

# Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone Research Report



## **Authors**

Louise Francis, Mapping for Change  
Hannah Stockwell, Mapping for Change  
Maria Alonso, Mapping for Change

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## Foreword

People Zones is an initiative designed and funded by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner to build on the positivity and skills of communities. The Police & Crime Commissioner believes that communities play a vital role in creating safe and cohesive neighbourhoods and are well placed to understand and address local issues of concern. The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner is committed to supporting People Zones with a dedicated team working with our communities and partners. This research report will be key to driving forward connections and continuing to build on the community spirit in Thringstone and Whitwick.

## Executive Summary

The People Zones Vision is to grow safer communities by building on strengths, creating connections and empowering everyone to play a role. Adopting an Asset Based Community Development approach based on the communities' strengths and potentials is seen as key to maximising the impact and sustainability of People Zones. To underpin this, Mapping for Change (MfC), a social enterprise part-owned by University College London, conducted research within Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone to uncover existing assets, identify current challenges, and gain insights into the community's aspirations. The findings in this report will inform the development of the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone and ensure that support is targeted to meet the priorities of the residents and the networks of organisations that make up the community and support the community.

A mixed methods approach was adopted to conduct the research over three months which included surveys, workshops, meetings, pop-up events and semi-structured interviews.

The overall sentiment of community members and leaders is that Thringstone and Whitwick is blessed with its rural location, surrounded by nature and great walking routes. The people are friendly and there is a good community spirit. However, there are some divisions within the community, both geographically and socially. Poor public transport and a lack of activities for young people, especially teenagers are the biggest areas of concern that need to be addressed. The digital divide is a concern in the People Zone and care must be taken not to exclude residents who do not have access to the internet.

In general, the community feels safe around the People Zone, however, the lack of street lighting in some areas causes some people to feel unsafe at night. It was emphasised that anti-social behaviour was more of a concern than crime or fear of personal safety.

The lack of youth activities was considered one of the main reasons behind the antisocial behaviour of some young people, as existing activities i.e. Scouts and sports failed to engage those who were harder to reach. A relaxed space, a youth café, where young people could feel welcome and safe could be established with a support worker on hand to help with any issues that the young people could be facing.

A joined-up approach with all local organisations working together could achieve a great result, harnessing the abundance of energy and enthusiasm. A timetable of free activities for young people across both villages would help to share resources, encourage collaboration and integration among the residents and workers within the People Zone.

Over half of the people, when asked, said that they would be happy to volunteer and contribute to the community. However, this would need coordinating as people need to be invited and encouraged, which is a job in itself. Some volunteer activities already exist,



such as litter picking, but this could be extended to running a volunteer taxi service and a befriending project to reduce the severe impact of the loss of bus services to the area.

Finally, a lack of trust in the police was expressed but could be addressed by an increased presence, beat surgeries and a greater level of communication – again not only restricted to online channels.

## Introduction

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC) overall vision for People Zones is: To grow safer communities by building on strengths, creating connections and empowering everyone to play a role.

People Zones is an initiative that was created by the OPCC in 2018. People Zones are areas in Leicestershire and Rutland which have been identified through crime, public health and census data to benefit from extra direct and financial support from the OPCC. Although launched in 2018, upon review, it was agreed that the People Zones would be much more likely to achieve a greater and more sustainable impact if it was to take the approach of asset-based community development (ABCD). ABCD aims to build on existing assets and address local needs through community driven efforts. To ensure the direction and outputs would benefit the community, baseline research was needed to uncover some of these assets and underpin the future strategy of the People Zones. Mapping for Change was commissioned, via a tendering process, to undertake this research.

Mapping for Change (MfC) is a social enterprise part-owned by University College London specialising in community and stakeholder engagement. MfC aims to empower individuals and communities to make a difference to their local area through the use of mapping and geographical information to co-design solutions. With over fifteen years' experience providing bespoke solutions to public, private and third sector organisations, they have delivered multiple projects on environmental and social issues, across the UK and further afield.

## Scope of Work

This report will focus solely on the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone (Figure 1). Further reports are available for the two other People Zones – Bell Foundry and New Parks as part of this six-month research project.

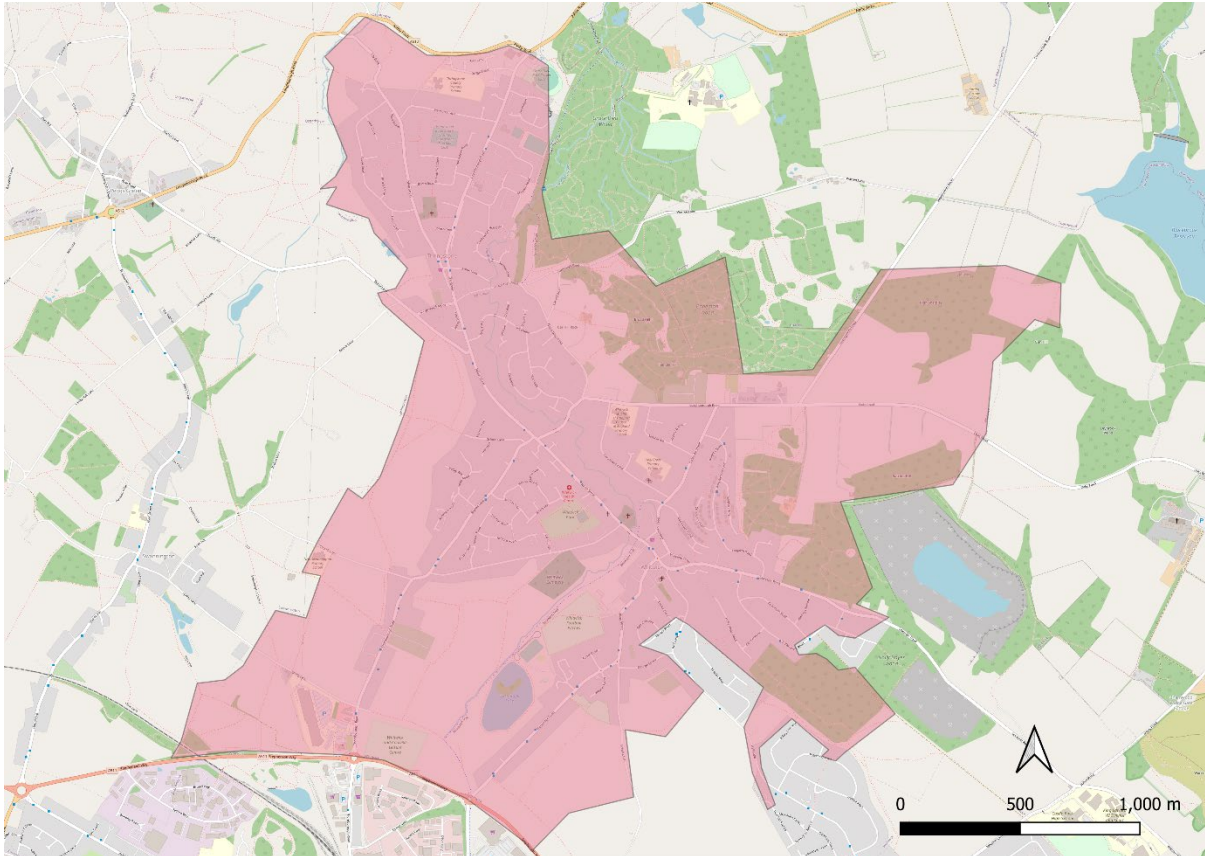


Figure 1 The total area of the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone highlighted in pink

The Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone, brings together the two neighbouring villages of Thringstone and Whitwick situated in north-west Leicestershire. In the 2021 census the combined population of Thringstone and Whitwick was 11,119. The villages are largely residential against a rural backdrop and are steeped in history. The population of Thringstone in particular increased rapidly in the 1960s as miners were transferred from Scotland and north-east England to work in the local colliery. The People Zone falls under the remit of North West Leicestershire District Council and Whitwick also has its own Parish Council.

The objective of the research was to engage the Thringstone and Whitwick community to uncover and map existing assets; identify the main challenges that residents and service providers face; and co-develop ideas to address these challenges. To be as inclusive and thorough as possible, a mixed methods approach was taken, including surveys, workshops, pop-up events, and interviews.



An online asset map was built from the findings of this research which will continue as a living resource for the community to contribute to and use as an information source.

The findings in this report will inform the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone development and direction. A Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone Steering Group will be set up as a final element of the research to ensure the momentum and awareness generated during the engagement and research is maintained and built upon. Moving forward it is expected that the steering group, which comprises representatives of the community and local support organisations, will help to drive the programme forward for the benefit of the community and offer support to local residents who would like to initiate community led projects. The Steering Group will also be responsible for promoting and moderating the online asset map. The initial meeting will be held in January 2023 to review the findings of this report, establish the Terms of Reference for the group, agree on a mission and roadmap for the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone and introduce the online Community Asset Map.



## Approach

Mapping for Change began by conducting a thorough stakeholder mapping exercise. A list of stakeholders was initially provided by the OPCC and was supplemented with desktop research, on the ground observations, conversations with the community, mentions on surveys, and information from a previous asset mapping exercise undertaken by Active Together.

Various research methods were employed to uncover the assets, challenges and opportunities in the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone. These included desk-based research, on-the-ground familiarisation, meetings with local organisations, paper and online surveys, pop-up sessions, a workshop with community leaders, an informal workshop with residents, and five in-depth semi-structured interviews with community leaders and support providers.

Finding the people to engage with was the first step of the research process. To hear the views of as much of the community as possible and from the different sub-communities, Mapping for Change reached out to North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) networks, the recently formed *People Zone Action Group* and local organisations in the neighbourhood identified through the stakeholder research. This provided a good starting point as it offered opportunities to distribute and complete surveys, hold workshops and promote the research to a wider demographic.

Other ways of promoting the surveys included online promotion via the social media of local groups and the OPCC, posts on Neighbourhood Link; posters (Image 1) in prominent positions around the neighbourhood such as the local Co-op Food noticeboard.

To gain deeper insights, a workshop was organised in November at the Thringstone Miners Social Centre with NWLDC representatives, community leaders and local representatives to build on the information already gathered. The session began with an introduction to People Zones and a summary of what research had been carried out so far. A facilitated roundtable discussion was held to deep dive into some of the most pressing issues faced by the representatives. Participants were then invited to add local organisations, services and groups to a Stakeholder Wall under eight different categories



Image 1 Poster advertising residents' survey



of support. Finally, the workshop concluded with an exercise called Future Newspaper in which participants worked in pairs to imagine a positive future for Thringstone and Whitwick and then add their headlines of potential news stories to a newspaper template set 10 years in the future.

To supplement the survey data and gather more views, three informal workshops/pop-ups were organised to engage local residents. The locations were selected to capitalise on people already attending the activities there. i.e. The Charles Booth Centre and St Andrews Church both hold regular coffee mornings which are often well attended, and Coalville Rugby Club has evening training sessions for the different age groups which usually attracts a lot of members and their families.

The first workshop was held at The Charles Booth Centre during the Remembrance Day Coffee Morning. This workshop took a relaxed and informal approach. It consisted of talking to guests in turn to introduce People Zones and ask them what they liked about the area, what they didn't like and also what they would like to see happen to improve their community. Notes were taken during each conversation.

A pop-up session was held a month later in December at St Andrews Church Coffee Morning. Again, the same informal and relaxed approach was used but with fewer guests, a group conversation was more appropriate to discuss ideas and perceptions of the area.

The second pop-up session was arranged at Coalville Rugby Club in December however, unfortunately due to the frozen ground; training was cancelled and therefore so was the pop-up.

In depth interviews were conducted online with five community representatives. The interviewees were selected to cover a range of community roles and perspectives, from community policing to service providers. Interviewees were able to draw from their years of first-hand experience interacting and working with different residents in the People Zone in their various roles. Each interview asked the same 13 questions (Appendix A) in a semi-structured manner to gather deeper insights into the issues and assets already identified by the other research methods. The interviews were recorded, and answers were transcribed and compared for commonalities and variations. All interviewees gave their free, prior, informed consent to take part and for their anonymised answers to be used for research and open publication.

## Final Stakeholder map

The results of the stakeholder identification research can be seen in Figure 2 which shows the main stakeholders of Thringstone and Whitwick.

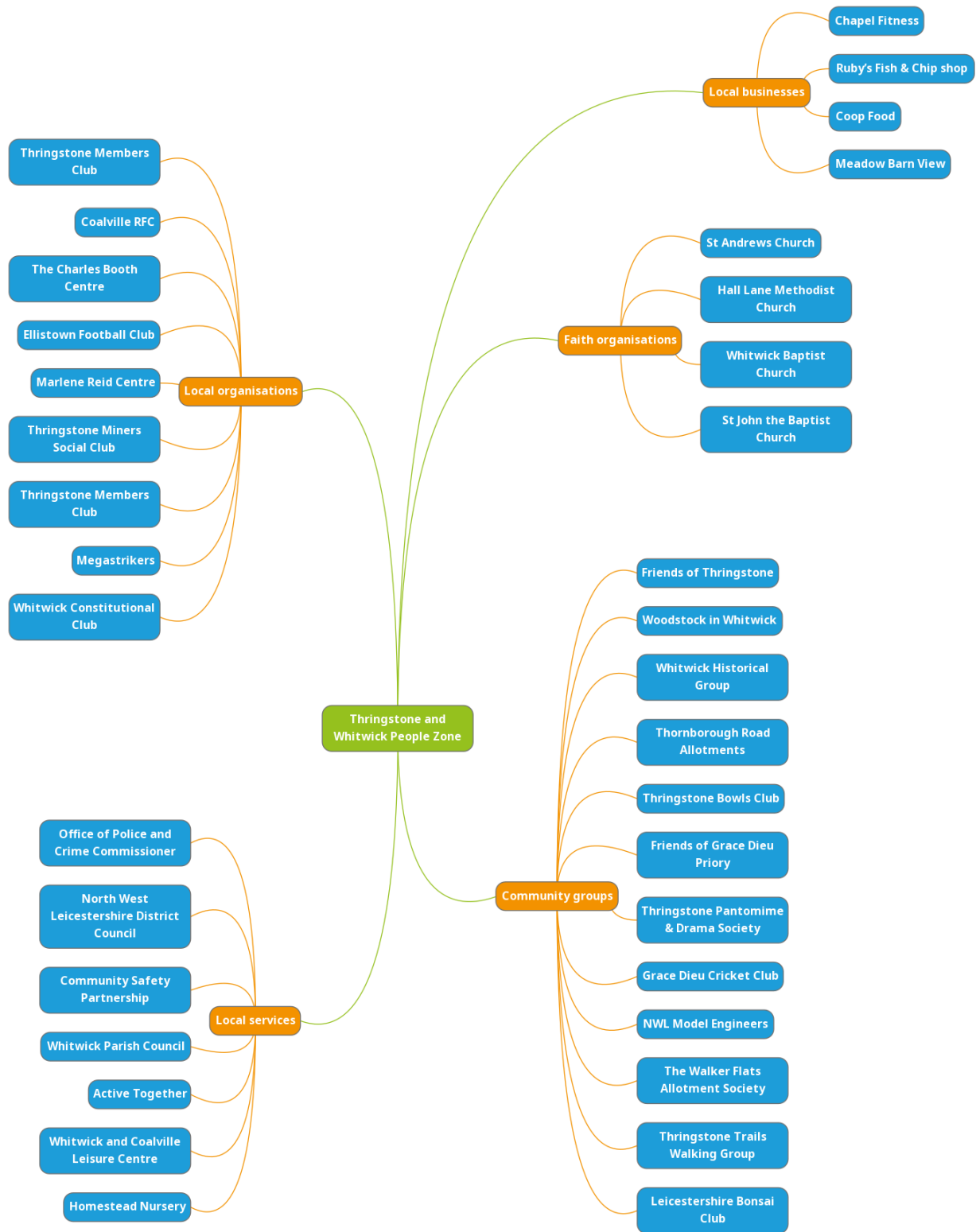


Figure 2 Stakeholder Map for Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone

## Survey Responses

The survey was available to complete both online and offline. In total 154 surveys were completed, 108 respondents lived in the People Zone, 11 worked in the People Zone, 17 lived and worked in the People Zone and 18 were visiting. Not every respondent answered every question in the survey and so numbers vary throughout the results.

To encourage the completion of the surveys, promotion via local organisations was incentivised by a £1 donation to the organisation nominated on each form. The breakdown of this incentivisation is as follows (Table 1).

Table 1 List of organisations incentivised to promote the survey with the tally of nominations each

Organisation	Number of surveys completed
Coalville Rugby Club	31
Friends of Thringstone	30
Woodstock in Whitwick	9
The Charles Booth Centre	9
Whitwick Historical Group	4
Thringstone: St Andrew	4
Hall Lane Methodist Church	2
Thringstone Miners Social Centre	2
Whitwick Baptist Church	2
Thringstone Members Club	1
Thringstone Trails	1
St John the Baptist Church	1
Marlene Reid Centre	1
Whitwick Bowls Club	1
None	12

An optional section of the survey collected data on the protected characteristics of the respondent to assess whether the sample surveyed represented the demographics of the area and to identify any differences in responses between the different demographic groups. Figures 3 to 8 present the detailed breakdowns and can be summarised as follows:

- A spread across all age groups, with almost three quarters (73%) falling between 25 and 64 and the younger groups being much less represented at only 7% under 25 years old.
- 81% of respondents did not report having a disability.
- The majority (92%) of responders were White, 7% was split between Black, Mixed Heritage, Chinese and Other, and the remaining 1% did not answer. According to the local demographic statistics (UK census data 2021), 96.3% of people living in Thringstone were of White ethnicity, 1.4% Mixed Heritage, 1.1% Asian, 0.7% Other and 0.4% Black. In Whitwick the respective figures were similar: 97.8% White, 0.9%



Mixed Heritage, 0.7% Asian, 0.4% Other, 0.2% Black. The sample of survey responders therefore is slightly over-representing non-White participants, however, of this 7%, 3% do not live in the area and so their responses will not be analysed for every question, as per clarifications in the text below.

- Christianity is the most represented religion with 46%, followed by 38% in total identifying as Atheist, agnostic or no religion and 12% of the respondents did not specify a religion. No other religion was selected by more than 2% of respondents. The main religious make up of Thringstone and Whitwick respectively is 53.2% and 56.6% Christian, 45.3% and 41.8% No religion (UK Census Data 2021) and so despite, the survey being distributed via the various churches, Christianity is slightly under-represented.
- The majority of responders described themselves as heterosexual (81%). One respondent described themselves as gay male, eight as gay female/lesbian and nine as bisexual, totalling 12% which is higher than the national average of 3.1% of the population identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual in 2020<sup>1</sup>. Seven percent preferred not to answer or self-describe.
- The gender split was biased with 67% of respondents identifying as female compared to 29% male. Two people identified as non-binary and the remainder preferred not to answer or self-describe. According to the 2021 census, the overall gender breakdown of Thringstone and Whitwick was approximately 51% female and 49% male.

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<sup>1</sup> (Office of National Statistics online report accessed October 2022 using data from the Annual Population Survey (APS))



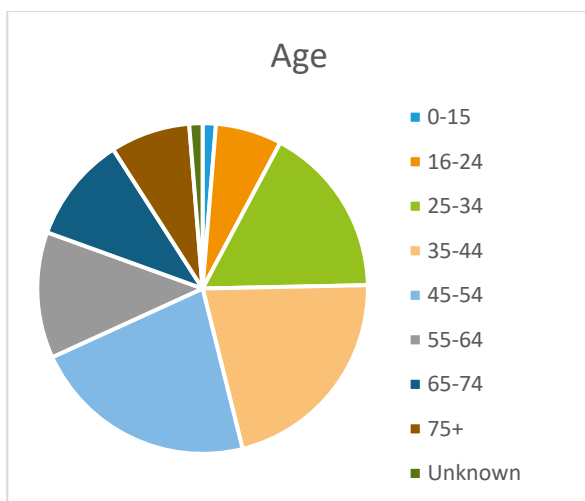


Figure 3 Age breakdown of respondents

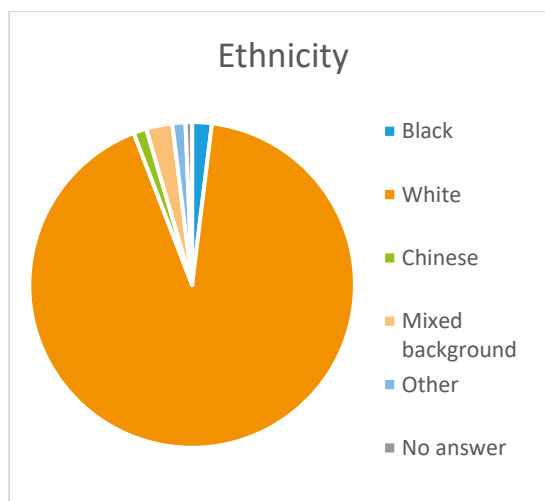


Figure 4 Ethnic breakdown of respondents

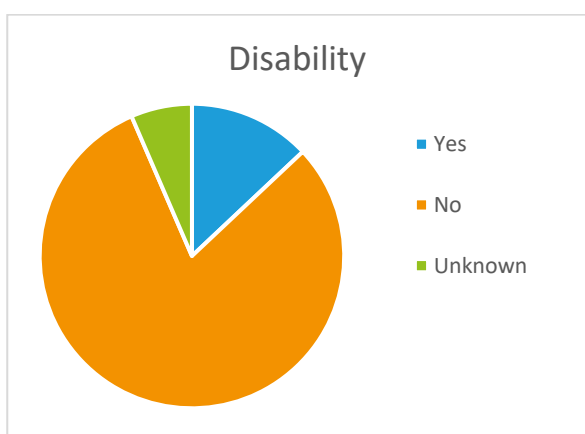


Figure 5 Disability breakdown of respondents

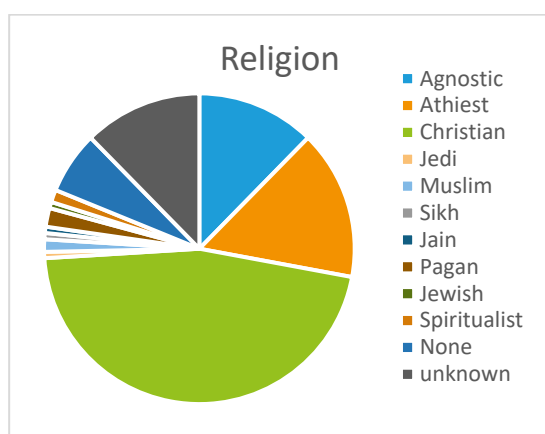


Figure 6 Religious breakdown of respondents

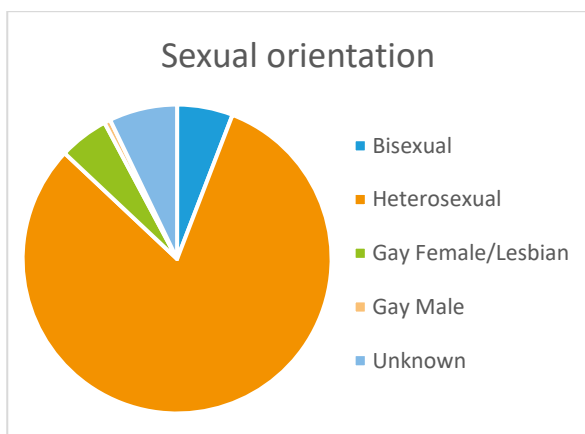


Figure 7 Sexual orientation of respondents

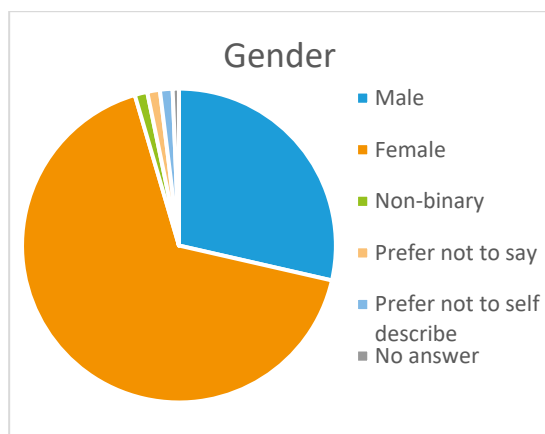


Figure 8 Gender breakdown of respondents

For each of the questions in the survey, the data was analysed against the demographic data to identify any differences in responses between the groups. Due to the low representation of ethnicities other than white, not all groups were included in every analysis as the sample size was too small to discount the possibility of the differences being down to an individual level.



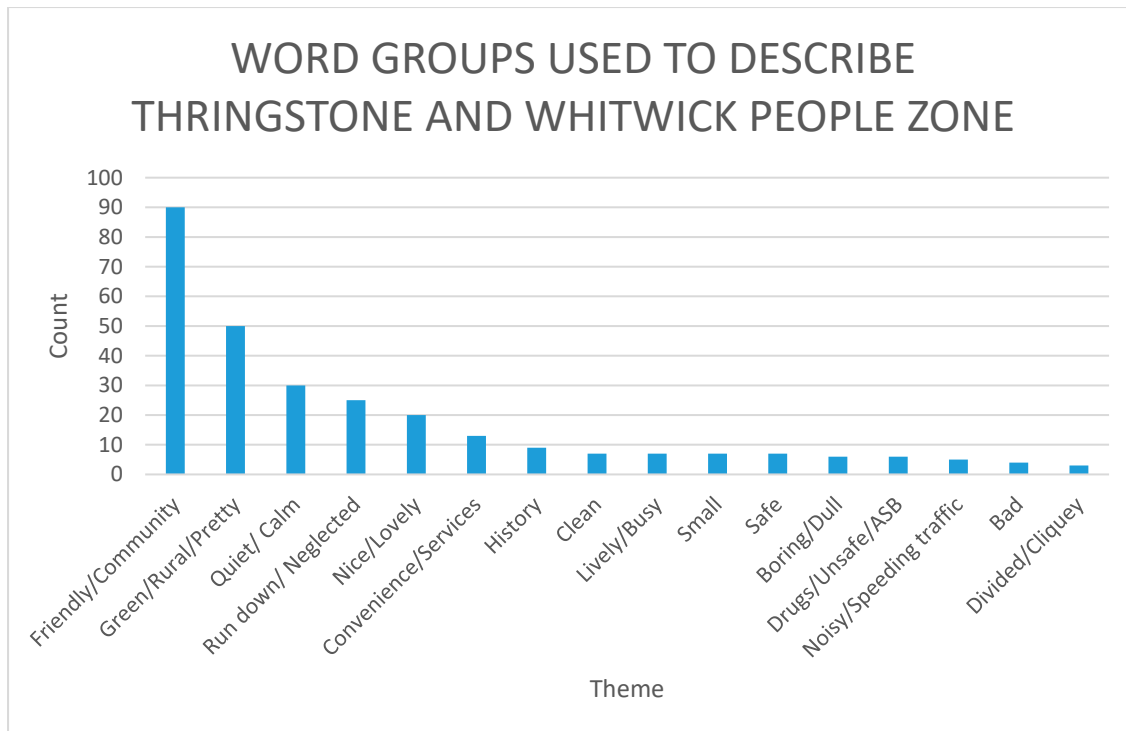


Figure 10 Chart of the responses of the words used to describe Thringstone and Whitwick, grouped into themes

The respondents were asked what they liked most and least about living in the area, again, as free text answers the responses were grouped into themes (Figure 11 and Figure 12 respectively). The responses from those who were visiting or only working in the area were removed before analysis so as not to detract from lived experience of residents.

The most liked aspect across the respondents was the location, being close to larger towns and connected well via road transport, whilst being able to enjoy the peaceful village life and woodland walks.

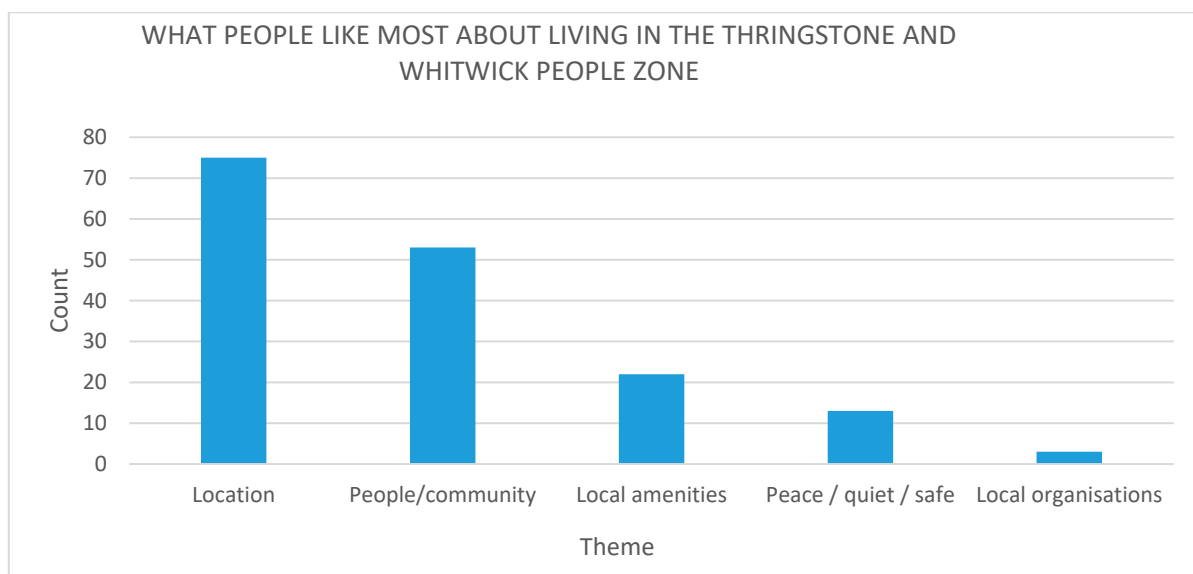


Figure 11 Chart of what respondents liked most about living in Thringstone and Whitwick, grouped into themes



When asked what they liked least about the area, the greatest concern for the majority was crime and antisocial behaviour, followed by speeding traffic / dangerous driving and lack of amenities such as shops, cafes and play areas. Crime and antisocial behaviour were quoted proportionately more by the 65–74-year-old age group and the 55–64-year-old group was least likely to consider traffic as the biggest issue. Several respondents had concerns over the expansion of the area that could change its ‘village feel’ and new residents being re-housed in the area who they feared brought problems with behaviour and drug use with them. There were also some respondents who specifically highlighted young people as being the cause of antisocial behaviour, for example:

*“A lot [of] kids can be on the streets and wrecking nice places”*

*“Youths with nothing to do, causing damage to public areas, damaging local football ground and setting fires in the woods.”*

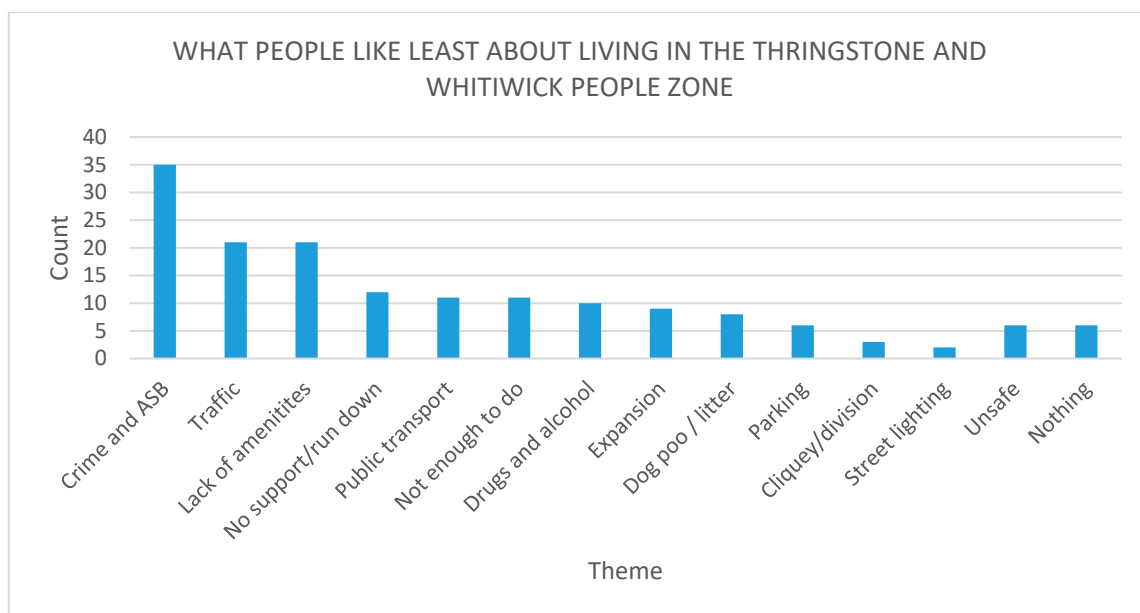


Figure 12 Chart of what respondents liked least about living in Thringstone and Whitwick, grouped into themes

The survey asked respondents to select the local organisations, from a predefined list, that they used or visited for support. These are shown in Table 2, ordered by popularity, and split between the different genders and whether the visitors have a disability.

Proportionately more females than males said that they access religious organisations whereas proportionately more males than females access hobby related organisations such as history and model engineers.

Several organisations were manually added under the ‘other’ option as follows: Thringstone Womens Institute (WI), Whitwick Quilting Group, Whitwick U3A, Neighbourhood Watch, Whitwick Scouts Group, Thringstone Trails Walking Group,



Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre, Whitwick Park, Hermitage Lake and “WTTA” for which no information could be found to identify the organisation online. The data analysis included those who were visiting or working in the area to gain a fuller picture of the use of local services.

Overall, the mean average of organisations visited was 2.25 per respondent. There were 24 respondents who lived in the People Zone who said that they did not access or visit any of the organisations/services. Of the 47 people who selected Coalville Rugby Club, 29 did not select any other services which could suggest that the organisation attracts a wider range of people and those who might not otherwise engage in community activities. No other organisation had such a large proportion of visitors who did not select at least one other organisation.

*Table 2 The local organisations that respondents visit for support split by gender and disability*

	Total	Gender				Disability		
		Female	Male	Non-binary	Unknown	Yes	No	Unknown
<b>The Charles Booth Centre</b>	63	43	18	0	2	12	46	5
<b>Coalville Rugby Club</b>	47	33	10	2	2	7	37	3
<b>Friends of Thringstone</b>	38	25	12	0	1	8	28	2
<b>Woodstock in Whitwick</b>	32	21	11	0	0	4	27	1
<b>Friends of Grace Dieu Priory</b>	30	18	10	0	2	5	22	3
<b>Thringstone Members Club</b>	23	17	5	0	1	2	18	3
<b>Thringstone Miners Social Centre</b>	17	13	2	0	2	3	12	2
<b>Whitwick Historical Group</b>	18	11	7	0	0	8	10	0
<b>Thringstone: St Andrew</b>	17	13	3	0	1	4	11	2
<b>St John the Baptist Church</b>	12	10	2	0	0	2	10	0
<b>Hall Lane Methodist Church</b>	10	8	1	0	1	3	7	0
<b>NWL Model Engineers</b>	7	3	4	0	0	0	7	0
<b>Grace Dieu Cricket Club</b>	6	3	3	0	0	2	4	0
<b>Whitwick Methodist Church</b>	6	4	2	0	0	1	5	0
<b>Whitwick Baptist Church</b>	5	4	1	0	0	1	4	0
<b>Thringstone Bowls Club</b>	3	1	2	0	0	1	2	0



None	28	21	7	0	0		3	24	1
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Respondents were asked if they ever ask other members of the community for support, such as help with their shopping or emotional support. Using the answers from those living in the area only, 31% of respondents said they did. However, when asked if they ever offered informal support to members of the community, including dog walking, child minding etc, 47% said they did. 37% of respondents said that they volunteered or contributed to more formally organised activities and well over half (60%) said they would like more opportunities to volunteer, which was seen across genders and ages although some included tentative responses such as: 'maybe' and 'it depends on what it is'.

Following the Asset Based Community Development approach, the survey aimed to uncover any hidden assets within the People Zone, and therefore asked respondents to list their top three talents or skills. Answers from those respondents who were visiting, working or living in area were included to present a holistic picture of the potential. The free text responses were grouped into themes to analyse the data and can be seen in Figure 13. Overwhelmingly the responses centred around being friendly, having good listening skills and talking followed by organisational skills. Other answers included life skills such as cooking, DIY and communications. A number of responses described character traits like funny, hardworking and being positive which could be transferred to many skills and therefore weren't coded or included in Figure 13. Character traits along with less common skills can be seen in the Word Cloud (Figure 14).

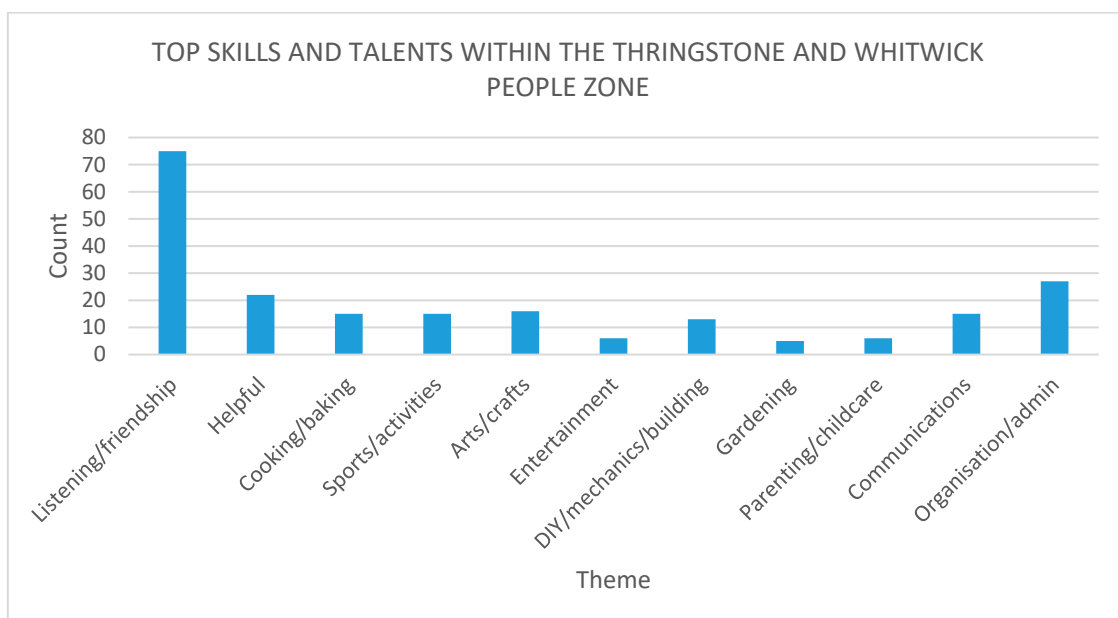
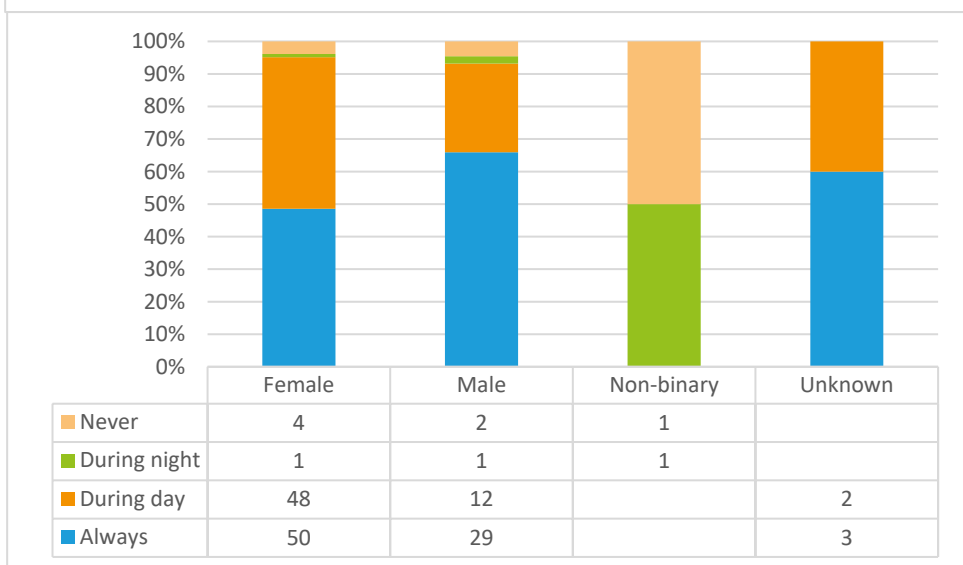
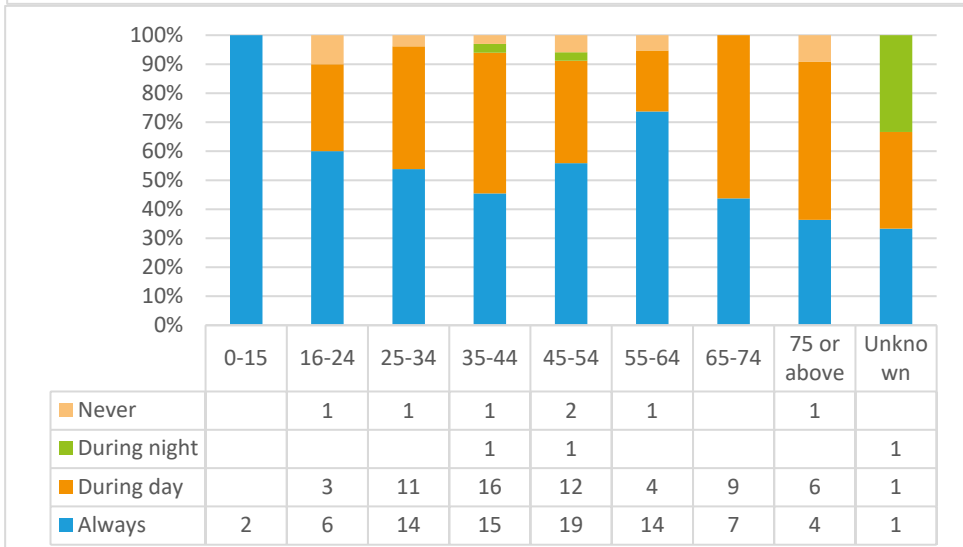
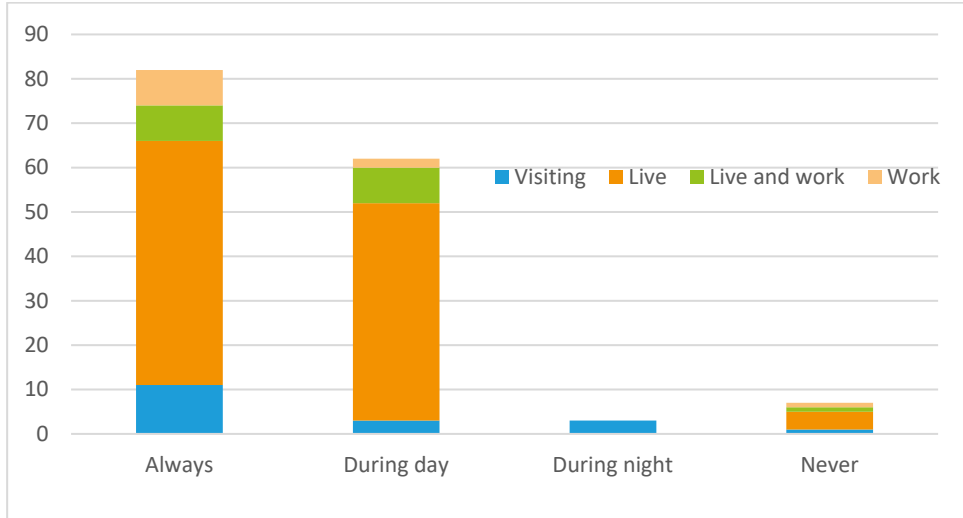


Figure 13 The skills and talents of respondents grouped into themes





## HOW SAFE DO PEOPLE FEEL IN THE THRINGSTONE AND WHITWICK PEOPLE ZONE



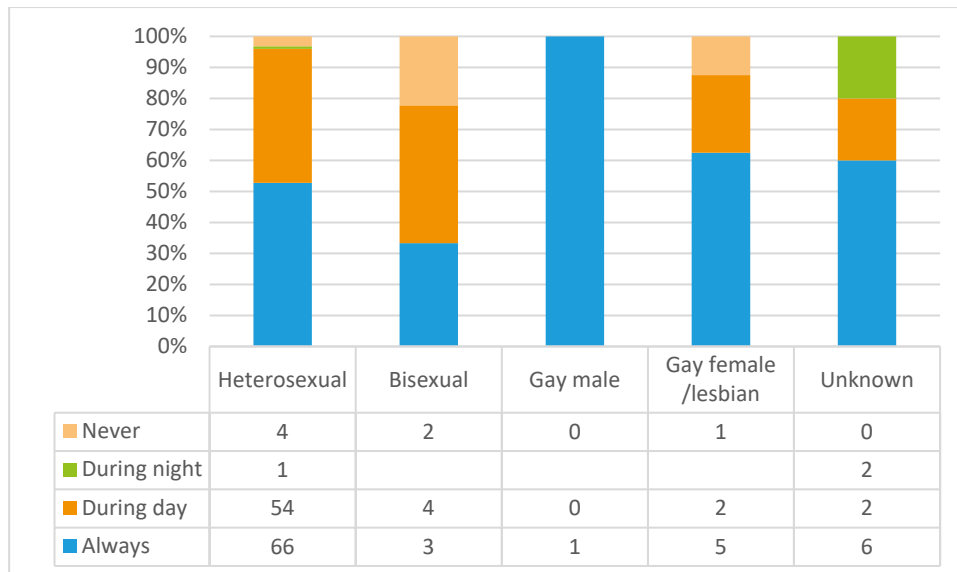


Figure 15 Perceptions of safety according to whether respondents live, work, or are visiting; proportion of responses according to their age and gender

The map below (Figure 16) highlights the locations where people said they were most concerned for their personal safety. Melrose Estate was cited 14 times, making it the area of greatest concern. This was followed by Grace Dieu Woods (6 mentions); Whitwick Park (5 mentions) and the pathway around Hermitage Lake towards the church (5 mentions). Many of the responses were no more specific than the street name and therefore the map may be misleading when it is highlighting a whole road instead of one section. Other answers which could not be accurately mapped without further clarification or using subjectivity were responses such as 'alleyways/jitties' (5 mentions), 'parks' (5 mentions), and 'woods' (8 mentions).

Thirty-seven respondents specified that there were no areas where they felt particularly unsafe whereas five respondents said they felt unsafe in all areas. In total 19 respondents made some reference to the lack of street lighting with 12 of these not specifying a particular area but referenced the poor lighting or darkness of the area at night as their reason to feel unsafe. Some respondents commented that they did not feel unsafe as such but were more concerned about antisocial behaviour.



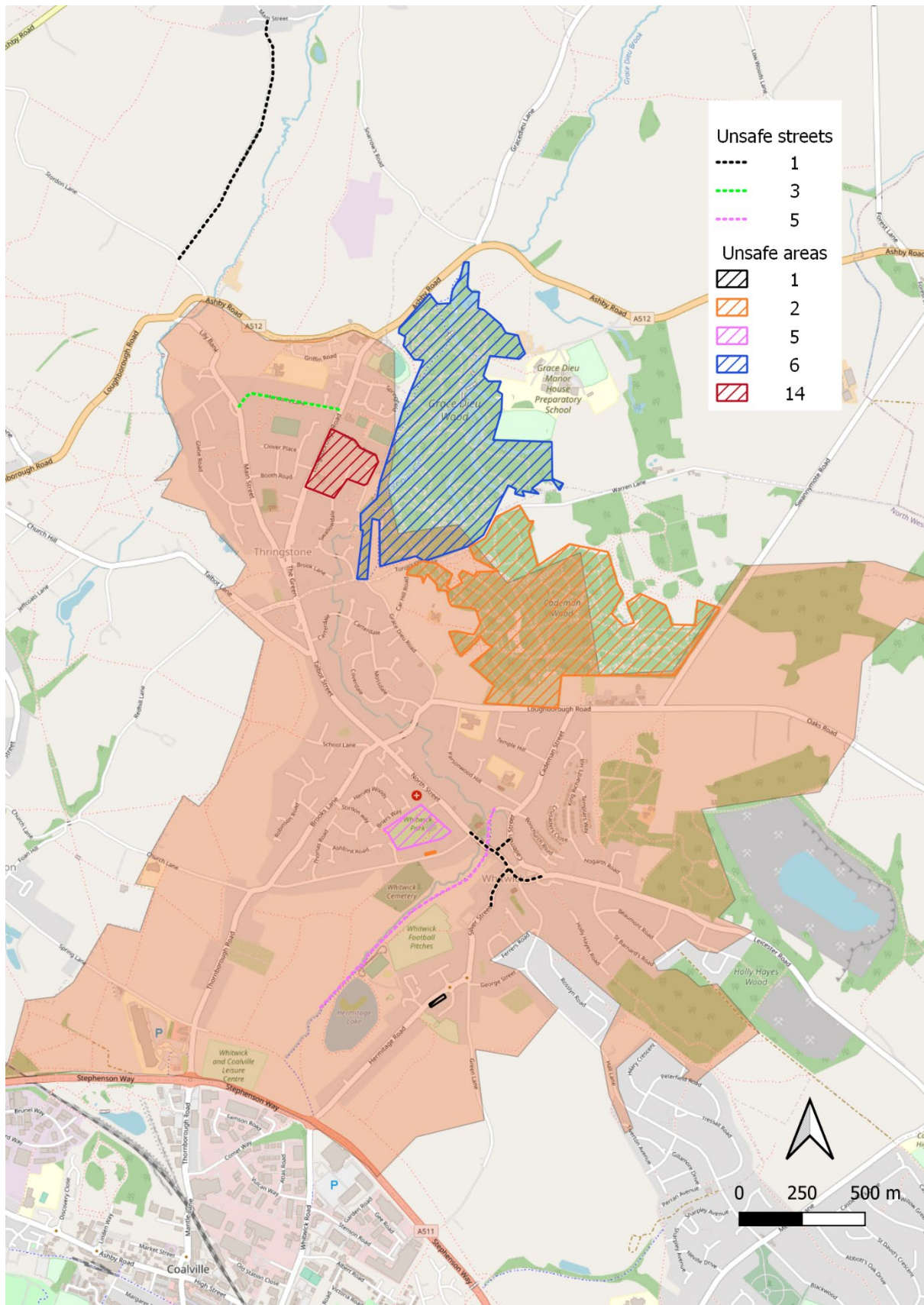
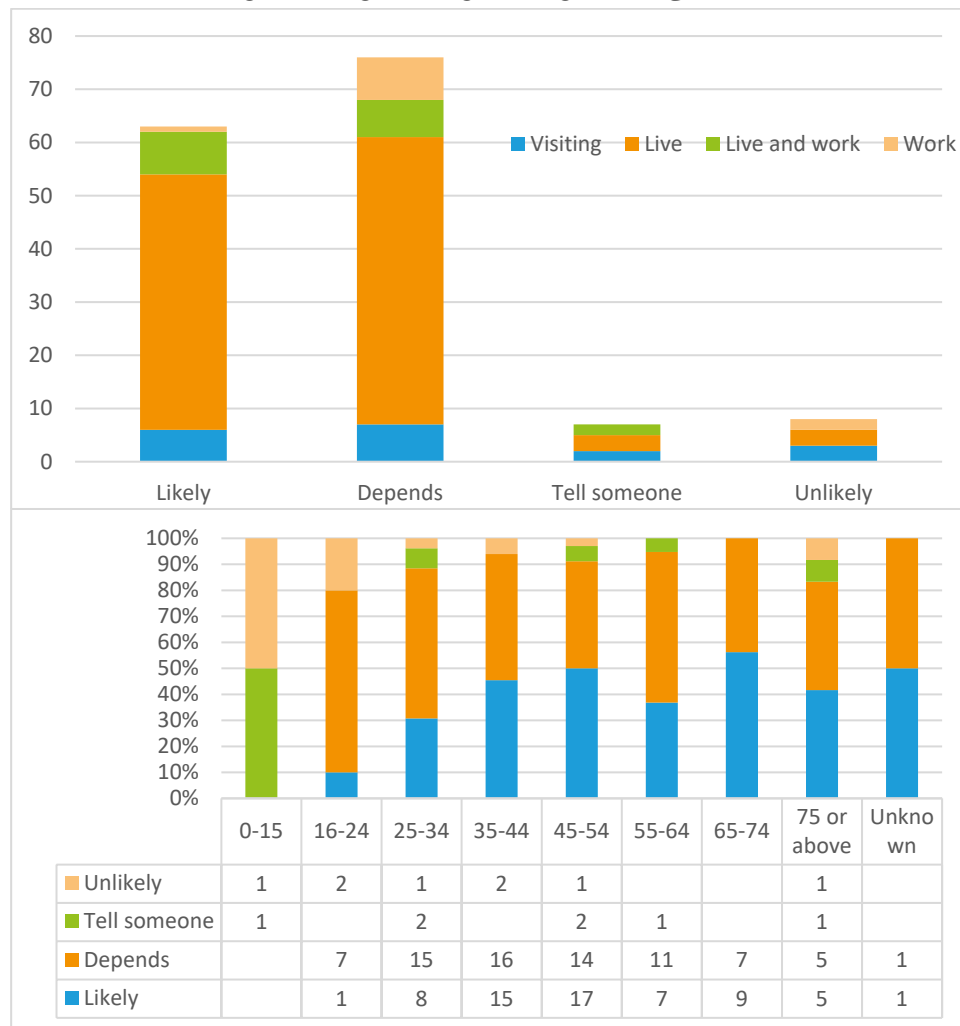


Figure 16 Map of Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone highlighting the respondents' areas of concern for personal safety



The survey sought to gain an understanding of how likely residents, workers and visitors were to report a crime by asking respondents directly to choose from one of four options. Figure 17 expresses the responses broken down into the different demographic groups. More respondents agreed that it would *depend on the situation* than any other option, closely followed by those selecting *likely to report a crime*. Only seven respondents said they would be more likely to tell someone else. The 45–54-year-old age group were proportionately most likely to report a crime and the under 25-year-olds least likely. Proportionately females were more inclined to say it depended on the situation.

### HOW LIKELY ARE PEOPLE IN THE THRINGSTONE AND WHITWICK PEOPLE ZONE TO REPORT A CRIME?





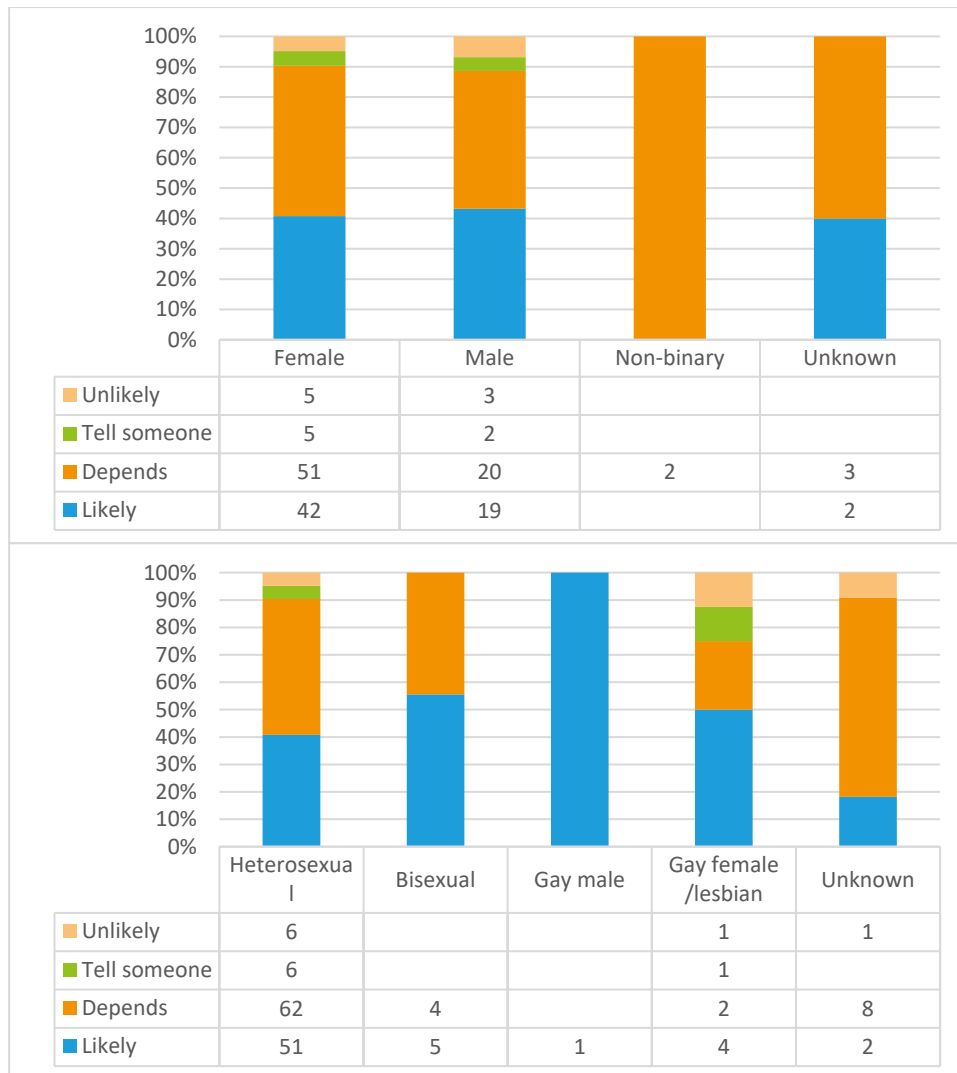
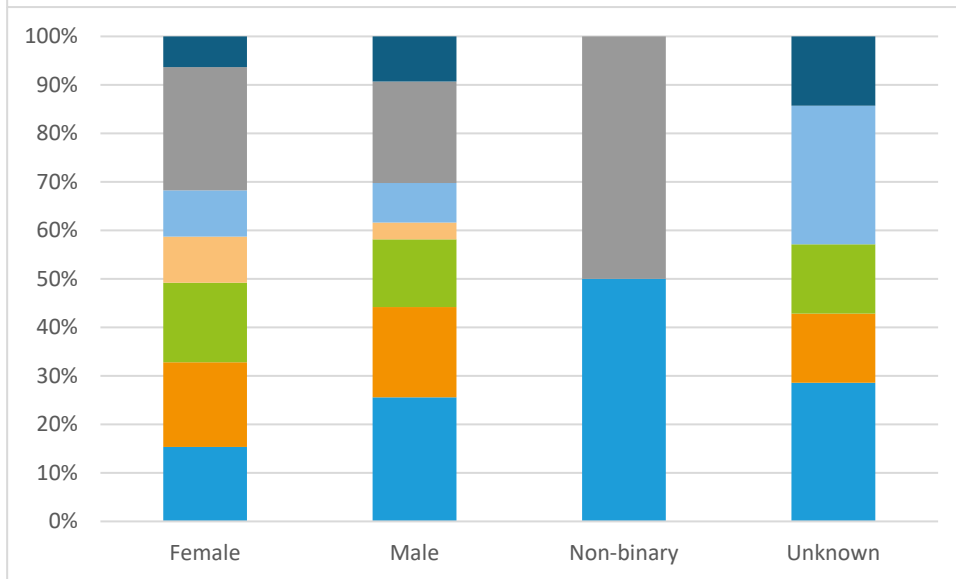
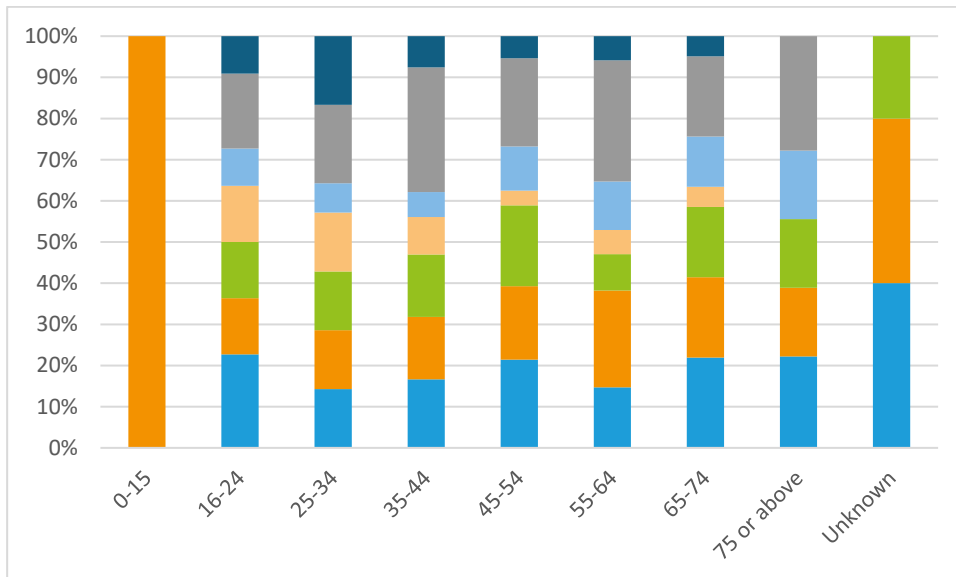
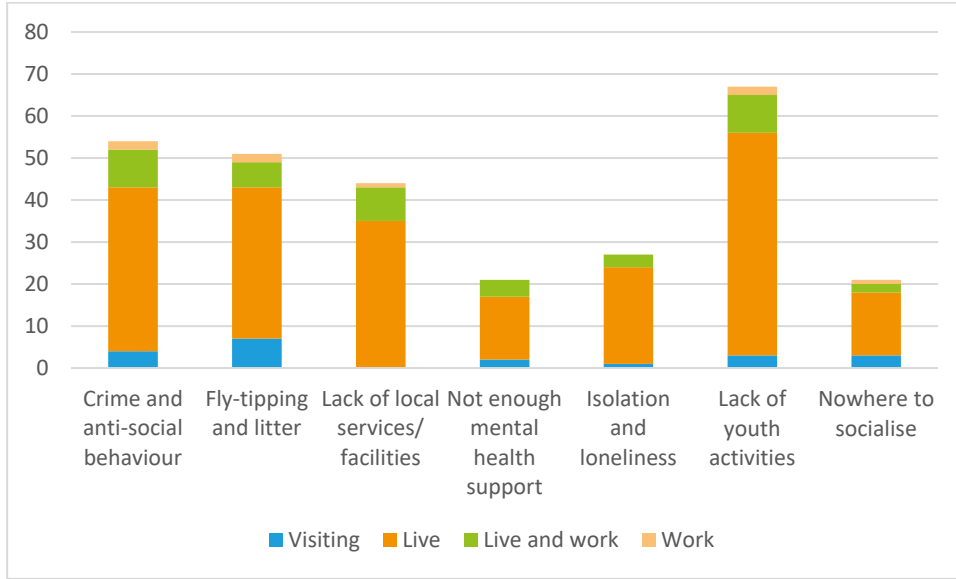


Figure 17 Likelihood of reporting a crime according to whether respondents live, work, or are visiting; proportion of responses according to their gender and their age

Figure 18 highlights that the biggest areas of concern, overall, is the lack of youth activities. However, for those visiting the area, litter and fly-tipping were seen as the greatest concern. The respondents selected these from a predefined list with the option to add other suggestions. There were some differences observed between the age groups with litter and fly-tipping being the concern of under 16-year-olds. However, there were only two respondents in this group and therefore difficult to consider this representative of all under 16s. A particular difference can be seen in the younger groups where not enough mental health support is an issue, and this is also seen in the gender and sexual orientation split with females and gay female/ lesbian proportionately selecting this more. Males were more likely to select crime and antisocial behaviour as their greatest concern.



### THE BIGGEST AREAS OF CONCERN LOCALLY



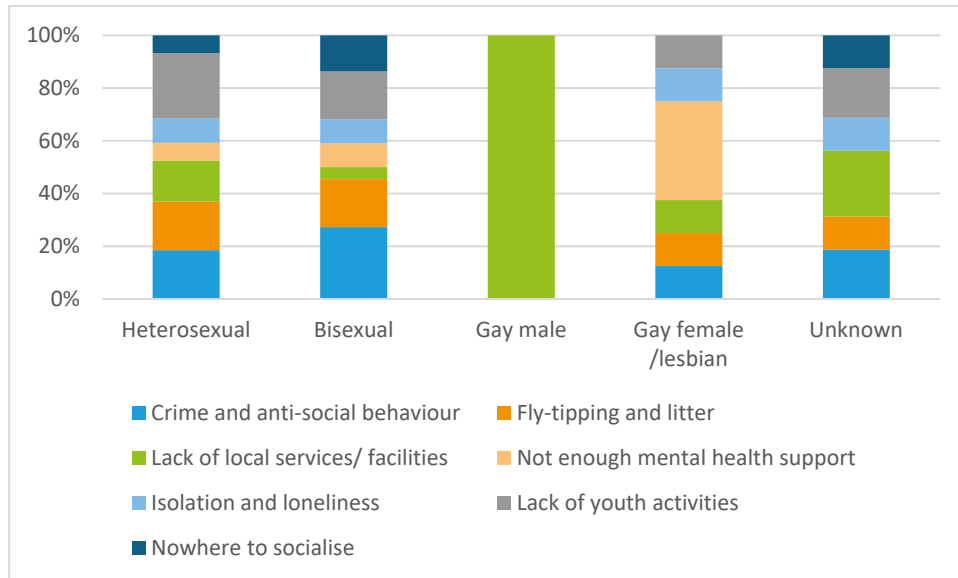


Figure 168 The biggest areas of concern locally, according to whether respondents live, work, or are visiting; proportion of responses according to their age and gender

## Results of workshops and pop-ups

In November, a workshop was held at the Thringstone Miners Social Centre to collect qualitative data. Ten representatives of the community attended from local organisations, service providers and the local authority.

The results of the second exercise, The Stakeholder Wall, are shown in Figure 19 below. The entries that had a local base or focus were extracted to help develop the final stakeholder map (Figure 2). The category for 'Social' had the most additions and included community led groups and local organisations covering a variety of foci ranging from sports and drama to dining and keeping warm. There is clearly some crossover across the categories with organisations providing several different services. The area which seems least well provided was 'advice' which could be a gap in provision or may be because local organisations provide this informally rather than it being within their official remit; that the one organisation providing this covers all subjects and is well resourced; or that there is no identified need for this locally.

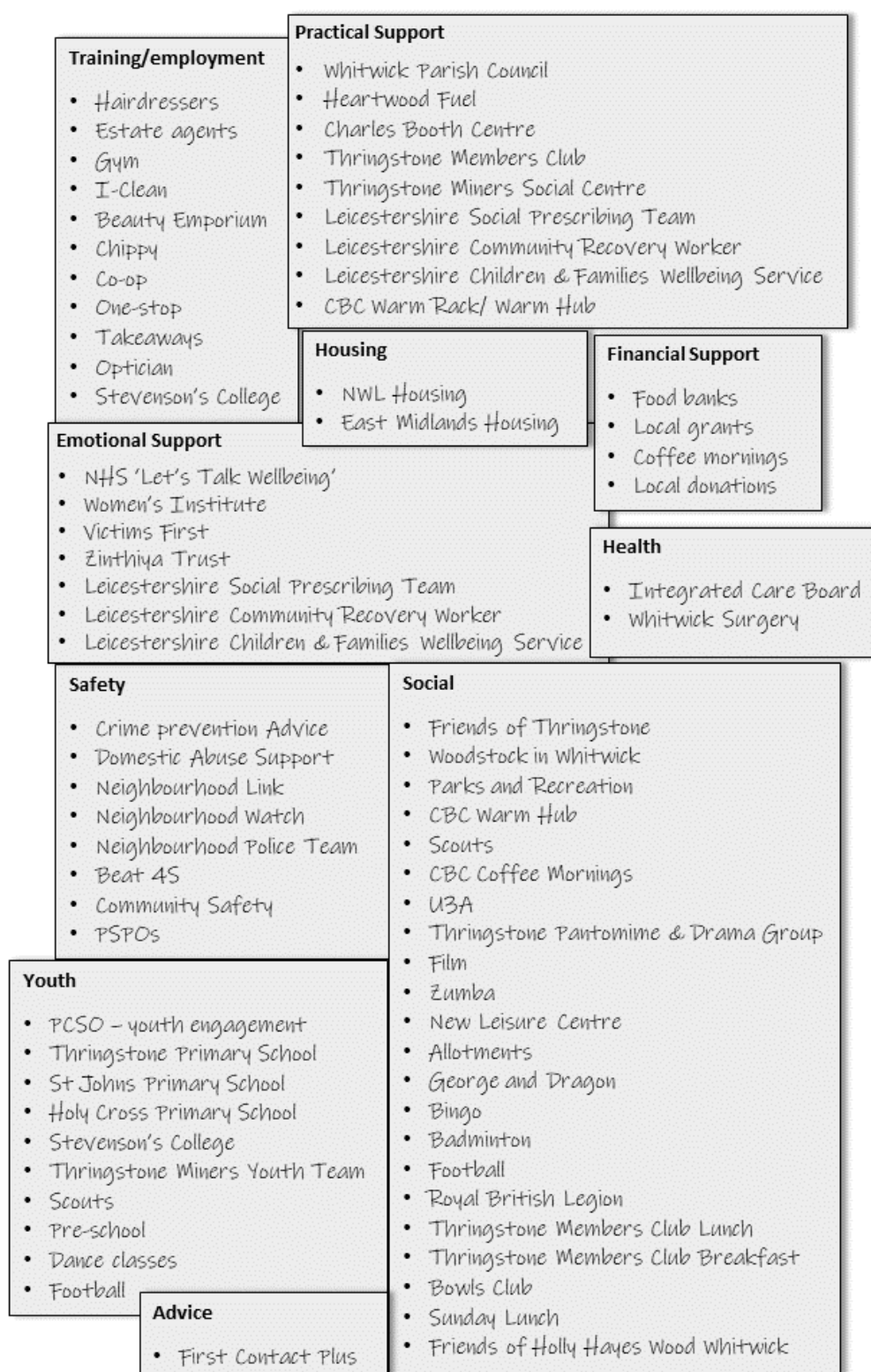


Figure 179 Results of Stakeholder Wall Exercise

The facilitated roundtable discussion at the beginning of the workshop offered some valuable insights and has been summarised under the themes of local character, assets, concerns, work in progress and potential solutions.

## Local character

The participants were all very positive about the areas in which they live and work. There is a great pride among both villages of their contribution to World War I and World War II, being made apparent every Remembrance Day with the display of poppies and residents' engagement in events. There is considerable interest in the heritage and local history among many residents and some traditions still remain. The community is not ethnically diverse but is welcoming in general. However, efforts to introduce new ideas, such as the Cultural Day are not always well received and there can be some resistance to change, even among community leaders and committees.

## Local Assets

Thringstone and Whitwick are surrounded by beautiful countryside and nature. The woodland walks are well used, where the paths are maintained. The parks are also a big asset, and especially the Parks Teams who are very passionate about managing them and keeping them safe. There are organisations, especially in Thringstone offering excellent activities and services for older people and younger children especially. Whilst Whitwick is lacking community space, it does enjoy several churches, community groups and public houses. An interesting local asset was introduced, an elderly married couple called Geoff and Pauline Walker who have become an internet sensation with over 300,000 people following their Instagram posts about life.

## Local Concerns

The greatest area of concern was the lack of youth activities, in particular for the 11–16-year-olds, which was considered one of the many factors contributing to antisocial behaviour of some young people. Incidents explained included a rise in right-wing and racist graffiti; an attempt to set fire to the nature bridge and general antisocial behaviour around the local parks. The young people believe that there is little the police can do and therefore no consequences. In addition, people are not reporting the behaviour and so most reports come from the Parks Team, who are now wearing body cameras as they fear for their safety.

Another clear concern was the changes to public transport which it was felt would particularly affect the older residents. Providers such as Foxes Transport have been cut, and bus routes re-routed, which causes problems, especially on Glebe Road, which is on a hill. This reduces access to essential services such as the health centre, let alone the social opportunities. A volunteer taxi facility is in operation for certain demographics but not everyone knows about it, and it is only for pre-booked essential journeys, such as medical appointments, and cannot be used to access activities.



The villages can feel divided, both geographically and demographically. In years gone by, the public houses would serve as a neutral space where everyone met each other, whereas many have closed in Thringstone so the perceived divisions remain. This issue also exists at an organisational level where communication and collaboration should be key to maximising the services available for the residents. An example cited was when two community spaces competed for guests at their Halloween parties because they were held on the same day, rather than spreading out the activities so residents can enjoy both parties on different days.

The local woodlands have already been listed as an asset, however it was felt by one participant that the woodland management could be improved, to clear footpaths and remove some ivy for biodiversity reasons. Participants were reminded that as the woodlands are under private ownership, carrying out any personal maintenance work and straying from the paths is an illegal activity.

### **Work in progress**

Antisocial behaviour of young people is a complex issue that needs a multi-agency approach, which the council is currently trying. However, it does not yet have much involvement with schools in a community safety element as they are not seen as the police and therefore further efforts need to be made.

A group called KISP; Knowledge IS Power work well with young people. The organisation does a lot of work in Greenhill and go out twice a week. They have experienced children as young as 10 years old being quite volatile and aggressive.

The Charles Booth Centre has started a warm rack and a warm hub and is now looking at a warm hub for young people, so they have a safe, warm space to meet.

The NWLDC Health and Wellbeing Team is carrying out consultation in schools about how young people would like to be communicated with and how best to reach out to them. This includes language, platforms and even branding used. For example, when they asked the young people about parks, they only considered a park with a playground in it rather than playing fields.

### **Potential solutions**

To address the antisocial behaviour of some young people, everyone agreed that more youth provision was necessary. The young people needed something to do that they could access locally. There was some discussion about what this provision would look like where different ideas were put forward.

It was suggested that sport, such as football brings people together and facilities and organisations already exist in the area to develop this and increase the youth involvement. Whilst everyone agreed that this would be appropriate for some young people, those involved in antisocial behaviour were considered unlikely to engage as there are so many factors involved. It was argued that this had been tried before and doesn't always work, so a different approach is needed for those youth in need. Another



suggestion was a 'demolition area' where young people could go and smash things up to get their aggression out, but in a controlled environment. This idea caused some concern over whether this could teach them the wrong things and could encourage vandalism elsewhere.

It was apparent that there was a clear need to provide a safe and positive space for young people to use and to attend sessions. The questioned raised, however, pertained to how could staff, premises and equipment be protected from those with challenging behaviour in any potential venue and who could provide training and resources to manage some of this risk and deal with safeguarding etc. It was put forward that the efforts could be shared between different organisations by organising a timetable of activities hosted by different places. Partnering with a provider such as NWLDC's programme *Positive Futures* who specialise in engaging young people between 10 and 19 years old could help provide a range of activities.

It was felt that the whole community needed to play a role in reporting behaviour and in engaging young people. Local role models were considered important in this context and local hidden talent, such as a young local boxer, needed to be identified and recruited as a role model and community champion.

In response to the woodland management concerns, an organisation called Heartwood Fuel was brought up as a possible sustainable solution with added value. Heartwood Fuel carry out tree felling in the national woodlands and also offer free training to members (who pay £25 per year) in tree felling, creating bird boxes, hedgehog homes etc. which could even be a different way to engage young people.

The final activity of the meeting was Future Newspaper. The outputs of this exercise are shown in Figure 20.



# THRINGSTONE & WHITWICK CHRONICLE

10th November 2032



*Thringstone  
and Whitwick  
thriving as  
communities  
come together*

## Breaking News!!

- No dog poo on Melrose field
- Woodland management group in woods
- Police report zero crime five years running
- Geoff and Pauline – local heroes – to have movie made.

*Thringstone and Whitwick lead the  
way in community spirit*

*Old school rivalries set aside for local  
success/needs*

## Sports

**Thringstone's Ingles FC win the FA Vase**

**Striker brings record transfer fee to football club**

**Thringstone Ladies FC gain promotion**

**U18s Thringstone FC make premier league.**

*Thringstone People Zone is heart  
of the community.  
Thringstone thriving  
Whitwick winning*



## Youth Update

**Thringstone Youth Club making free pizza for the elderly and homeless.**

**Local youths win e-scooter championship**

**Thringstone and Whitwick Youth Club now open five nights a week**

## EVENTS

- **Line up announced for tenth music festival in Whitwick and Thringo. Headliners include...**
- **Multi-generational pub quiz team wins national accolade**
- **Gala day upcoming**
- **Music festival on the Thringstone Miners Social Club football ground brings 4000**

[www.peoplezones.co.uk](http://www.peoplezones.co.uk)

Figure 20 Results of Future Newspaper exercise

A second workshop was held in November at The Charles Booth Centre. Participants were asked what their concerns were and what ideas or wishes they had for the area. Table 3 below summarises the responses.

Table 3: Summary of responses from resident workshop

Concerns/challenges	Assets	Ideas and wishes
Two main bus stops in Whitwick village have been removed	Mon, Wed, Thurs warm hub is where people can go and have a chat	Creating a café in the old post office on the green in Thringstone
Knocking down the old Leisure Centre	Stroke Club held at The Charles Booth Centre	A youth club
Lack of things for younger people	The George Hub on Hotel Street helps homeless people and they have a café	Rock 'n' Rollers go to sessions across the area but none in Thringstone or Whitwick. Are held in New Town Linford-Bradgate Park; West End Club, Leicestershire; Wykin Club, Hinckley (Fri nights); Crops and Tiger Pub. Could do something similar at the Charles Booth Centre
Difficult to get volunteers	Some very active volunteers	A women's only group
No activities for middle aged people	The Oasis Café at the old chemist is run daily except Mon & Sat. They have a mental health group; women's group; homeless group & men's group.	Bingo on Thursday is in the evening and many of the older people can't get out in the evenings, sometimes because of lack of transport, but if it were in the afternoon more people could go
Poor public transport	Love the area; it's quiet, safe and can walk everywhere	A gentle exercise class for older people in the Charles Booth Centre
All of the activities seem to go on at night time	Choir at the Members Club once a fortnight. Sometimes go into nursing homes and run sing-alongs	Nowhere to stop for a drink when on a walk. Not everyone wants to go to a pub, especially with kids. They want a hot drink. Also if the café had a car park others would go as there isn't really any nice ones in the area.



<p>The baby groups can cost £5 per session which is too expensive considering they are £1.50 in Loughborough – if you can travel there... This can lead to isolation of new mums</p>	<p>There are some lovely walks to go on all around Whitwick and there is a Thringstone Trails Walking Group, plus ramblers who visit.</p>	<p>There needs to be more for Teens. The scout group is active but it isn't attracting the kids that need most support and potentially cause the trouble. Need a drop in centre. They want to be drinking and smoking around age 15, not hanging around with adults in a youth club – it needs to be led by younger people.</p>
<p>A lot of people don't take up the activities on offer.</p>	<p>The new leisure centre is good and it runs aqua-natal classes</p>	<p>Youth drop in centre should also include mental health support as youth are under a lot of pressure these days.</p>
	<p>People are willing to volunteer, but they just need to be asked</p>	<p>The skatepark in Whitwick is well used so could have one in Thringstone too as they might not travel that far</p>
	<p>Young people can attend the open mic night, but not that many do. Also can join the panto and drama group – again not appealing to the ones we need to reach</p>	<p>A lot of the older people don't go online and so leaflet drops and posters, e.g. at coop would be good to promote things more whereas now a lot of it seems to be on Facebook and is excluding people</p>
	<p>There is a warm hub set up but that is during the day which has increased the Monday coffee morning uptake.</p>	<p>There should be something similar to a warm hub in the evenings e.g. 5-7 to break up a long cold night alone, but not too late as many don't feel safe to go out at night.</p>
		<p>A befriending service, especially for elderly or disabled. Some individuals have never 'got back to normal' after covid and there is a lot of hidden isolation. Befriending could be just</p>



		an hour chatting or playing a game at their home and then noticing any other needs they may have to signpost or suggest extra support. A project called 'Enrich' was suggested to replicate
		Volunteer service to get people's shopping or prescriptions or offer lifts to appointments as public transport is bad
		A mobile library for the villages
		Digital skills support, with lessons in cyber-security, online banking / paying bills etc as well as social media to help people keep in touch. Also a community IT support line so people can reach out with concerns and queries – especially with so many online scams happening
		There used to be a disability group with a social lunch and games. However this stopped before Covid and hasn't been replaced so maybe a need for this again



The pop-up held at St Andrew's Baptist Church in December engaged eight female participants and one male participant. Again, the main theme raised was poor public transport, i.e. reduced bus service and bus stops having been removed. This limited people's movement, especially to essential services such as the doctor and chemist, but also for workers commuting to Shepshed and for those who can no longer socialise which could cause more isolation. It was agreed that a volunteer taxi service would be good.

There was a consensus that although there is a youth group at St John the Baptist Church, in general the lack of activities for the young residents meant that some caused 'mischief'.

Another point raised, which hadn't been brought up in any other sessions, was the fact that health screening facilities, specifically the breast clinic, was now at Glenfield Hospital, which is a long distance for those who don't drive, compared to it once being in Coalville and could some mobile version be considered instead.

Regarding activities in the villages, as well as the St Andrew's coffee morning every week, which is also attended by residents of the Meadows Care Home, some residents attended the Mothers' Union and the cafe at St John the Baptist Church, Thringo Bingo and coffee mornings at The Charles Booth Centre. The main way of finding out about what is going on in the villages is through word of mouth and newsletters, and previously The Thringstone Bauble which is no longer being published.

In addition to the one-on-one interviews held, one individual, who received a copy of the interview questions through word-of-mouth provided their own responses, documented below for full transparency.

When considering the assets within the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone the response was that some of the greatest assets were the people, the ability to walk in the countryside, and the many opportunities to engage in sport, such as football, cricket and bowls in the village. The respondent's involvement in the community, which is largely voluntary, has ranged from coordinating music events to sports development. In their response they expressed a strong desire to focus on youth team football development and expansion of the grounds at the Thringstone Miners Social Centre, but time and resources were some of the factors limiting the expansion of these. Their view was that there appears to be little collaboration between the various sporting clubs. The suggestion put forward to overcome this was to schedule meetings for people to get to know one another and to set-up a common discussion group to pass on scheduled events.

The respondent expressed the hope that focussing on youth development will see more parents attending the Ingles FC grounds and getting involved. When considering potential community champions, it was felt that this was not an easy task to get people to lead projects. A female coach at Ingles FC was identified as being keen on developing female



football in Thringstone and the respondent believed that youth teams would bring parents and some of those may get involved.

In considering any lack in service provision both youth football teams and policing were identified. The respondent felt that drugs were a standard problem with dealers operating in the area at a low level. Antisocial behaviour was mentioned as another area warranting attention, which was one of the reasons the respondent wants to develop youth football teams. Further to this, their view was that sponsorship of youth teams by the OPCC and signs showing this could be an effective way to increase trust in the OPCC.

Community competitions, best front garden, dog shows, along with other ideas were suggested as things that could encourage residents to take more pride in their community but would require community leaders and a viable communication method.

When considering where to potentially invest £5000 within the community the respondent suggested a girls' football project – and youth teams generally. The unused local authority football pitch and changing rooms behind the Members Club could be brought back into use. Thringstone Miners/Ingles FC and their volunteers are keen to work on this and have the skilled people to do so. The site was said to be big enough to have two junior pitches and has a tarmacked area already ideal for a basketball net. The respondent said large signs showing it to be a kids pitch area would be required to reduce dog fouling. Permanent, steel junior goal posts would be needed so that the pitches would be a natural place for kids to play and was felt would be a wonderful, low-cost project that would have wide community support.

When responding to how they would imagine the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone in 5 years if it could have unlimited funding and support: yearly music festivals, which were considered very popular in the village and brought people together for a whole day, and until late; increased policing with community officers to talk to; sporting venues; Thringstone Primary and Charles Booth Centre working together to make Thringstone a happy social place, and lots of village youth football teams linking up with the schools and bringing parents together, were all imagined.

## Interview Responses

Five semi structured interviews were conducted with representatives from both the public and third sector. These comprised individuals from the police, the local authority, and community leaders. The views expressed by those interviewed as part of this research are based on peoples' own experiences and perceptions having either lived and/or worked within the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone. These, however, have not been cross referenced against any official datasets, as this was deemed out of the scope of the research in this instance.





## Community Assets

In line with the ABCD approach underpinning the research and development of the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone, interviewees were asked their opinion on what the best thing about Thringstone and Whitwick is.

*"I think one of the best things really is around the environment... it's free and it's on the doorstep"*

The diversity of green infrastructure; woods, open fields, brooks and countryside, which are accessible within a short walking distance in any direction were some of the greatest assets valued by all those who were interviewed. Similarly, in terms of the villages' location, accessibility and their proximity to the A42 and M1 were identified as providing easy access to other locations within the district.

Several interviewees felt that the sense of community and the sense of belonging made it a fantastic community and that there were individuals who are willing to go the extra mile compared to everybody else.

*..." when it comes to the crunch, you know, there's usually people... we'll help each other out, so that's a great asset..."*

*"Everybody still knows everybody, you know, and I love that."*

As an old mining community and a village that has been around for centuries, the area is steeped in local history, with many very old buildings and historical assets that are much valued. There is a lively history group in Whitwick who go out to the local schools and engage the children in learning about the local history and practices of old. For example, one lady goes out to schools to provide demonstrations of how people used to do their washing with dolly tubs. There is also the Friends of Thringstone group who preserve and promote the local history for the benefit of residents and visitors.

The Charles Booth Community Centre, along with the different activities run from this space was identified as one of the community assets. One respondent commented on the fact that it is nice that the community centre has now set-up a warm hub and the challenge now will be to get people to use it. The Thringstone Scout Group is located within the grounds of The Charles Booth Centre and there is also a very active scout troop that has been going for a long time in Whitwick and who do a lot within the community. The Thringstone Members Club was also identified as an asset that serves residents on the Melrose Estate.

Additional assets identified within the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone are the individuals who work to serve the people in the area, both paid and unpaid. Interviewees were asked about their role within the community and those working in a voluntary capacity were very active in areas spanning the local environment; local history; coordinating local events; managing the social media of local organisations, and



fundraising. One interviewee saw their role as being an advocate, supporter, and protector for the community. Another respondent saw their role as one which focuses on supporting people and organisations in doing something beneficial for the community. This could span anything from community safety to supporting families in need, from helping groups to become constituted or supporting local businesses. Bringing people together and providing a safe haven for residents on the estate were the primary roles for two of the interviewees. Engaging with the local community to see any issues they have, which can then be passed on to the relevant agencies who might not be aware of them, was the focus mentioned by one respondent.



## The Challenges Faced

In enquiring about some of the challenges faced by those either living, working, or supporting people in the area, the lack of youth provision was raised by all those who were interviewed. Something noted by one of the interviewees was that those who may be in desperate need are frequently the ones who are not reached or who are difficult to identify. Others, who are perhaps less in need, receive the most because they are the ones who ask was the view expressed by one interviewee. It was suggested that having a wide network of contacts can help address this. For example, sometimes neighbours will identify someone who is in need, and communicate this, whereas the actual person may not ask themselves as they do not want to admit that they cannot cope or appear to be asking for charity.

People's perceptions of things were the biggest hurdle for one interviewee. The growth of both Thringstone and Whitwick stemmed from the mining industry where a lot of people came from Scotland, Newcastle and other locations. They came to work in the collieries and were located on the estates or private properties. One respondent suggested that the mindset of many is that the area, as well as the Northwest as a whole, is predominantly white British. As times are changing, a lot of different cultures are moving into the area and some people are opposed or quite defensive over these changes because they want to keep that culture of mining.

*"I think it's trying to get them to understand that we're not getting rid of that, that's not gonna go anywhere. But we can share it with other people and allow other people to come in with their experiences and what matters to them... And I think that's a big thing, and that's what separates the different [centres]."*

A lot of these perceptions were seen as generational with older residents finding it more difficult to change their views. There has, however, been a considerable amount of change in the area both in terms of housing and transport. The change in bus route has resulted in the loss of two bus stops, which has had a serious impact on residents. Especially on Glebe Road, which has a hill on either side, and trying to get up the hill as an elderly person can be hard, "they're basically stuck in a ditch." They then see other





people coming into the many new social houses that have been built over the past eight years and feel they have been forgotten about was the sentiment shared.

Time and resources were the key limiting factors cited by all in preventing individuals and their specific institutions from expanding on their existing responsibilities or activities. The lack of support from the council and other agencies was mentioned during one interview in which they felt many things were the responsibility of the council but acknowledged the lack of funding was a factor. One interviewee stated that many of the volunteers who were active within the community are now ageing and that the younger generation do not seem to be willing to take over. Their sentiment was that there is a considerable amount of apathy among residents, whereby “people want everything, but they don't want to do”.

*“...one of the things [that] hits me every time I ask people to do things is [the] lack of eye contact and how people's heads automatically either look away or look at the floor or change the subject or talk amongst themselves ...”*

It was felt that people are very much focused on themselves and their families and tend to think in terms of ‘them’ and ‘theirs’ rather than a bigger picture. However, one interviewee pointed out that there are a lot of people that want to do a lot of good, but they don't know how to do it. They don't galvanize themselves to try and find out, and then their motivation dwindles.

The perceived lack of trust in the police was mentioned as one of the challenges faced and is discussed in more detail later in the report. When asked about the main concerns among residents in the area, in relation to crime, drugs and associated issues were identified by most of those interviewed along with antisocial behaviour (ASB). Several of the respondents questioned whether the ASB was as bad as it is perceived to be and one felt that it could often be attributed to young people hanging around in groups, which can be intimidating. Car crime, domestic abuse, and shed crime were also mentioned.



## Collaborative Working

The challenges raised were considered in more detail when respondents were asked whether different organisations and agencies successfully work together in the area. One interviewee said that both the police and the council, in particular, worked well together to address issues whereas the immediate response from another interviewee was that they are not. They felt that there was a clear distinction between Whitwick and Thringstone, with those from either community having little to do with one another. The fact that Whitwick has a parish council, whereas Thringstone has not creates a further differential. The presence of proactive Councillors in Whitwick that are there to listen to the voice of their community and to get things done was seen as missing in Thringstone.



In reference to the different clubs and community centres, there appears to have been some crossover of personnel over the years, between The Charles Booth Community Centre and the Thringstone Miners Social Centre, which was believed to have created some difficulties. The view expressed by one interviewee was each were quite insular in their thinking. Historically, the Thringstone Members Club used to be the Rangers Supporters Club, so it was seen as very Scottish orientated. It was perceived as being for the people on the “Scots Estate”, which is called Melrose Estate and is owned by the local council. However, the estate was not just built for the Scottish miners but was also built for the Durham miners and there was a fifty-fifty split between the two. Previously you had to be a member to go to the Thringstone Members Club, whereas that is not the case anymore and it is open to anybody. The need to raise awareness about what is happening at the club was mentioned. One comment made was that a lot of people who live on the Melrose Estate do not cross over the Loughborough Road to attend activities being held at the facilities to the west of the area. This includes both The Charles Booth Community Centre and Thringstone Miners Social Centre. Despite this, many of the children from the Melrose Estate attend the playgroup being run from the latter. One respondent said that people do come together when there are events that have been well advertised. However, it was again suggested that those who attend The Charles Booth Community Centre may not go to the Thringstone Members Club because there is still the perception that it is for the Scottish people from the council estate. Similarly, they may not go to the Thringstone Miners Social Centre, because again, that is considered to be for football.

The Charles Booth Community Centre used to be members run but was felt to be somewhat of a “clique” and was seen as the sort of place you went to if you knew the people that ran it. The Thringstone Miners Social Centre was said to have had their ups and downs but were seen as the fill-in for groups that wanted to meet somewhere but could not afford the Charles Booth Community Centre rates. The latter has largely been football focused and still is to some degree. As a result, it was felt that people are less inclined to go there unless they have an interest in football.

It was said that Thringstone Members Club is run as a business and that organisations like the Charles Booth Community Centre and the Thringstone Miners Social Centre also do to some degree. As a result, the view was that they have become very enmeshed in what they are doing themselves, rather than reaching out to see what others are doing and then working with them, which is something several of the interviewees would like to see. There was the feeling that each of the centres were not always open to collaborate and opted to do things on their own, which on occasion has resulted on holding similar events on the same day to celebrate the same thing.

*...there's enough room for all of them, and they all offer something totally different, but they just need to become more joined up. They need to talk to each other and to stop issues from arising, like duplication of work. So much could happen if they just all sat together.”*

*“I think they need to start working together and talking. I think once they do that, they'll find things easier and it'll open a lot more doors... and a lot of the people that work in those areas*



*as well as live in the area... they're gonna see the benefit of that for them, and hopefully then it'll be sustainable rather than, you know..."*

One respondent expressed the desire to overcome the current lack of collaboration but could not identify what this would require. They felt that the fact that people are entrenched in their own ideas and surroundings, their own ethos, aims and objectives results in a lack of a tendency to think on a broader basis and outside the box for those individual organisations. However, one interviewee stated that the previous Manager of the Charles Booth Community Centre was keen to collaborate with the Thringstone Members Club and collectively they discussed holding a youth club in each of the centres on different days. There was also discussion around organising a walking train, with a meeting point to escort the children between the two locations. With the departure of the Centre Manager the idea of such a collaboration has not been further pursued.

In looking at the current gaps in youth service provision, particularly those of secondary school age were unanimously seen as underserved. For example, the swimming pool, which used to be at the old leisure centre, where kids were able to go swimming throughout the holidays, has now closed. It has been relocated to the new leisure centre with much of the provision centred on lessons and access having to be pre-booked online. The fishing lake was a further example mentioned following its handover to a private angling club. Anyone wishing to use the lake is now required to be a member, which is a year's membership, so youngsters cannot just go out for a day of fishing as they could previously.

There have been previous attempts made by The Charles Booth Centre to consult with young people to find out what they would like to see offered. Children from the local school were shown around the centre during which they shared their ideas for different activities, which ranged from having pet shows to playing badminton, from being able to do things on the allotment to having gaming nights. Despite this, none of their ideas were implemented or carried forward, due, in part, to blocks from existing users of the various spaces within the facility. When the Thringstone Members Club have organised fun days, they have been at capacity, which suggests there is both an appetite and a need. They would be keen to host a youth club but would require support in doing so.

Transport was seen as another big gap in terms of provision - not necessarily just for the elderly - but also for those who do not have access to a vehicle or the financial capacity to pay for public transport, especially since fares have increased.



## Adopting a Different Approach to Tackle the Challenges

In exploring the potential or desire to expand on existing responsibilities or activities there were several areas touched upon. It was identified that there are a lot of good things going on in the area, but it requires a bit more joined-up working to connect and link existing assets and resources so that people are aware of what is happening in various parts of the community. Ensuring everyone is working together instead of



separately was seen as crucial to most of those interviewed and there was a genuine willingness to do so. One suggestion put forward was to convene a meeting to bring the Managers/Committee Members of the different centres around one table and enlist an external facilitator to manage the session. This could ensure the meeting is structured so as to focus on some clear constructive and tangible outputs. Coordinating activities so that they are available at different times and days at the various facilities was suggested as a more effective way of working collaboratively.

*"I want to break down people's perceptions of what the community centre is and what it can offer."*

Striving to get the community spirit back in areas where it has perhaps been lost and ensuring the sense of village is not lost was considered important for one of the interviewees. They highlighted the fact that a number of new families have moved onto the Melrose Estate from cities, whether due to issues with their younger children or with older children being involved in knife crime, who may not have previously lived in a village environment. Making sure these families integrate within the village was seen as key.

One interviewee spoke about a new Mini Police programme that is being piloted by the police to engage children within the local school from an earlier age. The idea here is to enable them to begin building relationships and a rapport, which could then improve as the children grow into young adults.



## Trust Within the Community

Working with or in any community can present multiple challenges and the lack of trust in the police was echoed by all of those interviewed. Most respondents felt that people need to see that the police are more active and engaging with local people. The absence of beat surgeries in Thringstone was raised by two of the interviewees and one mentioned the lack of engagement with Thringstone's Neighbourhood Watch. It was acknowledged, however, that the police have a large area to cover and are short of time.

*"...mainly with the police is to see them doing, and I don't mean that like increasing beats or getting more police down there or anything like that. Just being more proactive as in having beat surgeries there. They don't have them in Thringstone"*

Several of the respondents felt that a lot of the current attitude stems from the fact that there is a lack of follow-up when people contact the police. People are given a crime number, but nobody comes out to pay victims a visit was the comment made by one interviewee. They went on to say that if people's belongings have been stolen, they expect somebody to come out and be concerned about it, even if it's considered petty crime. To those concerned, it is not, they are still victims was the point being made. The perception is that the police are not bothered, there is a lack of transparency, that the support is not there, and that people reporting will just be under a crime number, and nobody will care.



This discourages people from reporting things which means there could be an awful lot more happening, such as kids being exploited for county lines, but would they trust the police enough to report it was the question posed.

*“I think people are becoming disillusioned... you only need to look on social media. The response is it's wasted time phoning the police...”*

A comment made in relation to Neighbourhood Link was that a lot of elderly people wouldn't use it as it is online, even though a lot of them would find the information interesting. They questioned whether the same information could be circulated via mail in an information pack once a month. It was acknowledged that there would be an associated cost, but the interviewee felt that the benefits would outweigh the costs. The view was this would go some way to getting the trust back and would make people feel that they have someone to talk to, and that something is being done.

For some, reading and writing might be a challenge. There are also several sheltered accommodations in the area whose residents may not have computers or mobile phones. The respondent questioned how such individuals are expected to get to know about things. One interviewee emphasised the fact there needs to be more consideration about the different approaches required to reach the community. They went on to say that we cannot always presume that everything will be seen online, or that giving someone a mobile number, a link, or a QR code is suitable for everybody.

*“That will raise the trust... especially the police and the police crime commission, is that they need to be seen to be helping everyone, not just, you know, saying, oh, it's online.”*

*“...something as simple as that. Or just send in a regular, I am your local beat officer or whoever. If you need anything, I'll be here on this date or whatever.”*

The Mini Police programme being piloted by the police is one attempt being made to improve trust and to encourage people to want to talk to them a bit more. It was acknowledged that sometimes people are scared to report things because of the potential repercussions from neighbours.



## Investing in the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone

Some of the issues, for example ASB, raised the question as to what might encourage the community to take more pride in the area. Having nicer facilities or upgrading the parks, which were considered a bit outdated, might make young people feel that more is being done for them, which might encourage them to treat it a bit better, as there is a tendency of kids smashing things up was the view from one of the respondents. Parents may also feel a bit safer in taking their kids to the park was the opinion.

One interviewee felt that a lot comes down to recognition, or lack thereof. Taking a more positive approach to certain activities, such as litter picking, that is more inviting was suggested. Providing people with the opportunity to have a chat about the area and what they might like to see happen, or do, could encourage people to participate in such



activities. Making people feel like they're being listened to and asked what they might like to see or do in the area, but then making sure their ideas or views are followed up was key. Several respondents felt that people just don't take pride in the area and are happy to walk along and throw rubbish out of their pockets or cars with the belief that somebody else will pick it up, so it is not seen as their problem. The sentiment of the interviewee was that we live in an entitled society who feel that these things are somebody else's job to do.

*"If they're not interested in keeping their village looking nice, I don't think that they take pride in their community."*

The cessation of free waste collection for large items was seen as contributing to an increase in fly-tipping because people do not have the money to pay for it. One of the respondents outlined the fact that there are no initiatives or incentives for people to clean their front gardens or for anyone to care. They suggested the housing officers could walk around the estate and provide some form of recognition or incentive for those who maintained the front of their properties so people might be more inclined to keep them clean. Speaking about the maintenance of certain green spaces and hedgerows, one interviewee spoke of a local volunteer who is in his eighties and still active in maintaining areas across the community. They went on to share the fact that some residents had been complaining about the unkept hedges for some time on the belief that it was the council rather than volunteers who were to maintain them.

*"Well, okay. If you moan about it, why don't you then do something about it yourself? Why don't you then take that step outside your own little box and find out whose it is, and why don't you offer help, but people don't."*

When asked how £5,000 could be spent in the community most responses centred around youth as their primary focus.

*"...they're our biggest issue is the children, but also they're our next generation, so we wanna invest in them"*

Engaging young people around the use of the parks was proposed by one interviewee. They pointed out that there are youths who are keen skateboarders so providing classes which target 12 to 16-year-olds, could be one way in which to get them engaged. The football field near the Thringstone Members Club was identified as location, that if fenced and cleared of dog foul, could be used not only for football but is big enough to host a basketball hoop, a little kid's football area, a skate park or an obstacle course for people to ride their push along scooters. Providing some outside play equipment was also suggested. One interviewee said that it would be nice if there was something set up for kids so that they could have a focus. They were hopeful that the Grace Dieu Manor Football Academy will look to local people and offer kids who have an interest in football the chance to develop their skills and grow. Similarly, they went on to say that they would like to see a similar sort of provision for girls and see young people flourish with the skills they have.



One of the respondents spoke of the need to invest in the youth and shared a story about a young girl.

*“She said, would you be interested in my poetry? And I said, yes. She came back and gave me this poetry to read... she'd obviously got a pattern and wanted to do it. And I said, oh. I said, have you shown this to the teachers at school? She said they wouldn't be interested... what about you mom? Oh, well my mom's not very well and she spends a lot of time in bed, and I have to look after her... I said, well, what about other members of your family? Well, she says, it's just me and my mom... I nearly roared because it was such a shame cuz this kid had got an interest.”*

To tackle the negative perceptions around young people, one idea was to create a warm hub for youth. Whitwick Park Hall, which was originally built for youth provision but currently offers nothing for young people, was identified as a potential ideal location to host a warm hub. This could offer young people somewhere to go, where they can sit, have a drink, chill out, listen to music, and maybe connect to a Wi-Fi. A community café that has a trained youth worker present was another proposition made. Not one that assumes the position of youth worker leading a youth group, but more just to have someone there that could identify or look out for any indications and signpost people, or agencies, if things were wrong before they got to a critical point. Turning the empty pub on Silver Street into a community café for young people was suggested as another potential location. The Thringstone Members Club was also identified as a potential location. One respondent said that there just needs to be some free youth activities, whether that is a boxing club, basketball park, an internal space, or anything that they could have so that they feel included and welcomed. Suggesting young people could join the cricket club, or football clubs, which would require their parents to take them to matches all over the district, was seen as unrealistic.

*“Parents haven't got the money to keep giving, they haven't got the money. It's got to be free.”*

One idea put forward was to share the funds between three areas: a foodbank; local transport provision, and something for the older youths. For example, hiring a community minibus to provide a weekly food run for people that don't have their own transport or who cannot afford public transport. These weekly trips could be scheduled to somewhere like the social supermarket in the Marlene Reid Centre to give people access to affordable food. Starting a local foodbank to tackle food poverty for those families that are struggling was seen as important. The Charles Booth Centre currently operate a warm rack and warm hub. However, it was suggested that a lot of people from the other end of the village in Thringstone, on the Melrose Estate, may not choose to go because they don't want to be judged. Whereas, if such provisions like a foodbank were available at the Members Club, people might be more likely to go. Whether the Members Club would want to take responsibility of running a foodbank was the question raised.



One solution put forward was having someone from The Charles Booth Centre to set things up in the Members Club.

*“Once things start to happen, it'll raise people's beliefs that they're not forgotten about or that they, you know, people are out there to help, rather than it being, oh, the \*\*\* police, \*\*\* council, or this... For them to see us doing things, is a massive benefit for them”*



## A Vision for the Area

When respondents were asked for their five-year vision for the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone, given unlimited resources, one said that they would like to see something that has got a name and objectives that everybody can feed into and agree with but believed that there is always going to be the point made that it's not on our list of priorities. They wanted to see everyone pulling in the same direction rather than fragmenting and pulling apart and that everybody's aims is for the betterment of not just themselves and their family, but for everybody.

*“...it's trying to get all those together to work for something for the betterment of everybody. And if People's Zone can do that, I'm with you”*

One respondent said they would like to see more engagement events, coffee mornings for the elderly, and more things for the kids to do. They felt that if we invest in the youth, it will be better for everyone. Another's vision was that the community would be self-sustaining and thrive with things such as community litter days, a weekly youth club, a food bank where people can go if they need support and have a place that they know they can get help, even if it's in two different locations. They felt that communication was also key to achieving this. One interviewee would like to see a free shuttle bus once a week, the areas cleaned-up, the football pitch to use, a walking train to different activities across the area, and people working together.

Most of the interviewees spoke of wanting to see the community come together.

*“...reconnected. The generations looking after each other and reintegrated again, because that's what used to happen... for that, you've gotta make everybody feel included. And if people feel excluded in the first place, then this is what's happening. We are growing up into an increasingly fragmented society because people feel excluded at particularly the teenage. And once that is ingrained, they no longer integrate with society and because they don't feel part of society, then they're not gonna feel any responsibility or caring for the rest of society. So, we need to get it there then... reintegrate them, teach them about how people care for them and them to learn how to care for other people.”*





## Observations and Informal Interactions

Throughout the research work there were several ad hoc situations where anecdotal evidence was collected in an informal manner, for example personal conversations and meetings. Below are some of the points that were raised.

There appeared to be a sense of competition or lack of coordination between the different community organisations. This could sometimes result in the community losing out if events are being held on the same day as they must choose which to attend, rather than being able to enjoy both events on different days.

The research uncovered the use of a number of active online channels to promote activities and community spirit in general. Several Facebook pages which are organised by different community members regularly share information on different events and opportunities. To balance this, conversations with some older residents highlighted the digital divide and meant that they would not be able to access these channels.

## Thringstone and Whitwick Asset Map

An output of the research is an online community asset map which members of the public can not only consult for information but also contribute to in order to keep it accurate and up to date. The community map is a living resource to document all the local assets and other information in response to the community feedback. Separate discussions were also taking place around an asset map for 'Get Moving Thringstone' and therefore efforts were combined to meet both aims and save resources. Figure 21 shows a screenshot of the map with the different categories visible. The community assets were divided into seven categories to make the information easier to navigate, as follows:

- Help and Support
- Let's Get Moving
- Fun and Friendship
- History and Heritage
- Faith and Spirituality
- Learn, Work and Volunteer
- Events

At the time of writing, there are 17 entries on the map covering the different categories. Any contributions from the public will be moderated by a steering group member before going live on the map, in order to maintain integrity. A training session with Steering Group members will be delivered in the next month.



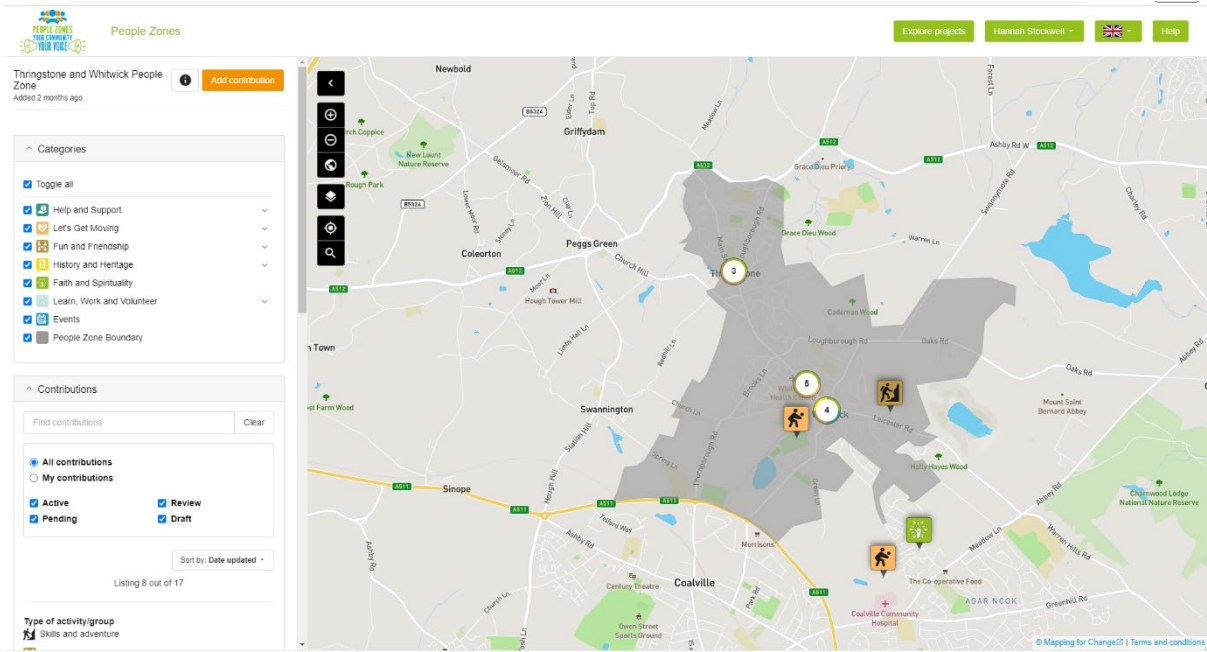


Figure 181 A screenshot of the map with the different categories visible



## Summary of Findings

The research included people from all ages, but the under 25s were under-represented overall. When considering the findings, the bias towards females who accounted for two thirds of survey responders should also be taken into account. Whilst just under a fifth of survey respondents said that they did not visit any of the local organisations for support, it is important to note that as most of the surveys were distributed through these organisations, the number of individuals not accessing the local assets in reality could be higher.

The research shows that the community assets in terms of organisations and activities are well used by much of the community. A number of these groups and organisations have a specific focus such as heritage, sports and hobbies, or are church based. The most used organisation is The Charles Booth Centre which offers a variety of activities to different target groups and now hosts a warm hub.

The greatest asset of the Thringstone and Whitwick People Zone is its rural location, being surrounded by nature. The second biggest asset according to survey participants are the people themselves, being described as friendly, welcoming and lovely. This was reinforced by the interviewees and personal experience.

There was a general sentiment among the community leaders that there was room for improvement when working together to design, develop and deliver activities. For example, hosting seasonal events on the same day could result in competing for visitors which does not benefit anyone and could further embed existing community division as people choose which event to attend. Interestingly, this was not mentioned by the residents either in the surveys or during the pop-ups and workshops, therefore the division could be a perception at an organisational level rather than on the ground. A desire to open up communication and co-working between community leaders was seen as key in effecting change.

In general, most people felt safe around Thringstone and Whitwick, especially during the day. The Melrose Estate was perceived as the least safe location within the Zone as well as generically parks and woods. Moreover, the issue of poor street lighting contributed the most to people feeling unsafe. Antisocial behaviour was cited as being the greatest issue for some, not so much a concern for personal safety but more intimidation or damage of property.

Some individuals may not be accessing the services and activities due to a lack of awareness as much of the promotion is conducted online and via social media, therefore excluding those who do not have digital access or know-how. There is still a need for offline information either via newsletters or posters.

The main themes that ran throughout the research and were cited across all the different elements of the consultation were the poor public transport provision; lack of youth activities and antisocial behaviour. Most participants involved in the research felt



that the lack of activities was one of, if not the main reason for the antisocial behaviour among the young people, although it was acknowledged that the issue was multi-faceted. It was understood that young people needed to be listened to and supported, but also given opportunities to give back to the community.

The villages of Thringstone and Whitwick have their own distinct character with each village offering different facilities and amenities for the community. Whitwick has several pubs where adults can socialise, eat and drink, but it has little to no community space available to hire or attend open activities. Any activities available tend to be faith based, e.g. church led coffee mornings, and approximately half of the Whitwick population describe their religion as Christian, this still leaves the other half of the village who may not feel comfortable attending such occasions. There are also opportunities to join interest groups within Whitwick, such as local history or bowls, but again this might not appeal to all residents. The village also benefits from a health centre and a park.

Conversely, Thringstone has little in the way of pubs and restaurants but has a wealth of community space and activities available. Two main centres are The Charles Booth Centre and the Thringstone Members Club. Whilst community leaders interviewed felt that there was little cross-over in these two spaces, the survey showed that all respondents who attended Thringstone Members Club also accessed other organisations or groups in the area, and one third of the respondents who attended The Charles Booth Centre also said they used the Members Club. In addition, The Thringstone Miners Social Centre offers community space and sports-based sessions as well as a pre-school, and Coalville Rugby club is also well attended by all ages. A fitness centre also provides further opportunities for community cohesion and health.

The combined facilities and activities of both villages could offer the residents a range of social and supportive opportunities, but currently it is difficult to travel between the villages, with a reduced bus service, concerns about parking and the hilly nature of the area. The division of the villages goes beyond that of geography, with historic and social barriers which would need a concerted effort to break down.

Trust in the police appears to be quite low within the People Zone, due to a lack of beat surgeries, poor communication about action taken against crime and a general feeling of disinterest. This could be improved by increased police presence and building of rapport with officers.

## Recommendations and next steps

- The lack of public transport within and between the villages of Thringstone and Whitwick, and beyond, is a real issue affecting a lot of residents. Whilst a long-term solution may be to reinstate and subsidise the bus services that have been cut, shorter term, immediate solutions are required. The coordination of a wider volunteer taxi service, befriending service and/or a weekly minibus to a supermarket could provide access to affordable food, access to essential services such as medical appointments but also keep open opportunities to socialise, keep warm at the hub and reduce isolation and loneliness. Interest among residents for volunteering to befriend and drive, coupled with the number of people who said that they were friendly/ good listeners etc and would like more opportunities to volunteer suggests that with some coordination and promotion, the project could be a success.
- More activities could be organised for local young people, in particular those of secondary school age and those who are harder to reach and not already engaged in sport or Scouts. Building on consultations already underway by NWLDC, the young people could be consulted directly on what they would like to see in their villages. This will encourage buy-in, ownership and ultimately increase the chances of success. Some ideas to explore could include the use of the Park Hall as a hang-out space so they take pride and become the custodians of the space and the park surrounding it. Any youth consultation must result in visible outcomes to avoid the lack of action seen in previous attempts.
- A regular timetable of activities for young people across both villages and all community spaces, using expertise and support from external agencies such as KISP and Positive Futures, could help to share the burden of developing a programme for youth. It could also begin to solve issues in addition to youth provision. This could be coupled with a mentoring/ capacity building programme that could be advertised via the local schools' communication channels to parents, which include digital and paper-based options, to recruit parent volunteers, so as to make the delivery of any provision more sustainable in the long-term. If all parties successfully work together on a joint project with the common goal and start to share resources and knowledge, this may lead to the same approach being adopted for other target groups and activities.
- The digital divide is quite apparent in the People Zone with much more of life, including village life, moving online. Social media is very active in Thringstone and Whitwick, and events and activities are mainly promoted online, but this is excluding a proportion of residents who do not have access to computers, data, or the know-how. Digital skills workshops, an IT fraud helpline, free Wi-Fi and communal computer stations would go some way to address this issue, but wherever possible, offline communications should still be used. If it is not feasible to print and post regular Neighbourhood Link updates, for example, then the community centres, churches and local businesses could act as the conduit by



displaying printed updates. An alternative could be to utilise existing local resources by offering content to publications such as the bi-monthly Hall Lane Methodist Church newsletter and the monthly Community Voice magazine which is distributed widely in the area.

- The two villages are seen as distinct neighbourhoods, and there are divisions even within the villages. To counter this, movement around the People Zone could be incentivised by way of services on offer, for example, Thringstone could offer a regular mobile library stop and Whitwick could host mobile health screening events or mobile banking. In addition, the celebration of the armed forces and the local history is common to both villages and perhaps connections could be built upon with this in mind, for example, using the asset map to map local history for the whole area, pooling knowledge and resources from each area.

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendix A

### New Parks Resident Survey Questions

The map to the right shows the boundary of the New Parks People Zone in pink. Please tick which best describes you:

- I live within this area
- I work within this area
- I live and work within this area
- I am visiting this area



How did you hear about this survey?

- 1) What three words would you use to describe the New Parks area?
- 2) What do you like most about living in the New Parks area?
- 3) What do you like least about living in the New Parks area?
- 4) Which, if any of the following organisations or groups do you use or visit for support? Tick all that apply...
- 5) Do you ever ask any networks such as neighbours for help e.g. with shopping or for emotional support?
- 6) Do you ever support your neighbours informally, e.g. babysit, bake cakes or dog walk?
- 7) Do you contribute to any locally organised activities, e.g. volunteer at the community centre or local allotment?
- 8) Would you like more opportunities to contribute to local activities and community services?
- 9) What do you think a friend or family would say your top 3 talents/skills/assets are?





- 10) How safe do you feel travelling around the New Parks area?
- Always feel safe
  - Feel safe during the day
  - Feel safe at night
  - Never feel safe
- 11) How likely are you to report a local crime or antisocial behaviour?
- Likely to report it
  - It would depend on the situation
  - Unlikely to report it
  - More likely to tell someone else, for example a community leader, than report it to the police
- 12) Please list any particular areas where you are worried about your personal safety in the New Parks area?
- 13) What would you consider to be the biggest area of concern locally?
- Lack of local services/ facilities
  - Crime and antisocial behaviour
  - Not enough mental health support
  - Lack of youth activities
  - Nowhere to socialise
  - Isolation and loneliness
  - Fly-tipping and litter
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) Have you ever heard of People Zones before receiving this survey?
- |     |    |          |
|-----|----|----------|
| Yes | No | Not sure |
|-----|----|----------|
- 15) How do you usually find out about local news and events? Tick all that apply
- |                 |              |                             |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Local newspaper | Online       | Social media, e.g. Facebook |
| Neighbours      | Local groups | Posters/flyers              |
| Other _____     |              |                             |



## Appendix B

### Interview questions

- 1) How would you describe your role in the local community?
- 2) Are there other responsibilities/activities that you would like to take on/expand as an organisation if possible?
  - a) If so, what is limiting this?
- 3) Other than funding and lack of time, what are your greatest challenges living /working /supporting people in the area?
- 4) What is the best thing about the area, in your opinion?
- 5) Could you identify any community champions among your groups who could lead on projects?
  - a) What support would be required to achieve this?
- 6) Do you think that different organisations and agencies are successfully working together in the area?
  - a) How do you think this could be improved?
- 7) Do you feel that there are any gaps in service provision in the area and if so where?
- 8) What do you think would encourage more trust in the OPCC amongst residents?
- 9) If you were given £5,000 tomorrow to spend in the community, what would you spend it on?
- 10) How would you imagine New Parks People Zone in 5 years if it could have unlimited funding and support, obviously in an ideal world?
- 11) One of the main concerns among residents in the area is drug use and dealing. Do you have any ideas how this could be tackled?
- 12) What do you think could encourage residents to take more pride in their community?
- 13) What type of activities or actions do you think would enhance the self-esteem and/or confidence of local residents?