

Planning for Your Future Consultation at Asfordby Hill Primary School

Introduction

Asfordby Parish Council appointed Planning Consultant Helen Metcalfe to deliver a half-day session at Asfordby Hill Primary school as part of its consultation strategy in the preparation of the Asfordby Neighbourhood Plan. 25 pupils age 10 and 11 participated. The session took place on 17th May 2012 and the support of the head teacher Ms McConnell assisted in making the session really successful in terms of engaging the children for 2 hours and getting some really good, thoughtful responses.

Format

The format for the session focused on short visual presentations explaining what planning is, how town planning affects us all and why the children's opinions matter to the Parish Council in the preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan. These presentations were interspersed with activities that allowed the children to consider the impact planning had on their lives. The session outline is shown at Appendix 1.

The children drew pictures of what they see out of their bedroom window and the class discussed their drawings. For those children who could see open fields we discussed how planning had protected that land from development in the past and why it may be necessary to consider building on it in the future.

The children were also shown photographs of local buildings like the Parish Hall, the shops in Asfordby and all the play areas and sports facilities in Asfordby Parish which also prompted discussion about why you needed local shops, why you should bother protecting the church and what value the children got from the various parks, play areas and community facilities.

The children then worked in 5 groups with A1 maps kindly provided by Leicestershire County Council/Leicestershire Rural Communities Council. Using sticky spots the children were asked to show where they lived (silver stars), if they had relatives in the village where they lived (blue spots), what parks or open spaces they played on (green spots) and where their shops, school, play areas were (yellow spots). The maps showed the three settlements and the countryside around that make up Asfordby Parish. This enabled a discussion (and some explanation) of how the planning system has protected these settlements from expansion (especially the open countryside between Asfordby Hill and Melton Mowbray) in the last 20 years.

The children were then asked to use red spots to show those areas they didn't like and gold stars to show the areas they loved. Each group had to discuss their likes and dislikes and for each red spot or gold star they had to explain their reasoning on post it notes.

The slides used in the sessions are shown at Appendix 2.

There was no attempt to persuade the children or to lead them to come to any opinion or other. It was made clear that this was an exercise with no wrong answer but that their views and opinions mattered.

Feedback

The maps provide a clear visual record of what the children thought about living in and around Asfordby and the Parish Council will keep the original copies as a visual record for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation. Photographs of the maps are at Appendix 3.

What the pupils of Asfordby Hill said

Like	Dislike
Asfordby Amateurs - because they try so hard and it is a great football pitch!	The car park for Asfordby shops it is too small
Mowbray Football team - because they are awesome!	Sewage works – the smell
The shops in Asfordby Village (but there should be more of them so there is more choice)	Main Road past Asfordby Valley towards the roundabout the cars go too fast especially on the bend
Priory Nature Reserve – it's fun to walk there and cool when it's hot	Lack of shops near South Street (in Asfordby Hill)
Newleigh Farm (Riding School) - it's fun to play there and full of surprises	Nowhere to hang out
Skate Park in Melton Mowbray	Our school playground it is too small
Living in Asfordby village	Having to cross the road to go to our school playing fields ¹
Playing fields near the school (but they do need more equipment on them and there could be more activities there) ²	Compton Park: it needs more equipment (swings, climbing frame etc.)

¹ The school's playing fields are outside the parish boundary but the constraints facing the school and the suitability of a Victorian building to meet the needs of children in 2012 should not be thwarted by this administrative matter. The Asfordby Neighbourhood Plan could facilitate a solution to this matter.

² This area is just outside Asfordby Parish boundary but in doing a Neighbourhood Plan Asfordby Parish Council should consult adjoining parishes and could feedback these comments.

Like	Dislike
Carp Ponds, (for fishing), the woods and stepping stones	The woods next to Compton Park are really messy, with old mattresses and broken glass in; it is unsafe and children have hurt themselves there.
Play area adjacent to the Main Road in Asfordby Valley ; walk dogs, explore and play but would like more play equipment and for it to be bigger	
The skate park but it needs more ramps and more shelters. Would like one like Terminal 1 but outside. Music used to come out of shelter but it is broke and has not been repaired.	
The Parish Hall because I do guides there; everyone who does guides there likes it	
The Stute because I do Tae Kwon Do there	

What do you want Asfordby to be like in 2026?

A safe environment

Peaceful but not boring

Lots of things to do, something for everyone of all ages

More trees to climb

More playing fields

More shops in Asfordby so there is more choice

Space around me not all crammed in

If there will be more houses and people in Asfordby by 2026 then demolish the school and build a new one, our playground is too small

Summary

The children had many more likes than dislikes about living in and around Asfordby. They do value the play areas they have but the skate park behind the Parish Hall does not have enough ramps or shelters. Skateboarding and consequently skate parks are very popular with children this age and older and some pupils did use the one in Melton Mowbray.

The Valley play area is also used and enjoyed by the children although they would like more equipment on it. However, Compton Park (the one nearest the school) is well used by the children but this park appears the most in need of investment (it has minimal equipment and the children want better swings and a decent climbing frame). The woods next to Compton Park are also apparently in need of maintenance as they are unsafe. This should be investigated as a matter of urgency.

They value the 'Stute' as they had all been to birthday parties there but there didn't seem to be that much going on there on a regular basis for children (only one activity was mentioned). This is potentially an underused community resource.

As these children come from one side of Asfordby Parish (and 1/3 from outside the parish altogether) it is pleasing that they still all recognised the Parish Hall and were familiar with the facilities in Asfordby village. They use the shops in Asfordby village (although they wanted more of them) and some of the children did go on walks around the Priory Nature Reserve and elsewhere in the fields around the parish. Others liked the fishing at Carp Ponds or taking their bikes to the open space north of Holwell Works to do jumps. From this sample of children there was clearly a familiarity and enjoyment of the variety of features in the varied landscape around the three settlements that make up Asfordby Parish.

A more complex issue is that of the school building and its playing fields. With the children having to cross busy roads to access the playing fields, a small playground (too small according to the children) and inadequate parking for staff or visitors, there is clearly an issue about the suitability of the school to meet 21st century requirements.

In all 5 groups there were some children who had relatives living somewhere on the map and they were able to show where these relatives lived with the blue spots. This suggests that Asfordby does retain different generations of the same family, although to ensure Asfordby remains a well-balanced community in the future a variety of housing types and a suitable proportion of affordable housing should be considered.

Approximately one third of the children knew someone who had an allotment in the parish although none of them noted specifically that they spent time at them. When prompted they were aware of their value (cheap food) and did consider there should be more of them.

Plan Your Ideal Town

As a round up activity and to enable the pupils to consolidate some of their learning about what makes a well-planned place, their final activity was to design their ideal town based on the good planning principles that had been discussed during the session. They were also told to think about what they liked about living in and around Asfordby and to ensure they planned these features into their ideal town. The children enthusiastically engaged with the task saying it was really good fun. It also gave them some insight into the task Asfordby Parish Council faces; the children commented 'it is harder than you think as the different uses, housing, shops or offices affect each other'. One pupil also commented that it was hard to keep everybody happy when working together as a team as everyone has their own ideas! However, the 2 groups that won the small prize were those who worked collaboratively. Photographs showing the children in action doing the map work and planning their ideal town are shown at Appendix 4.

Concluding Remarks

The children at Asfordby Hill Primary School know their local area very well and contributed a lot of local knowledge and a young persons' perspective to help the Parish Council understand what 10/11 year olds like and don't like about living in and around Asfordby. The sessions provided a valuable insight into how children perceive their area and what they value. These things must be understood and cherished to ensure that they are not lost in any development proposals for the future.

As the timescale for the implementation of policies in a Neighbourhood Plan will impact more on these youngsters than any other group (any provision of affordable housing for example, maybe the only way they are able to live in Asfordby when they grow up,) it is very important that they feel part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. Their involvement in this session enabled them to make a significant contribution at an early stage in the policy making of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is suggested that the children are kept informed of the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan, especially any policies that are formed in part by the outcome of this consultation process.

Helen Metcalfe

May 2012

Appendix 1

Planning with People

Planning the future of Asfordby

- 1.30** **Who are we and what are we here for?**
- 1.35** **What is town planning and how does it affect your life?**
- 1.45** **Activity 1: Can you describe the view outside your bedroom window?**
- 1.55** **Feedback: what do you see and how have planners affected that?**
- 2.00** **Activity 2: Let's look at maps of Asfordby**
Can you find where you live? Your school? Where you play? Where the shops are? As there will be pupils from outside Asfordby groups will be arranged to make sure that there is a pupil from Asfordby in every group. Pupils can still tell us general things too about what they like/dislike these will still give an idea about what matters to children of this age.
- 2.10** **Activity 3: You show me**
Let's go through your photos of your likes and dislikes. Can you put your likes and dislikes on the map?
- 2.20** **If you were town planners what would you do to improve Asfordby?**
- 2.40** **Can you design your ideal town?**
Think of all the things you like about your area, think about all the planning issues you have considered this morning. Using models can you create the ideal town? Work in groups.
- 3.05** **Close and award prize to winning group.**

Appendix 2

How do you want Asfordby planned?



Planning
with People

Why are you here?

- What do you want Asfordby to look like in 2026?
- The parish council needs your help to write the Asfordby Plan
- It's your life that will be affected
- I want your ideas, so I can tell the council what you think!



Planning
with People

How can you help Asfordby Parish Council?

- Listen and learn about what town planning is
- Describe what you can see from your bedroom window
- Look at maps of Asfordby and tell us what you do and don't like about it
- If you were town planners what would you do?
- Can you design your ideal town, can you show us how it should be done!

Planning
with People

Rules!

- Get stuck in
- Team effort
- Ask questions



Planning
with People

WHAT THINGS ARE PLANNED?



How has town planning affected you?

- What can you see from your bedroom window?
- Can you see other houses, parks or fields?
- Town planning has decided where the houses should go ...
- ...and has stopped the fields around Asfordby being built on...



Planning
with People

What is around you?

- Draw or describe what can you see from your bedroom window?
- 10 minutes
- Be prepared to share with the class what you see every day
- Do you like your view?



Planning
with People

What is the point of town planning?

- It shapes the places where we all live and work and the country we live in.
- Good planning means we get the right building in the right place at the right time.



Planning
with People









Tell me what you think!

- These are your maps to help the parish council understand what you think about living in and around Asfordby
- Put the name of your school on and your names and ages around the edge
- Follow the instructions carefully, make sure you use the right coloured spots and stars



Planning
with People

Likes and dislikes

- What do you like about living in or around Asfordby?
- Are there things to do, places to go?
- Where do you go for fun? (indoors and outdoors)
- What do you dislike about where you live? (whether it is in Asfordby or not)
- What would you do to improve the area?



Planning
with People

Likes and dislikes

- Can you put your likes and dislikes on the map?
- **Red spots = dislike**
- **Gold stars = like**
- Use post it notes to explain what you mean
- Everyone must write down one like and one dislike
- If you don't live on the map tell me where you live and what you like and don't



Planning
with People

Now you are town planners!

- Imagine you are aged 24/25
- What sort of place do you want to live in?
- What sort of place do you want Asfordby to be?
- What would you change about where you live to make your life better?
- What would you change to make life better for 10 year olds in 2026?



Planning
with People

Planning your ideal town

- Where will you live?
- Where will your mum and dad work?
- Where will you go to school?
- Where would you go shopping?
- What about other things, libraries, cinema, doctors?
- What will your town look like?
- Will there be trees?
- What will the buildings look like?
- How will you get about?



Planning
with People

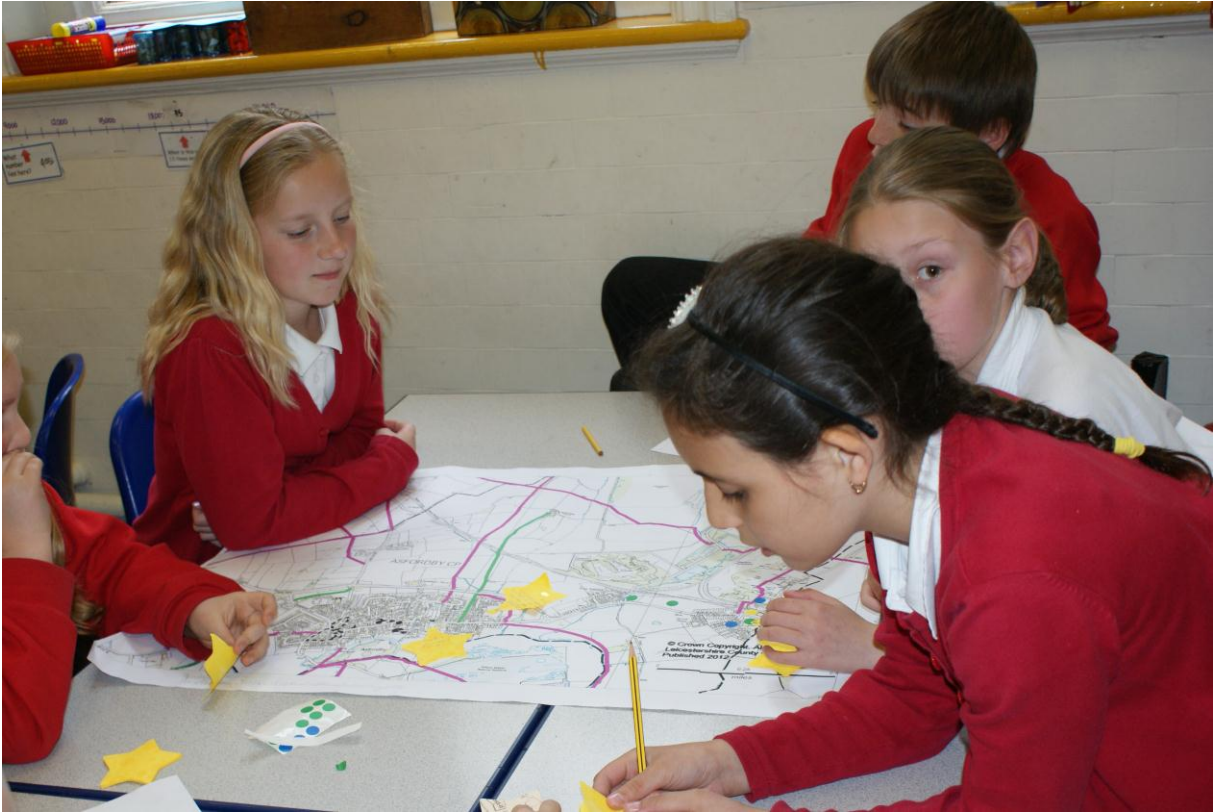
Appendix 3

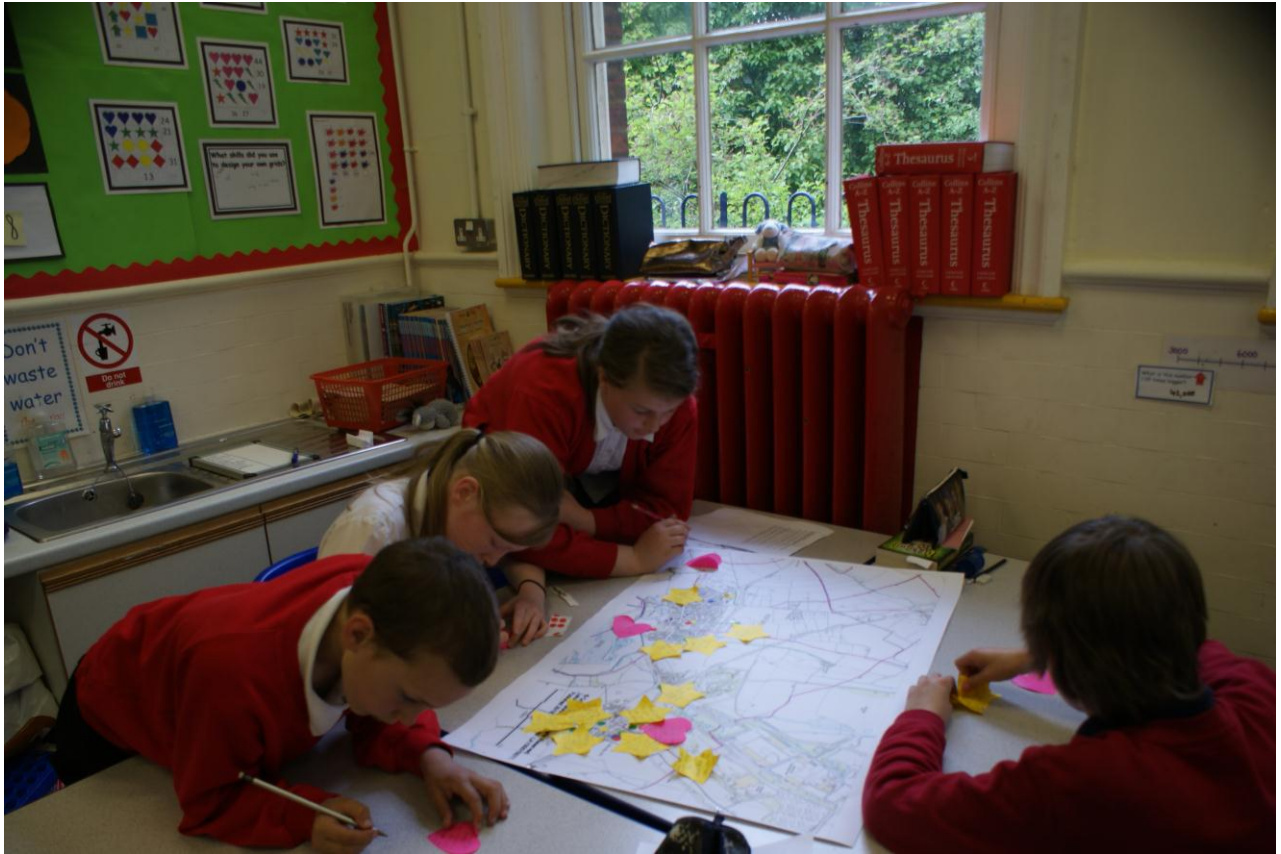
The Map Work



Appendix 4

The children in action!







Planning their Ideal Town





