be used for emergencies!!!

Non-emergency incidents/crimes report immediately to:
03000 111222 (ext 3255 for information only)

For information only SCT Team box e.mail:
SCT-SouthNorthantsTowcester@northants.pnn.police.uk

Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator: Alan Andrews: 01604 858023

Ward	Town/village	PCSO	PC
Blisworth and Roade	Blisworth, Courteenhall, Roade	Tara Cooksammy	Andy Scott
Brafield and Yardley	Brafield on the Green, Castle Ashby, Chadstone, Cogenhoe, Denton, Little Houghton, Whiston, Yardley Hastings	Charlotte Johnson	Andy Scott
Hackleton	Hackleton, Horton, Piddington, Preston Deanery, Quinton	Charlotte Johnson	Andy Scott
Salcey	Ashton, Hartwell	Tara Cooksammy	Andy Scott
Tove	Alderton, Heathencote, Paulerspury, Pury End, Shutlanger, Stoke Bruerne	Tara Cooksammy	Mick Wallace

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Liaise with Police Community Support Officer to arrange talks/surgeries (Women's Institute, Come And Meet Each Other (CAMEO) Coffee House, etc.)	Parish Council, Parish Plan Action Group	May 2011, Ongoing
Continue to support Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator through <i>Round & About</i>	Parish Council,	Ongoing
Investigate feasibility of sponsorship for personal alarms and/or wind-up torches for those who feel at risk in hours of darkness	Parish Council Parish Plan Action Group	May 2011 (provide alarms/torches by winter 2011 - dependent on cost)

Background

Collected surveys show that people living in Blisworth value the rural nature of our village and the surrounding countryside and want this to be respected and protected. The canal, towpath, footpaths and bridleways are seen as an important village asset.



Candlebridge

Key Issues



- Snow clearance and the salting of roads was seen as poor by 56% of respondents
 - Gritting of pavements was seen as poor by 77% of respondents
 - 80% felt it was important to care for the canal and railway embankments and 78% wanted to see the towpath cleaned up
 - 76% felt that ensuring stone walls were maintained would improve the environment of Blisworth
 - 71% requested maps of local footpaths, 62% wanted gates, stiles and bridges repaired, 58% wanted footpaths and bridleways signposted and 53% wanted footpaths made more accessible
-
- Keeping roadside verges mown and tidy was important to 65% of respondents
 - 67% of respondents thought Blisworth should be kept clean and tidy by the installation of more bins for litter and dog waste
 - 69% wanted woodlands preserved, over 50% wanted established trees preserved and more trees planted and 60% wanted hedges kept short and tidy
 - Environmental services and the provision of water, gas and electricity are all seen as satisfactory



Note: Street Doctor can be contacted to report footpath and road problems, empty grit bins, potholes and overgrown verges etc. on: 0845 601 113 or streetdoctor@northamptonshire.gov.uk



Lockbeams opposite The Mill

Recent changes / progress so far

- Blisworth Canal Partnership is working on the development of a pocket park by the tunnel
- Blisworth Canal Partnership is hoping to secure funding to upgrade the tow path between Candle Bridge and the junction
- Blisworth Canal Partnership, with the help of British Waterways and village volunteers have installed reclaimed lockbeams as seating opposite The Mill

Comments from the Community Survey

“Generally we are a good, friendly, safe community. Please don’t let this be spoiled.”

“Blisworth is a lovely village and has beautiful scenery, wildlife etc.”

“All villagers need to care more and feel more responsible for the well being of the village.”

“Blisworth would benefit from a number of pocket parks for community use.”

“Something needs to be done about the amount of dog poo on the High Street, paths etc.”

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Roads kept open better in winter	South Northants Council (SNC), Parish Council,	Winter 2011 Ongoing
Paths to be gritted and cleared of ice and snow	Residents	Winter 2011 Ongoing
Improvements to towpath and land bordering the canal	Canal Partnership, British Waterways and Parish Council	2009 -onwards
Stone walls to be maintained	Land owners	Ongoing
Footpaths and bridleways to be kept accessible and signposted	SNC, land owners, parish path warden	Ongoing
Maps and leaflets to be available	Volunteers needed	Ongoing
Roadside verges to be kept mown and tidy	SNC and Parish Council	Summer 2011 Ongoing
More litter and dog waste bins to be installed	SNC and Parish Council	Summer 2011 as funds allow
Woodlands and single trees preserved. Hedges kept short and tidy	SNC and Parish Council and land owners	Ongoing
Consider entering The Best Village Competition which looks at all aspects of the village as a good place to live and visit	Volunteers, Parish Council, and Parish Plan Action Group	Spring 2012 Ongoing
Consider applying to The Conservation Churchyards Award Scheme to improve and make more of a feature of the old burial ground	Volunteers, Parish Council, and Parish Plan Action Group	Spring 2012 Ongoing

AMENITIES

Background

The village is fortunate to have a good range of amenities including a shop, an hotel, a pub, a plant nursery, bus services, primary school and two churches.

Collected surveys showed that all of these are valued but some aspects could be improved to meet the needs of residents.

The canal is also regarded as a real asset to the village (for more details see Environment section).

Key Issue 1 the shop/post office

- The shop and post office is used by over 70% of respondents
- Concern was expressed that the outside of the shop needs upgrading to present a more pleasing appearance
- These changes would need the agreement of the Parish Council and South Northants Council (SNC)
- Some respondents requested additional services at the post office such as car tax applications. (Unfortunately this is decided by the DVLA and cannot be implemented by the owner)
- There was considerable support from 48% of respondents for the development of a bakery/teashop/local produce shop



Blisworth Stores and Post Office

Recent changes/ progress so far

- The owner has been considering the appearance of the outside of the shop and would be happy to make improvements
- The canopies over the door and windows have been cleaned

Key Issue 2 the Public Houses

- The Royal Oak recently came under new management having been closed for a time. If it is to survive, as a business, more people in the village need to support it with their custom
- The Walnut Tree Hotel is a successful business but its position, so far from the centre of the village, limits the way villagers use it
- The Sun Moon and Stars building has now been put up for sale by SNC. Their favoured use is as a public house or restaurant.

Comments from the Community Survey

“A teashop would be excellent.”

“We need something for tourists and walkers eg. a cafe/gallery for local artists.”

“The village pub should be a centre for the community providing a place to meet and exchange news/information, get help with problems, sell local produce.”

“Renovate and re-open the Sun Moon and Stars as a cafe/museum.”

Recent changes/ progress so far



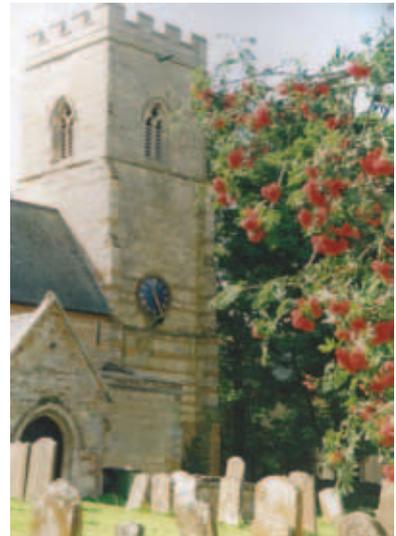
Royal Oak

- The Royal Oak has been re-painted, new signs and lighting installed, the kitchen completely renovated and cooked food is now being served regularly
- New central heating has been installed in the Hougemont barn (adjoining the pub)
- Darts and skittles and themed nights based around food are now available
- The Walnut Tree offers accommodation, bar and restaurant meals, monthly live comedy and quiz nights and regular musical events
- It is now licensed for civil ceremonies
- As we go to print no buyer has yet been found for the Sun Moon and Stars

Key Issue 3 The Churches

The Parish Church of St. John the Baptist and the Baptist Church (Chapel) are both situated in the centre of the village. They are strikingly contrasting, attractive and significant historic village buildings.

- Half the village responded to the two questions about the churches
- They said they were important to them mainly as historic buildings, for weddings and funerals and as a focal point for the community
- They would like to see the churches used more for musical events and community festivals



Parish Church



Baptist Chapel

About forty comments, most of them positive, were made about the churches.

- These were forwarded to the former Rector and the former Pastor, as information for church members
- The comments were discussed fully with the pastor and assistant pastor of the Baptist Church
- A positive letter was received from the Parochial Church Council. This is the group who make decisions on behalf of church members

Recent changes / progress

- Since the survey was completed the work of the Parish Church has continued with visiting clergy and considerable help and input from members of the congregation. The post of Rector is now being advertised nationally and interviews will be held in May
- The Baptist Church has recently appointed a new minister who will take up his duties following a service of welcome on July 2nd. The considerable additional resources in the form of halls, rooms, coffee house and kitchen, are in use seven days a week by various organisations
- Both churches will be open with a programme of events during the days of the annual canal festival in August as they were last year. This festival, organised by Blisworth Canal Partnership, was supported by 61.6% of respondents

Key issue 4 transport links

- Blisworth currently has half hourly bus services to Northampton and Towcester. One bus an hour continues via Towcester to Milton Keynes (89) and the other (88) to Silverstone. Collected surveys showed that there were no problems with this provision. However the removal of bus subsidies in Northampton County Council (NCC) 2011/2012 budget will almost certainly lead to reductions in this service. There are also two buses in the morning which serve Blisworth Park
- Towcester Area Door to Door (TADD) provides volunteer car drivers to medical appointments for those with difficulty accessing public transport
- Journeys Around South Northamptonshire (JASON) provides low cost transport for social visits for those with impaired mobility

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Investigate the possibility of selling more local produce in the village and having a tea shop open every day	Parish Council, volunteers and existing or new businesses	Summer 2011 Onwards
Support/use the public houses	Residents and friends	Ongoing
Encourage local support for our historic churches	St. John's Parochial Church Council (PCC), Baptist Church Deacons, Parish Council, volunteers and new church leaders when appointed	Ongoing
Encourage use of our churches as a focal point for the community especially during events such as the canal festival	As above with music groups and organisers of community events	Ongoing

COMMUNICATION

Background

There is already a good level of communication in the village and it has become even better recently.

Key Issues

- Village organisations and venues seem to be good at ensuring that people know what is going on
- *Round and About (R & A)* is the most effective means of communication in the village and 70.7% of respondents would like it to be available every month
- The Notice Boards are also important and many people would like a secure central board
- In addition much information is disseminated by word of mouth

Comments from the Community Survey

Most people who commented said that they wanted information via the internet
Other people mentioned, in order of importance, *Round and About*, the School and the Pub, the Post Office and the Chapel Newsletter
"I usually get information about events taking place in Blisworth on the school playground"

Recent Changes/ Progress so far

- The Parish Council has recently installed a large new secure board on the wall of the Village Hall to display Parish Council business
- In addition to the original Blisworth Online Archive, recent websites relating to the Parish Council, the Heritage Society, Blisworth Tapestry Project, Blisworth Canal Partnership and Blisworth Canal Festival and several others have become available
- A suggestion has been made that an additional alternate monthly edition of *R & A* could be produced for the Parish Council website until funding can be found for a printed copy

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Ensure <i>Round and About</i> continues to be published	Parish Council, Editor, distribution volunteers	Ongoing
Explore feasibility of a monthly issue of <i>Round and About</i> , costs, contributors and delivery team	As above, Parish Plan Action Group, volunteers	Monthly by January 2012 (dependent on cost)
Identify funding for an additional secure central notice board and arrange installation (using local carpenter/blacksmith if possible) Approach local businesses for sponsorship	Parish Council and Parish Plan Action Group	Installed by summer 2012

SPORT AND LEISURE

Background

Blisworth has a wide range of leisure activities and awareness of them seems to be high. Clubs and activities include:

- Women's Institute and Mothers' Club
- Seniors' luncheon club
- Coffee house and CAMEO group (Come And Meet Each Other)
- Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers and Guides
- Health walks and jogging
- Mobile library and Bookworms group
- Heritage society
- Bellringing



Chapel coffee house & tapestry



Short mat bowling in the village hall

- Short mat bowls
- Tapestry and sewing group
- Arts and crafts group
- Dancing classes
- Morris dancing
- Dog training classes
- Allotments
- Football
- Horse riding and pony club
- Boat hire
- Live entertainment – music, jam sessions and jazz, comedy

Key Issues

Analysis of the questionnaire showed		
Views on social facilities for	good or reasonable	poor
Up to 16 yr olds	220	365
17 – 25 yr olds	136	388
26 – 60 yr olds	352	180
Over 60 yr olds	384	144
Disabled	133	266

New clubs and activities requested included			
Keep fit	295	computer classes	223
Badminton	209	gardening group	199
Yoga	205	seniors' group	164
Tennis	152	play reading	85
Canoeing	142	choir	75
Outdoor bowls	138		
Cycling	121		
Snooker/pool	121		
Cricket	98		
Skittles	66		

- 350 considered we need improved facilities in the Village Hall
- 278 wanted a public toilet
- 118 expressed difficulties using the access road to the Playing Field
- 111 thought the parking at village venues inconvenient
- 97 were worried about personal safety

Recent changes and progress

- A comprehensive list of all the activities in Blisworth and contact telephone numbers is now displayed on the new Parish Council notice board on the wall of the Village Hall and included on its website

These new groups have been started as a direct result of initiatives taken by the Parish Plan Action Group

Yoga	Pilates
Bridge club	Gardening group
Play reading	Film club
Adult computer classes in the school computer suite	



Pilates class in the village hall

- The village hall has new flooring and new staging. A portable ramp for the rear entrance has been made to provide easier access for wheelchairs
- New activities have been introduced at the Royal Oak public house. Regular darts and skittles evenings, themed nights, Mums and Tots group and music performances are provided
- The Blisworth Scouts now have planning permission and substantial funds to start building new scout premises in the spring. They hope to start a youth club with an outdoor area and may have a bike track. The Scouts are keen to share their facilities with the wider community for other purposes, and courses, clubs and workshops will be possible

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Display a current list of all clubs and activities available in Blisworth with contact numbers	Parish Plan Action Group Parish council	Update as necessary
Support the Scouts in fund raising and building their new premises. Also in providing new clubs and facilities	Whole village	Ongoing
Support the activities being organised for the village	Whole village	Ongoing
Encourage more improvements to the Village Hall as required by users	Village Hall & Playing Fields Association	Ongoing
Ideas for new groups or activities to be advertised in <i>Round & About</i> and suitable volunteers encouraged to come forward	Whole village	Ongoing

YOUNG BLISWORTH

Background

- Much regeneration of the play areas has recently been achieved with the new equipment at Eastfield Play Park and the Multi-Use-Games-Area (MUGA), new roundabout and picnic benches at the Playing Field. A pod for the teenagers to use as a meeting place has also been erected near the football clubhouse
- The primary school has breakfast, after school and holiday clubs
- A pre-school playgroup is held in the village hall and there is a private children's day nursery
- The Scout groups and Guides are very active and provide activities and training for boys and girls from 6 to 18
- The Parish Church has a monthly children's club
- The football club has a junior section and a girls' team
- Classes are held in ballet, tap and modern dancing
- There is a pony club at the riding stables
- South Northants Council runs Play Ranger schemes in the village at times

Survey results			
Analysis of the 600 collected surveys shows that the 1374 residents of all ages include:		Number of children under 16 who attend the following schools etc:	
Under 5	57	Pre-school playgroup	11
5 – 10	79	Day nursery	7
11 – 15	57	Primary school	71
16 – 17	32	Secondary school	54
Total under 16	193	Special needs	4
		Other	16



The Pod for the teenagers at the Playing Field

Key issues

- Social facilities for up to 16s were rated good or reasonable by 220 but poor by 365
- 615 people favoured a youth club / café
- 465 supported the new scout hut
- 460 thought the regeneration of the play area at Eastfield should continue
- 458 wanted children's holiday workshops
- 376 hoped the regeneration of the football club area would continue

Youth survey and results

Survey forms were distributed at the launch of the MUGA (Multi-Use-Games-Area) in September 2009 to find out what the young people of Blisworth felt would make the village a better place for everyone. A total of 83 forms were completed over the following few weeks.

Ages ranged from 6 to 16 with the majority being between 9 and 11.



The MUGA and equipment at the Playing Field

Preferred equipment	
Off road bike track	48
Youth club/café	39
More play equipment at playing field	40
More play equipment at Eastfield	38
Said they would attend a holiday club and would prefer: sporting activities, computer games, drawing and painting or singing and dancing	47



Children's' play equipment at Eastfield Play Park

Recent changes and progress

- A "Mums and Tots" group now meets weekly in the Royal Oak barn
- Planning permission has been granted for a new Scout Hut and considerable funds have been raised. Building should begin in Spring 2011

Comments from the Youth Survey

"I like it very much – the canal, the football club, the people and the place."
 ".. because you can go for lovely walks"
 "Why is it only 12s and under at Eastfield?"
 "... somewhere to sit with my mates like a hut at Eastfield park"

Action	Person or group	Timescale
Support the Scouts in fund raising and building their new premises which will also provide a Youth Club and other facilities	Whole village	Ongoing
Encourage provision of more play equipment at the playing field	Village Hall & Playing Fields Association	As funds allow
Continue improvements at the Eastfield Play Park	Parish Council	As funds allow

BUSINESSES

Background

Businesses provide valuable amenities and can be an integral part of village life. Blisworth has three sizeable business parks on the outskirts of the village on Courteenhall Road, Northampton Road and Stoke Road. In September 2010 a questionnaire was delivered to all businesses to complete the data collection for the Parish Plan. There was a very good response with a 60% return of completed questionnaires. As with the residents' surveys the information was collected anonymously and will not be used for commercial reasons. The information should be used to enable mutual benefits for the parish and the businesses.

- 89.3% of employees use the village shop/post office
- 46.4% of employees use the pubs/hotel
- The responses indicate that currently few of the employees at the business parks actually live in the parish of Blisworth
- 21.4% said that affordable housing for employees would enable them to employ more locally based staff and/or develop their business
- 67.9% of respondents said they would advertise job vacancies on a dedicated vacancy board in the village
- In the community survey 354 residents said they would find a job vacancy board in the village very useful
- 39.3% of respondents to the business survey said they would be prepared, in principle, to sponsor a project for the benefit of the village

An undesirable effect of the business parks, due to their outlying position, is an inevitable increase in traffic through the village. We need to work with the businesses to try to reduce the adverse effects and achieve some mutual benefit e.g. car-share schemes.

Action	Responsible person or group	Timescale
Deliver some copies of <i>Round & About</i> to business parks to encourage closer relationship between the business and village residents/events Approach businesses to advertise village amenities and events e.g. Art Show, Canal Festival etc.	Volunteers, Parish Council, Parish Plan Action Group	Outlying business involvement with village events by Summer 2012 Ongoing
Approach businesses for sponsorship of central notice board to display job vacancies	Parish Plan Action Group	Sponsorship agreed by April 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to thank all the volunteers who gave their valuable time to deliver and collect the questionnaires and who will deliver the final Parish Plan to every household. Thanks also to the patient proof readers and everyone else who assisted us.

The Parish Plan Action Group are grateful for the activities of other organisations who have contributed to this plan. We appreciate the fact that, over the years, a large number of people have contributed enormously to the well-being and development of this vibrant village.

The Action Plans within this document have been endorsed by Blisworth Parish Council.

Thanks are due to South Northants Council for supplying the official maps of Blisworth village and the parish.

Photographs are by the Parish Plan Action Group or reproduced with the kind permission of the owners where they could be traced:

Paul Chapman
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Robin Freeston for George Freeston's pictures

The current Parish Plan Action Group volunteers are: - Chairperson Pat Masterman
The team: Beryl Andrews, Diana Burgoyne, Margarete Field, Mason Masterman, Ann North, Linda Pusey and Sarah Sykes.

No responsibility can be accepted for any errors or omissions in this document.



“Blisworth”

*Blisworth is where we like to be,
out in the fresh air and country.
Away from all the city noise,
walking in the lovely scenery.
Although it isn't very big
it is full of History.
There's lots of room to play and shout
lots of room to run about
Blisworth is the place to be.*

Written by Blisworth Community Primary School Pupils – early 1990's.



Blisworth Parish Plan

2011 - 2016