

Witton Gilbert

Parish Plan



February 2012

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1. Introduction

In November 2000 the Government launched the Rural White Paper "Our Countryside - The Future – a fair deal for rural England" which set out a vision of living and viable rural communities. It signalled the intention of establishing the principle that future decisions on the rural population be taken with the active participation of local people and the development of new partnerships in delivering change. The role of the Government would be to provide the framework and support for rural communities to succeed. Parish Councils would be encouraged to take greater responsibility for running their own affairs, and for shaping the future development of their communities through the preparation of parish plans. The plans would set out the economic, social and environmental concerns of the local population and the content, prepared after detailed consultation with the local community, could be used as a legitimate means of influencing future decisions and planning. It would also provide an opportunity for the community to put forward recommendations as to how the parish could develop and improve over time.

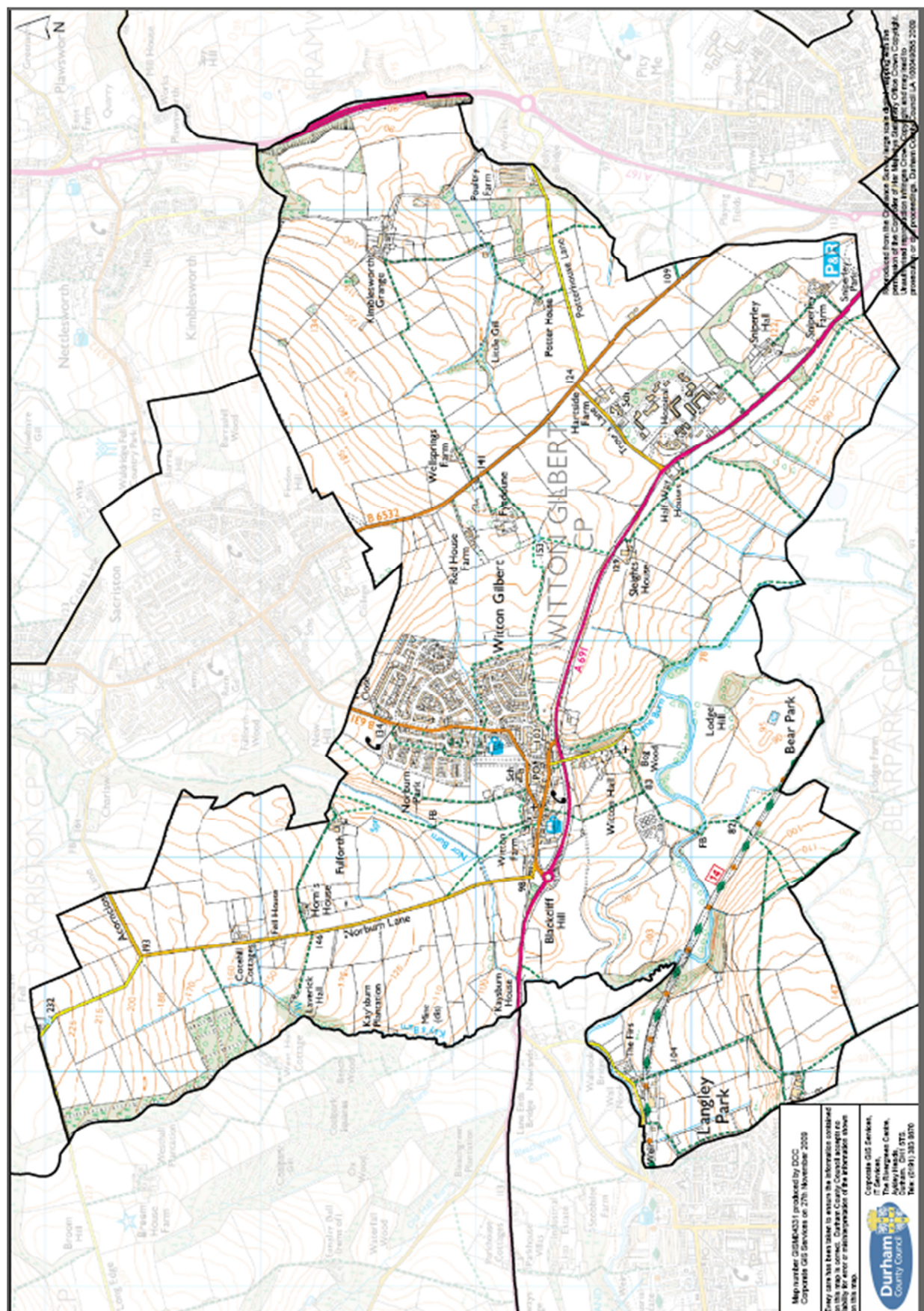
The formation of the Parish Plan was launched in October 2009 with a well-attended public meeting in the Witton Gilbert village hall. The meeting was led by staff of Durham Rural Community Council who explained the nature of the plan. Comments and suggestions from those present were noted. Volunteers were invited to take further part, and from these a steering committee was established to advance the initiative.



The steering committee designed a questionnaire which was sent to every household and establishment in the parish in June 2010. The completed questionnaire was collected through the cooperation of the post-office, parish church and shops. There was a disappointingly low but nevertheless significant return. The data was analysed with the help of Durham Rural Community Council and in January 2011 a second public meeting was held to give the community an opportunity to see the preliminary results and to make further comment. Additionally, local businesses were approached for further input and the village school and Fyndoune Community College were invited to put forward their views. Following this consultative process, focus groups were set up to look more closely at the individual sections arising from the questionnaire and with a view to developing future strategy. The published plan is derived from the comments arising from the meetings and interviews together with the results of the questionnaire.

2. Map

Map showing the extent of the Parish of Witton Gilbert



3. Population

In this section we present some of the data from the 2001 census (this is the latest data available). Then the population of Witton Gilbert was about 2500 with roughly equal numbers of male and female inhabitants. The age distribution of the population was:

Below 20 years	20%
20 to 29	12%
30 to 39	16%
40 to 49	14%
50 to 64	23%
65 and over	15%

About 73% of the working age population of the village were economically active with positions as below:

Managers/Senior Officials	11.7%
Professional	11.3%
Associate Professional/technical	15.2%
Admin/Secretarial	12.6%
Skilled Trades	11.9%
Personal Service	8.5%
Sales/Customer Service	7.2%
Process, Plant & Machine operatives	10.1%
Elementary Occupations	11.6%
	100.00%

This is further detailed in the following table:

Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry	1.7%
Mining & Quarrying, Elec., Gas & Water	0.8%
Manufacturing	11.3%
Construction	8.1%
Wholesale, retail, repair of motor Vehicles	13.6%
Hotels Restaurants	5.9%
Transport, Storage & Communication	6.2%
Financial	2.3%
Real Estate. Renting & Business	7.3%
Public Admin. Defence & Social security	10.5%
Education	12.0%
Health & Social work	15.0%
Other	5.2%
	100.00%

The religions of the population were as below:

Christian	81.31%
Buddhist	0.12%
Hindu	0.68%
Jewish	0.00%
Muslim	0.24%
Sikh	0.24%
Other Religion	0.24%
No Religion	10.50%
Religion Not stated	6.67%
	100.00%

The distribution of households at that time was:

All Households	1092
All People in Households	2408
All Families	720
Vacant Household Spaces	28
Owned	764
Council rented	225
Social rented	39
Private rented (or rent free)	56

Types of housing in the village were:

Detached House or Bungalow	190
Semi Detached	648
Terraced House	209
Flat, Maisonette, Apartment	37
Other	0
	1084

4. History of the village

There is evidence of people in the area in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age: a cyst grave on Fulforth farm land, and various cup and ring marked stones picked up in the fields. Field finds from Roman times suggest that there was a small Roman settlement at Crookton, across the Browney Valley from Witton. Crookton existed as a settlement from before the Norman Conquest until the thirteenth century. Witton itself was the centre of an estate created out of thick woodland some time before the Conquest and by the end of the twelfth century it was owned together with Fulforth by the Bishop of Durham. His tenant and Lord of the Manor was Gilbert de la Ley, who gave his name to his village in the woods. It is thought that his Manor house and its buildings were at St. John's Green down by the river. They have now totally disappeared, although its chapel of the same name still survived as a farm cottage in the early 1920s. There were other early settlements in the parish based on farms created at the edges of the village; Stobbilee (near Langley Park), Straight Stirrups, Findon and Sacriston Heugh.

The people of Witton Gilbert in the late twelfth century would have had their own small cottages, and worked strips of land which they held in the large open village fields. In return for their land, they owed the Lord of the Manor work in the manor fields and paid rent in cash and in kind. They had to pay to grind their corn at the Lord's mill at Wallnook. Animals were pastured in the common waste on the edges of the settlement, and the meadows by the Browney were kept for hay. The crops grown were wheat and rye for bread, oats and peas for animal fodder and barley for beer and bread. Unless they had 20 or more acres, the Witton farmers would have had to borrow oxen for the plough and horses for riding and pulling carts. Some sheep were kept for their meat and wool, and everyone would have pigs and hens, and a cow or two for milk, butter and cheese. The more prosperous farmers sold any surplus produce at Durham market.

The original parish of St. Oswald's in Durham was huge in the Middle Ages, stretching from near Chester le Street to near Croxdale and included Witton Gilbert. To make the Witton villagers' journey to church easier Bishop Hugh de Puiset built Witton Gilbert Chapel about 1175, with its own graveyard. About the same time, Gilbert de la Ley gave land near the chapel to Durham Priory for the building of a hospital for five lepers. A new grange farm, later known as Witton Farm was built alongside, and produce from the farm provided money to run the hospital and fund a chaplain for it. The farm was managed for the Almoner of the Priory, who provided clothes, shoes, food and fuel for the hospital's inhabitants. The farmhouse had a suite of rooms where monks from the Priory stayed when they visited Witton at Christmas and Easter for religious celebrations. By the fourteenth century, the lepers had been replaced in the hospital by retired people who had worked for the Prior and Bishop, and it became an alms-house.

There is evidence for coal digging in the parish from the early fourteenth century. It was mostly produced from bell pits reached by ladders, and soon worked out. There are several references to pits at Kimblesworth, in Beaurepaire Park, Findon and Fulforth. There were small drift mines too in the chapelry and a miner called John Nattress was fined in 1450 for not paying his coal tithe to the Bishop.

Some part of the Prior's Park of Beaurepaire was within the bounds of Witton Gilbert. Crookton fields, some woods in the Browney Valley and a small cattle farm became the Prior's when he built a house there for his retirement in 1258. Shortly afterwards he enclosed his land by making a ditch and bank along its boundary. Over the years the Park grew by further land grants until 1311 when it was enclosed by a stone wall. It was reckoned to contain 1500 acres. The gatehouse was at Stottgate and the keeper's house was Lodge Farm. Deer were kept in the Park, and monks from the Priory took their holidays

in the mansion house. At one time there were 2000 sheep in the Park, and tenants fed 42 pigs in its woods. During the Scottish wars of the fourteenth century, the Prior's estate was invaded several times, horses and cattle taken and the house of Beaurepaire and its chapel robbed of valuables. In 1346 King David and the Scots camped on the estate before the battle of Neville's Cross. Prior Fossour spent considerable sums repairing the damage and restocking the estate farm. After 1535 when Durham Priory was dissolved, the Bearpark estate, owned now by the Dean of Durham Cathedral was divided up into tenant farms, some of which were in Witton Gilbert parish. Farmers from Lodge Farm, Sleights House, St. John's Green, and Paper Mill Farm are buried in Witton churchyard.



After the Reformation Witton Gilbert became an independent parish. Kimblesworth was affiliated to it in 1593 when its people were permitted to use the church and burial ground, as its church there was ruinous. Witton's population had grown and now, amongst the farmers and agricultural workers there were tradesmen and craftsmen. At least one, Miles Sheppardson who was village constable in 1641 and had a farm in the parish, was a member of the Masons' Guild in Durham. People had houses and shops on each side of the village street, with long plots of land at the back to accommodate sheds, barns and workshops and to grow vegetables. In 1641 there were 76 men over the age of 18 in the parish, and in 1666 there were 92 houses of sufficient size to pay the government's Hearth Tax. Witton was reputed to be a healthy place and there is little evidence for plague. There were some large farms in the parish, some owned by Durham business men as their houses in the country. Mixed farming was carried out now with rather more emphasis on stock rearing than corn production.

The church was Protestant and the few remaining Catholics in the parish were listed as recusants and heavily fined. There were Quakers in the parish as early as 1660, when John Woodmas, the miller at Wallnook Mill and two other men were arrested for their nonconformity and sent to the gaol in Durham. The Church Vestry appointed the parish officials, who superintended road and bridge building and road repairs. Overseers of the Poor administered the Poor Tax and in 1747 organized a Poor House in the village where the infirm poor could be cared for. Other poor received small pensions and help in sickness. Two parish constables, under the authority of the Durham Sheriff, caught poachers and thieves, kept a check on alehouses, and were in charge of the village pinfold at the bottom of Norburn Lane (also called Nor Lane), where stray animals were kept until their owners reclaimed them by paying a fine.



There were some small schools in the village quite early. The vicar Robert Hawksworth ran one in his house for up to 15 boys in the early 1600s, and later there were some Dames' Schools, where literate old ladies took a few younger children into their homes and taught them the rudiments of reading. A school was built on Front Street in 1720 by public subscription and the first schoolmaster was the parish clerk, Stephen Clark. A few small collieries were developed in the parish on a slightly larger scale than before, employing a handful of men at Charlaw, Blackburn



and Findon Hill. Conditions for working were agreed between owners and their men by a pitman's bond.

By 1896, the parish was much changed. It was reported to have 4400 inhabitants and to cover 2535 acres, the increase in population being 'attributed to the extension of the collieries in the neighbourhood.' Charlaw Pit employed 300 men, Sacriston Pit 600 men, Kimblesworth and Nettlesworth employed 250 and 600 respectively. Sacriston, always part of the parish, had grown up to house the immigrant workers, and now totally dwarfed its neighbour Witton Gilbert. It was separated off into a new parish in 1863 with a new church. Langley Park Colliery opened in 1876, and Falkous Terrace and East and West Block, together with 80 back-to-back houses on the Clink Field were built at Witton to take the overspill pitmen from there and from the colliery at Bearpark, opened in 1872.

In 1862 a station was built on the edge of Witton village, which was now on the Browney Valley railway line to Consett. Coke from the plant at Langley Park, coal, creosote and timber, farm produce and passengers travelled the line between Consett and Durham. A postal service had grown up and Witton had its own Post Office on Front Street, where letters arrived from the Durham Office twice a day. Not far from the station, the Kaysburn Brick and Tile Company took advantage of the seams of fine blue clay found when the Langley Pit was sunk.

There were two new National Schools in the village, one for 100 infants and a Mixed School for 150 boys and girls. These schools were closed during the First World War due to subsidence. A prefabricated corrugated iron school at the top end of the Dene was in use until a Council School replaced it in 1932. There was also an Industrial School at Earl's House with its own farm. It took in boys from the County who were truants, or from poor homes, and taught them a trade.

Front Street had electric light, courtesy of the neighbouring collieries. Main drainage was installed along Front Street too, to help prevent the fever outbreaks when patients were sent to the Fever Hospital at Langley Park.

The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built in 1857 to hold 150. It had a Sunday School, and was the centre of a band of the Temperance Movement at work in the village, no doubt with good reason as there were seven public houses each with its own entertainment speciality. Rabbit coursing was held at the Black Lion, the stirrup cup was drunk at the Three Tuns on hunt days, the Gardening Club met at the Travellers' Rest, the Oddfellows' Arms hosted dances, at the Glendenning Arms the Oddfellows held their Club dinners, and at the Three Horseshoes, smoking concerts were held.

There were several shops in the village: Joseph Hedley was a draper and bootmaker, Cuthbert Green was a grocer. There was a greengrocer at Kaysburn, a tailor and draper at Fell House, a hairdresser, a blacksmith, a joiner and cartwright, and a photographer on Front Street. Small lending libraries were run from a cottage on Dene Bank and from the Post Office. After the First World War, a small drift mine was begun by Benjamin Pescod in the side of the Clink Bank, and employed about 20 men, mostly newcomers to the village, until shortly after the nationalization of the coal industry. In 1894 the Local Government Act removed responsibility for parish affairs from the control of the church vestry and created a joint civil parish of Witton Gilbert and Sacriston. After two years, and quite a lot of bad feeling, a boundary was established between the two sections, and five councillors assigned to Witton Gilbert and ten to Sacriston.

At the beginning of the 20th century the village started to move towards Sacriston with new council houses being built at Hillside, Fair View, Chester Gardens and Rose Lea. These were some of the first council houses to be built in the country and marked a social revolution as families moved away from the back to back terraces into spacious modern homes. Durham

Rural District Council continued this building programme into the 1960s, and 1970s then the Whitehouse Farm estate and Norburn Park were built. Both private estates which saw the housing stock in the village rise to approximately 1100 with a resident population of about 2500.

Witton Gilbert Primary School opened on Sacriston Lane in 1939. The present Workingmen's Club and the White Tun public house were built in the 1960s as were the present two shops trading as newsagents and general dealers. The Community Centre, (Cooper Hall) which is very much part of the village's recreational activities and where the Parish Council is based, was opened in 1974.

At the start of the twentieth century it was unusual for women with families to go out to work, the men mostly being employed at the nearby collieries or on local farms. However by the 1980s the mines were closed and both men and women now go out to work, mainly in service industries in Durham, Chester-Le-Street, Newcastle and Sunderland.

This century saw a massive rise in road transport with almost every household having a car. Front Street which was a constant problem and an accident black spot was by-passed in 1996 and is now a quiet residential area with two public houses, the Glendenning Arms and the Travellers Rest.

Several of the old farms are still there, and on fine summer evenings you can still walk across the meadows and down to the Browney, and imagine that the centuries have rolled back to the village's rural beginnings.

5. Amenities and Services

5.1 Introduction

Despite the antiquity of Witton Gilbert, the growth of the coal industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the rapid growth and considerable increase in size of the neighbouring communities of Sacriston & Langley Park. Local services have consequently tended to follow the larger centres of population and the village and parish share these facilities. Residents are, however, able to enjoy a number of intrinsic resources although many respondents made a case for additional services. The village also suffers from not having a clear and recognizable centre where they are able to exchange or access news and information about services and events.

5.2 Shops

There are two convenience stores in the village supplying a wide range of produce. There is also a post office, a hairdressers and a food take-away establishment. Additionally, two organic farm shops are located just outside of the parish boundary. The majority of respondents do their bulk household grocery shopping outside of the parish with the Arnison Centre, Sacriston, Chester-le-Street and Durham being the preferred centres. Opinion was almost equally divided on the need for more local shops, with those in favour suggesting the necessity for a baker, greengrocer butcher and chemist.



5.2.1 Is there a need for more local shops?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	51.1%
No	48.9%

5.2.2 If more shops were provided would you use them?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	73.9%
No	26.1%

5.3 Health Care

There are no GP services in the village but there is good provision in adjacent villages. The majority of residents consult the Sacriston medical practice, with significant numbers using services in Langley Park and Framwellgate Moor. There is a similar pattern in the use of pharmacies in these areas. Dental services are accessed more widely, the principal practices being in Durham, Sacriston and Chester-le-Street but also ranging from as far afield as areas such as Newcastle, South Shields and Coxhoe. Although there was some call for the establishment of these services within the village, the majority were satisfied with the present provision.

5.3.1 Do you have difficulty accessing these services?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	5.5%
No	94.5%

The University Hospital of North Durham is the main hospital for the area with additional hospital services being offered in Chester-le-Street. The Durham County health policy means, however, that residents can be referred to specialist centres throughout the county. Some people again cited problems of access, mobility and waiting times for specialist services.

5.3.2 Do you have any health related needs that are not being met (e.g. hospital services)?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	1.4%
No	98.6%

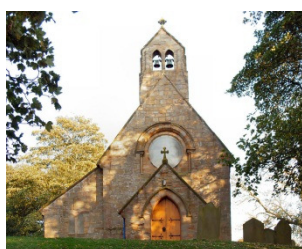
However, more respondents showed concern when asked:

5.3.3 Do you feel that any groups of parish residents are being disadvantaged?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	26.9%
No	73.1%

Despite the response to 5.3.1, the main areas of anxiety were those of access to surgeries, hospitals and pharmacies. Most seemed unaware of the voluntary driver and delivery schemes available. Some cited that there was little in the way of assistance available or information of any associations that could benefit the elderly. Others suggested the isolation of the elderly and that some were afraid to leave their homes because of anti-social behavior.

5.4 Religion



There are two churches in Witton Gilbert. The parish church of St Michael and All Angels stands on a wooded promontory to the south of the village and the Methodist Church is located at the junction of Front Street and Sacriston Lane.



Roman Catholic and other denominational churches can be found in adjacent villages and Durham City together with other forms of religious observance.

5.5 Education

The village primary school is centrally located, has a good reputation and attracts almost 80% of children of the appropriate age group. Others attend primary schools and faith schools in adjoining villages.



Pre-school provision is supplied by a nursery school, a toddler group and a village playgroup operating in the community centre.

There are no secondary schools in the parish and although almost 70% attend school in Sacriston, significant numbers attend school in Framwellgate Moor and elsewhere.

5.5 Library

The nearest library is based in Sacriston but this is regularly used by Witton residents who are also able to use larger library facilities in Durham City and Chester-le-Street.

5.6 Allotments

The parish council administers 34 allotment gardens adjacent to the school. There is a growing waiting list for these and many respondents emphasised the need for additional plots.



5.7 Community Buildings

There are currently two buildings used for community activities within the parish; the community centre (Cooper Hall) and Fyndoune House.



The main social activities are carried out in the Community Centre on Sacriston Lane, next to the school and on the adjacent playing fields and bowling green. Play equipment is dated and run down, but the Centre itself has recently had a number of improvements and is in good condition. It is heavily used by various groups such as the Women's' Institute, dancing club, local history group and is also used during the day as the centre for the pre-school nursery and toddlers' activities.

Fyndoune House is a small community centre in Fyndoune Way. It was formerly the hub of a sheltered housing scheme with a resident warden. Access is now remotely operated from a Durham switchboard. It is well set up and houses a fortnightly lunch club and is ideal for committee meetings and small educational or social gatherings. At the time of writing, the continued funding for this facility is under review and might not continue.

5.8 Communication

Currently, parish communication is provided on public notice boards located at the top of Newton Street and on Sacriston Lane. The Parish Council also publishes an attractive quarterly newsletter which is delivered free of charge to every household.



At present, the village does not have a web-site.

5.9 Action

- **Improve information about support available for access to medical services.**
- **Explore the possibility of developing a village centre.**
- **Develop a village and parish web-site.**
- **Consider the possibility of establishing additional shopping facilities.**
- **Consider additional tree and flower planting.**

6. Security

The parish is considered to be a good place to live. There are regular monthly reports from the police and the warden to the parish council and this shows that there is very little crime in the village. The survey indicated that the most positive aspects of life in the parish were that people were generally friendly, neighbours looked out for one another, there were many walking opportunities in and around the parish and there was easy access to the countryside.

The results from the survey are shown in the table and show an overwhelmingly positive view of the parish from the respondents.

6.1 Do you feel that the parish and village is a place you enjoy living in?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	82.0%
to some extent	16.5%
No	1.4%

However there are certain issues which do concern those who live in the parish. These are shown in the table below. One of the major irritations is the amount of litter that is found particularly on the playing fields. This is very unsightly and the result of thoughtlessness. Linked to this is the concern about dog fouling – especially when it is to be found on the playing fields and on the paths by the school. This again is unacceptable behaviour and is of course a health hazard especially for young children.

6.2 How much of a problem do you think the following are?

Answer Options	Big problem	Occasional problem	No problem
Anti-social behaviour	21	89	23
Vandalism	17	102	19
Alcohol consumption	27	76	25
Dog fouling	52	78	13
Litter	56	72	7
Other (please specify)			

A further issue that was expressed by a number of respondents concerned alcohol consumption, especially by young people, again this was seen as both a health hazard and a litter problem when bottles were often found strewn about the paths and playing fields.

The problem of vandalism and general antisocial behaviour were also raised. These manifest themselves in wanton destruction of property such as children's swings etc. and in the daubing of walls with unpleasant graffiti. Other matters – for example road safety are considered elsewhere in the report.

The Warden and Police were helpful in ensuring the security of the parish and was a pleasant place to live.

Action

- **Explore ways of reducing litter problems especially on the fields**
- **Explore ways of eliminating the problem of dog mess at various places but especially near the school area**
- **Ensure people are aware of how to contact Warden and Community Police.**

7. Transport

7.1 *Introduction and Existing Conditions*

The Parish of Witton Gilbert is well served by high quality roads and public transport and is reasonably accessible on foot by cycle and for horse riders. The Principal road A691 runs east-west through the centre of the Parish it has a 60mph speed limit and contains a combined footway/cycleway over the length of the Parish. The B6312 road runs north south through the village from the A691 roundabout on the bypass to Sacriston to the north and has a footway



on both sides. The B6532 road runs south east from Sacriston to Durham through the east of the Parish and has an un-surfaced footway over most of its length. Minor roads connect the village itself with farms north west of the village via the Nor Lane and connect the A691 with the B6532 and the A167 via Trout Lane and Potterhouse Lane. Public transport links with the village are good with the Consett to Durham 15 and 15A services providing access from the bottom of the village to Durham, the 25 service providing access through the village to Chester-le-Street and Newcastle the 13 and 14 services providing access through the village to Durham via Sacriston. Public footpath links to the village are mixed, links to the north include routes via Fulforth Dene and west of Norburn Park, and a link to the east includes a footpath to the south of Brookside connecting with Kimblesworth Grange via Findon Hill. Links to the south include routes from the church south west to the former railway walkway and south east along the river Browney. There are no formal footpath links between the village and the countryside to the west of the village and this area can only be accessed by circuitous routes via the railway walkway and via Nor Lane. There are no bridleway or cycleway links between the village and surrounding areas.

7.2 *Traffic Management, Road Safety and Road Signage*

There are a number of traffic management issues within the Parish and these mainly relate to parking problems and speeding. Parking is a particular issue in a number of areas in the Parish. Sacriston Lane between Front Street and the Workingmen's club is main focus of parking problems along with Norburn Park and the Community Centre. Norburn Park parking problems include the areas around the cul-de-sacs adjacent to the link villas and their garages. Parking problems at the Community Centre occur mainly on weekday nights when functions at the Centre coincide with other events such as football, bowling or school events. Rat-running along Front Street was identified as a problem in the evenings when traffic backs up on the bypass.



7.2.1 Survey Results Parking

Have you been affected by parking problems in the village?	
Answer Options	Response %
Yes	36.9%
No	63.1%

Speeding is seen as a particular problem by a majority of people responding to the survey. Again the main focus for speeding problems is Sacriston Lane from the top of the hill down to the school along with Norburn Park perimeter road and the lower section of Rose Lea. Speeding is identified as a problem for people crossing Sacriston Lane to access the paper shop the Workingmen's Club and the Chinese take-away.



7.2.2 Survey Results Speeding

Do you feel that traffic speed is a problem?	
Answer Options	Response %
Yes	72.9%
No	27.1%

Road Safety was identified as a problem by a significant number of respondents and was divided into 4 main areas: crossing the road at the paper shop, crossing the road at the school, speeding on Sacriston Lane and the need for traffic calming on estate roads. Poor road signage was identified by a significant number of respondents and enhanced signage to reduce speed was the predominant issue raised



7.2.3 Road Signage Survey Results

Is the road signage sufficient?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	73.4%
No	26.6%

7.2.4 Possible Improvements and Proposals

There are a number of potential improvements that could be made in respect of traffic management, road safety and road signage. Any proposals would be subject to approval from the appropriate authorities and implementation would be dependent on finance being made available. Parking at the Chapel, School and Village Hall could be improved with the addition of a limited number of parking spaces at the Village Hall and revisions to the school car park by relocating the security fence.

Parking at the paper shop may be eased by the addition of a pedestrian refuge encouraging parking on the opposite side of the road to the shop. Parking problems around the Workingmen's Club and the Chinese takeaway have no easy solution but some additional parking could be provided in the cul-de-sacs on Norburn Park within the existing verge or by demolishing garages if owners agree. Resolution of the parking problems around the School will require careful management as the County Council is unlikely to sanction additional parking here and alternative modes of transport or car sharing should be explored.

Speeding on Sacriston Lane has been partially addressed by the introduction of the speedvisor electronic sign above the Workingmen's Club and further sites for such signs should be explored. A pedestrian refuge at the paper shop would also help reduce speeds. With respect to speeding on Norburn Park perimeter road and the lower section of Rose Lea, some form of traffic calming should be investigated following speed tests. With respect to rat-running on Front Street two possible solutions are available: making the right turn off the bypass bus-only or changing the priority at the Front Street/Sacriston Lane junction. Addressing the parking and speeding problems should meet most of the road safety issues raised in the survey.

7.3 Public Transport

The majority of respondents indicated that they used bus travel frequently or occasionally. For all trips more than 90 % of respondents had shopping as their main purpose for travel for frequent trips with trips for pleasure the next highest followed by work journeys. 80 % of respondents were satisfied with the provision of public transport in the Parish. Those that were dissatisfied were generally asking for more frequent services and services to additional destinations. There is a reasonable level of satisfaction with public transport in the Parish but further improvements suggested in the survey could help to encourage more people to transfer from their cars to the bus and thereby reduce the problems that car travel and parking cause

7.3.1 Public Transport Survey Results

Are you satisfied with the provision of public transport?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	80.3%
No	19.7%

What is normally the main purpose of your journey?

Answer Options	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Response Count
Work	63	3	3	24	93
School/education	12	10	3	44	69
Shopping	105	37	0	0	141
Health (e.g. visits to doctor/hospital)	33	53	34	3	123
Pleasure	83	41	5	2	130
Other (please specify)					8

7.3.2 Possible Improvements and Proposals

Public Transport facilities within the village include a number of bus shelters of various types and ages and types. The bus shelters on Front Street and at the School are old brick shelters which are often full of litter and are used for anti-social purposes and should be considered for replacement. There is no shelter at the Travellers Rest for Consett bound passengers and the provision of one should be requested. The suggestion that the right turns from the bypass T junction should be made bus only would reduce bus delays but would need to be subject to public consultation. There is no real-time bus information provided in the village and the provision of this information would encourage further bus usage.

7.4 Walking Cycling and Horse riding

The vast majority of respondents thought walking should be encouraged and thought that footpaths were sufficiently accessible. Whilst a majority of respondents thought that there was sufficient space in the Parish for riding walking and cycling it was indicated earlier that no bridleways connected with the village or surrounding routes.

7.4.1 Possible Improvements and Proposals.

The creation of a formal right of way between Norburn Park and the Fulforth Dene footway would provide access to the countryside to the west of the village and the rights of way network there. The conversion of the Fulforth Dene footpath into a bridleway would provide access to the bridleway network north and west of the village for horse riders and cyclists. The creation of a bridge suitable for a bridleway between the sewage treatment works and the railway walkway on the other side of the river would provide better access for pedestrians cyclists and horse riders to the walkway as well as providing a tourist route into the village from the walkway.

7.5 Reducing Car Travel

Respondents were asked what would make them use their car less and by far the most popular answer was cheaper and more reliable buses, however, it was suggested that a better range of shops in the village, such as a greengrocer, butcher and baker would make car travelling for shopping less necessary. In addition other proposals for reducing car travel such as a car share scheme or a community bus scheme were suggested and the community bus scheme was the most popular with 39 respondents saying they would use one.

7.5.1 Reducing Car Travel Survey Results

If they were available, would you use the following?

Answer Options	Yes	No
Car Share Scheme (work, school or shopping ect)	16	100
Community car (a car that is available to hire in the village)	21	95
A community bus (e.g. for joint shopping, leisure use or school run)	39	80

7.5.2 Possible Improvements and Proposals

Possible additional improvements to reduce car travel, beyond the public transport improvements above, would include additional shops and a community bus.

Action:

- Explore further traffic calming possibilities on Sacriston Lane
- Improve quality of bus shelters
- Improve bus information in the village

8. Business

8.1 Introduction and Existing Businesses

Witton Gilbert is predominantly a rural parish and although there was a mining influence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the major emphasis in the past and present has been in agriculture. Despite this, about 30 additional businesses are listed for the parish ranging from electrical and computer services to hairdressing and removals. The focus of these businesses is largely outside of the parish and they offer employment to relatively small numbers of people. The principal employers are the Lanchester Road Hospital (previously called Earls House) and the school but the majority of the population work in Durham or the surrounding area. The growth of the village in the 1960s and '70s was largely due to the establishment of the Post Office Savings Bank and Land Registry in Durham City, and the development of Low Newton Prison. Although there have been subsequent changes in the patterns of employment, the village



has continued to attract commuters and is a popular source of housing for those who wish to enjoy the amenities and pleasant environment.

8.2 Agriculture

There are seven farms wholly or partly in the parish. For two of these, the farm house and buildings lie outside of the parish boundary and a specialist poultry business lies close to Pity Me. The farms average 300-400 acres and are family run with few employees. Four are mixed farms, one of which includes dairy cows, one only arable and one only grazing. Despite a popular request from respondents for farm shops, little need was seen by farmers for another since two already lie just outside the parish boundary.



8.3 Service Industries

There are a number of small to medium sized businesses providing electrical, electronic and computer services and consultancy. Three have been established for between 15 and 27 years and currently employ one to six people. The parish is also home to a large furniture removal firm and four taxi services.

The largest employer in the parish is the Lanchester Road hospital, based to the east of the village, in established buildings and a modern complex which also houses a special school.



8.4 Retail

The village is served by two long established convenience stores supplying everyday needs and newspapers. As well as serving locals one shop attracts considerable passing trade from motorists with attendant parking problems. When residents were asked which other types of shop they would welcome, a butcher and baker were foremost in their responses. Others that would be welcomed include a cafe and a craft shop.

Two farm shops, one with a coffee house, are just outside the parish boundary and attract many customers from a wide area. Most residents also shop in Sacriston because of its close proximity and wider range of shops. Bulk shopping tends to be carried out elsewhere. The village is fortunate in having the services of a post office. There is also a hair stylist and beauty business employing four staff and attracting customers from outside the village.

8.4.1 Survey results Shopping

Do you use the shops in the village?

Answer Options	Response %
Frequently	36.1%
Occasionally	44.9%
Rarely	19.0%

8.5 Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism

There are three public houses in the village, The Glendenning Arms, The Traveller's Rest and The White Tun, together with a Working Men's Club. With one pub serving meals which is well supported by residents and has developed good reputation, attracting customers from further afield. The only other food outlet in the village is a Chinese take-away establishment just off Sacriston Lane

One of the inns is seeking to provide overnight accommodation and this would be a welcome addition to the village amenities, offer more local employment and would help to support the local economy by attracting visitors to the area. Two small caravan sites presently provide accommodation to visitors.

8.5.1 Action

- **Encourage the promotion and expansion of new shops and businesses in the parish.**
- **Promote local knowledge of shops, services and businesses available in Witton via website.**
Maintain or enhance, as appropriate, parking facilities near to shopping areas in the village.
- **Find or create a village centre or focal point with some open space.**

9. Recreation and Leisure

9.1 Introduction

The Parish Survey shows that a wide range of leisure activities are undertaken by the Community, but a limited number of organised or group activities are available within the Parish itself. There are many active walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, gardeners, photographers and other similar activities where the rural location provides a conducive environment for individuals or small groups. The Parish should encourage and enhance the opportunities for both the resident community and for our visitors. Much can be done to make them more accessible, educational and entertaining by, for example, improving cycleways, pathways, and providing information on our wildlife and heritage.

Cooper Hall provides a focus for communal activities in the village and there are a wide range of groups and activities taking place. The consultations show that although people are generally satisfied with the arrangements at Cooper Hall there are a number of leisure activities which could be offered or groups which could be encouraged. This is especially true for youth provision. We would hope to set up an active and lively **Leisure Action Group** to involve all age groups, this group would help set up new (or improve existing) facilities.

9.2 Children's Play Areas

Providing safe, well designed, appropriately equipped, supervised and entertaining outdoor activity (play areas) spaces for our children should be of high priority for our community.

- **Quantity of Play areas;** the survey provides clear data on this topic with 63% saying that we do not need additional play areas and that 59% of household use the areas provided.
- **Quality of play areas;** here the survey shows that 62% do not think the quality of the provision is adequate. With damaged and poor quality equipment cited as an issue, the main problem seems to be that these areas are subject to vandalism and misuse by older children or youths.

9.2.1 Action

- **Investigate best practice for the design and location of children's activity areas.**
Seek funds to implement the proposals.
- **Engage with the older children and teenagers to provide activity and meeting places which will meet their needs in safe and stimulating way without disadvantaging the immediate neighbourhood.**

9.3 *Adult and youth provision*

9.3.1 Information

When asked how well informed about leisure activities they were, over 70% said they were either well or fairly well informed about the leisure activities available in the Parish. However that still left a significant minority that felt they could be better informed.

9.3.2 Action

- **Examine the current methods of communication; See where there are gaps or methods which will suit our catchment better than the existing systems.**

9.3.3 The Wider Provision

The consultation highlights the importance the recreational facilities and venues in the wider areas of Durham County and Tyne & Wear play in our lives. With the Sage, The Gala, other northern theatres, cinemas, museums, galleries, libraries, football clubs, pubs and restaurants all featuring in the places people use regularly. Not forgetting the sporting and fitness venues such as swimming pools, gyms & indoor sports, rugby & football playing fields, golf courses etc. Obviously all of these require some form of transport and it is accepted that most of these venues could not economically be provided in the parish. However as a community we should do all we can to actively encourage participation in these types of activities where it is possible provide peripatetic or small scale provision. For example in the consultation meeting held in March the young people that attended made a case for a small gym. This sort of facility can be provided if both space and funds could be made available. Consultations with the School and the Junior football team indicated that they would like a multi-use games area (MUGA) to be provided within the village. Such a facility would include an all-weather surface and would be floodlit. It would be similar to the one provided at Fyndoune Community College and could be used for a variety of sports and activities all year round. Grant funding would need to be sought to provide such a facility and arrangements would need to be agreed for its management.

9.3.4 Actions

- **Examine the feasibility of forming interest or activity groups and arranging group transport if necessary.**
- **Examine the suggestions made in the public consultation for their feasibility.**
Where appropriate add these to the action plan so that they can be actively progressed.
- **Examine feasibility of providing a MUGA for community & school use.**

9.4 Cohesive Communities

Though it didn't form part of the initial consultation there are events and occasions which bring the community together and it is important to ensure we do not neglect these aspects of village life. Events like a village fete help build community spirit, give opportunities to fund-raise, encourage people to volunteer or participate in improving our parish and hopefully have some fun and make new friends on the way.

9.4.1 Action

- **Reintroduce the village Fete.**
- **Examine the feasibility of creating other events which bring the community together. Both annually and on more regular occasions.**

10. The Natural Environment

10.1 Introduction

Witton Gilbert's natural environment is greatly valued by the residents of the parish because of the attractive countryside and the easy access to it. Many respondents were members of at least one environmental or wildlife group, and comments on the appearance of the village expressed strong views on the importance of having and retaining green spaces.



The village is bordered by a rural, rolling landscape, largely man-made, with small islands of mixed deciduous woodland. This parish environment is itself surrounded by similar countryside so that extensive wildlife corridors have been established. To the South, a number of steep, wooded denes run towards the river of which Witton Dene, extending from the village, is the largest, and the only one publicly accessible. The wildlife is extensive and typical of the terrain. The river, which was once heavily polluted by the mining industry has, since the closure of the Langley Park coke works and sensitive management, become clean and supports a good fish and wildlife fauna.

10.1.1 Survey Results

Is the natural environment of Witton Gilbert important to you?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	97.2%
No	2.8%

Is the parish wild-life friendly?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	94.0%
No	6.0%

The small number expressing a contrary view was mostly concerned about litter and the state of the dene burn.

Most people were in favour of developments in the village but few would support these at the expense of the environment

Would you support farming development or industrial development?

Answer Options	Yes	No
(a) If it affected the natural environment	16	89
(b) Only if it did not affect the natural environment	96	25

10.2 Footpaths

These form an extensive network, giving excellent access to substantial parts of the Parish. Many originate in and around the village and are well used for leisure and exercise. The disused railway line has been developed as a medium-distance path attracting walkers, cyclists and riders who are able to enjoy the Lanchester Valley Walk. This links Witton Gilbert to Langley Park, Malton, Lanchester and Consett to the West and Nevilles Cross to the East. The Eastern stretch also connects to the Deerness Valley. The path through the Dene extends to a succession of field and riverside footpaths, following the course of the River Browney. These paths link the ruins of Beaurepaire, country mansion of the priors of Durham, with Flass Vale in Durham, and the Lanchester Valley railway path. The creation of a way-marked 'Small Pilgrim Places' route has been provides a circular walk from Durham to St. Michael's Parish Church.



10.2.1 Survey Results

Do you feel that public areas (e.g. footpaths) are sufficiently accessible?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	81.7%
No	18.3%

How often do you use the following footpaths?

Answer Options	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely/Never
Dene	42	61	28
Riverside footpath	28	60	35
Railway line valley walk	35	62	30
Bearpark footpath	13	47	57
Fulforth footpath	11	42	56
Findon Hill footpath	11	33	66

Evidence suggests that these and other footpaths are extensively used

10.3 Witton Dene

The Dene has always been a leisure focus for residents, though the development of the bypass in 1996 cut off the head of the dene and a new link to Coach Lane and the Church was established via a bridge. New access points to the dene were also constructed. In April 2006 a



group of interested volunteers formed the "Friends of Witton Dene" with the purpose of conserving the dene, its flora, fauna, and wildlife habitats as a community resource. After a questionnaire to the village on priorities, through the work of the Friends, footpaths have been stabilised, two bridges constructed over the stream and a seepage area developed into a pond and dipping platform for the use of local schoolchildren. Funds raised by the Friends also made provision for planting and managing the woodland, and for the purchase of collecting equipment for the village school. Although a number of respondents would have preferred the dene to have been left alone, the majority expressed strong approval for the work done. In 2010 the work in the Dene was rewarded with Green Flag status and is now recognised as a local nature reserve.

10.4 Breathing Space Project

In 2011 an initiative from the parish church is seeking to establish a 'Breathing Space' project, linking the church and the natural local environment. The project will use the rural setting to tackle issues of emotional health and well-being, working in partnership with local organisations, among them the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, who supply advice and skills for environmental work-parties. Plans are under consideration to adapt the church to better serve the implementation of the scheme.



10.5 General Environment of the village

The village has no historic green spaces but a number of open areas have been created as buildings have been demolished or as new estates have been created. A substantial section of the dene burn has been retained in a landscaped area above the White Tun. These spaces add to the appearance and character of the village and are greatly valued by residents.

Opinion was divided on the overall appearance of the village

10.5.1 Survey results

Are you satisfied with the appearance of Witton Gilbert?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	55.4%
No	44.6%

There were many comments on the unsightly appearance and siting of the White Tun and the Working Men's' Club. There were also several remarks about the neglected state of Front Street with gaps between houses and unoccupied properties. Others commented about the unsightly array of exposed power lines throughout the village. A number of people suggested that more flower beds and planting would improve the appearance of the environment but also complained about the quality of grass cutting. There were also suggestions that the neglected commemorative area at the entrance to the village be refurbished and maintained

10.6 Litter and Dog Fouling

Many residents take pride in the village and surrounding areas and litter and dog fouling were seen as particular problems particularly in some of the more isolated green areas such as the sports fields, playgrounds and dene.

10.6. Walking, Cycling and Horse riding

The vast majority of respondents thought walking should be encouraged and thought that footpaths were sufficiently accessible. Whilst a majority of respondents thought that there was sufficient space in the Parish for riding walking and cycling it was indicated earlier that no bridleways connected with the Village or surrounding routes. The popularity of walking suggests that better signage should be created and a number of people would welcome the creation of boards giving information about the local environment and history.

Would more information about the local environment and history of the parish be welcome? (e.g. strategically placed information boards)

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	86.4%
No	13.6%

10.7 Action

- Action to eliminate dog fouling and litter
- Improve or Initiate disabled access to all areas
- Improve signage
- Seek to re-site overhead cables
- Consider additional planting

11 Built Environment

11.1 Introduction

The spatial planning section should be driven by all the other parts of the Consultation and Parish Plan actions. Any planning exercise should reflect the needs and aspirations of the local community.

The process of planning requires the balancing of many conflicting issues, such as the need to renew and develop against the obligation to preserve and protect our heritage and livelihoods.

We must also recognise that the wider community will place demands on our resources. It is the purpose of the report to articulate your views and try to set constraints and targets on the future developments in our Parish. It should also attempt to drive through the positive changes we need to address the issues raised in these documents.

The County Council is currently formulating its Local Development Framework. This will affect all of our lives and could have significant implications for Witton Gilbert Parish, with the possibility of new housing and major road transport developments. You have the opportunity to get involved and make your view known. Visit the Durham County Council WEB site or speak to your Councillor. Development in itself should not always be viewed as negative and where opportunities to improve our Parish exist we should work together to make the most of them.

11.2 The History

The introductory History section has been included not just for general background, but to explain where the community of Witton Gilbert came from and to help us plan for the future and preserve our heritage. The history of Witton is written in the layout of our streets, the surrounding fields and woodland. Each building and site tells a story and will provide examples of the success and failures of the changes to our Parish in the recent past.

Of course Witton does not stand in isolation; it is subject to the national and International trends like all other communities. So our plans need to adapt to a changing economic and social landscape. For example the huge increase in traffic in the last century caused significant problems for the old village centre. The bypass was constructed too late to save the old character of Front Street. The housing developments at Green Lea, Norburn Park and Whitehouse Farm shifted the centre of gravity and the village lost its hub.

11.3 Economic Development

The consultation shows that there is a desire for more local shops which can offer local produce. The community also expressed a need to provide a focus, a meeting point, a concentration of activity, where the Community can encounter each other, all ages and social groups. The concentration of footfall will make a more viable business community and provide opportunities to engage with the Community.

11.3.1 Action

- **Examine options and opportunities to recreate a village centre. Ensure that future developments will either help to make this possible or they will not hinder this objective.**

11.3.2 Business and Work

The history tells us that Witton Gilbert has provided work places for its inhabitants in the past, though it has not been a significant centre for industry. This is reflected in the character of the Parish. Coal mining was the major employer in the area for some time with Witton providing some of the housing needs of the collieries in the neighbouring parishes.

With the demise of the Coal industry most of the work force now commutes out of the immediate area. If we are to have a sustainable community it is important that we provide opportunities for employment where possible.

The consultation shows a majority would not like to see any form of commercial development regardless of size within the Parish, yet this is contradicted by a positive view on new shops and encouraging Tourism.

11.3.3 Action

- **Set up planning and Development Action Group whose aims are to clarify the Planning issues for Witton Gilbert. Ensure that the village and Parish Planning strategy is properly informed by a clear understanding of the Community's wishes.**
- **Explore with the Community the changes which will affect the Parish and how we can protect and benefit from these changes.**

11.4 Population and Housing

The demographic trend revealed in the survey returns is no surprise. We are an aging population and this poses two problems. How can we ensure the elderly population can be best served by the layout and amenities within the village and how can we encourage the younger members of society to live within the Parish? We also need to ensure that old and young (not forgetting the middle) have the opportunity to meet and engage with each other. Regardless of the age profile we should aim to be a cohesive and caring community.

The community has recognised there may be a need to provide additional housing in the Parish though the extent of the provision should be limited. With 52% reacting negatively or reluctantly to any expansion and if an expansion were unavoidable that expansion should be limited to fewer than 100 homes. The survey also produced some interesting figures on the type of dwelling which the community felt were needed in the parish if such a development proved necessary.

11.4.1 In your opinion, what type of additional accommodation would be required? (more than one category can be selected)

Answer Options	Response %
Starter homes (houses)	19.2%
Starter homes (apartments)	5.9%
Young family homes	18.3%
Single person apartments	4.8%
Family homes	16.1%
Homes for the mature/retired	17.2%
Sheltered housing: Young/special needs	3.4%
Sheltered housing: Elderly	12.1%
Student accommodation	0.3%
Live/works units	2.8%

11.4.2 Action

- All developments should be examined to ensure they do not create barriers to Community Cohesion but actively encourage it.
- Changes to layouts and services within the Parish should be interrogated so they do not disadvantage the elderly but make improvements where possible.
- Ensure that any housing development fits in with the views expressed by the Community.

11.5 Amenities & Services

The survey shows that a large portion of Services and amenities are obtained outside of the Parish.

There is no sense of dissatisfaction with this arrangement. While it makes economic and managerial sense to concentrate Dental, GP and Pharmacy provision in one location, Witton loses a meeting place and focal point.

The village School, community centre, playing fields, and churches all play their part in bringing the Community together.

11.5.1 Action

- **Engage with the providers of services and amenities to encourage them to look at Witton Gilbert next time they require a location for this type of provision.**
- **Examine strategies to expand and improve the facilities within the village.**

11.5.2 Security

The survey shows that there isn't a major unease about crime and personal security, though we should not be complacent. The main concern was antisocial behaviour of various types ranging from the thoughtless to the malicious.

11.5.3 Action

- **Examine pathways and make proposals which address dog fouling, litter and security. Provide new or improved links to important places in the Parish.**
- **Education may play a key role in reducing this problem. Look for initiatives which bring home the disrespect and waste displayed by the members of our Community who carry out these acts. However by improving the general appearance and cleanliness of the village we would hope to engender a sense of pride in place and Community.**

11.6 Transport

The transport section deals with the individual issues as raised in the consultations and implementation of the proposed solutions should be given a high priority. However any changes need to be properly coordinated with the other goals set in this report.

11.6.1 Action

- **Planning Group to help coordinate and provide a forum for community consultation.**

11.7 Leisure

The provision of leisure facilities and the short-comings are noted in the Leisure section. Here we should deal with how we would hope to coordinate and find solutions which build on the other objectives set out in this report. Changes to our built environment should not only deal with providing a facility with a single or limited goal. We should ensure that provision is placed where it will promote a healthy and active life style and help the community engage across the age groups.

Imagination should be used to link our objectives so that each development adds to our Community and its sense of place.

11.8 Sustainability, Environment and the Parish

The Parish Survey clearly shows that our community values the surrounding natural environment both for itself and for the benefits it brings to our lifestyles, health and wellbeing. We also demonstrated that we wish to play our part in promoting a more sustainable society by making Witton Gilbert an environmentally conscious Parish.



11.8.1 Should the Parish take a more active role in promoting sustainable developments and projects to improve the village?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	67.4%
No	9.3%
No Opinion	23.3%

The responses show a wide interest in energy use, recycling and more efficient transport. We would hope to build on this general interest by creating a special interest group to facilitate and inform.

Energy use and generation has been the subject of recent Government initiatives and directives and these are changing our landscape. While there are many opportunities to exploit there are also possible detrimental effects to guard against. How we define which is which should be the subject of further consultation. The survey demonstrates this with the question of whether we should have more wind farms in the neighbourhood. There is a clear majority opposed to wind farms yet small scale wind generation appears frequently on the list of environmental projects to be encouraged in the community responses.

11.8.2 Would you welcome further Wind Farms within or visible from the Parish?

Answer Options	Response %
Yes	37.1%
No	49.7%
No Opinion	13.3%

Many businesses are grasping the opportunity to profit from these changes, but uncoordinated developments may have an unexpected impact on our lives.

11.8.3 Action

- **Setup an Environment section of the Planning & Built Environment to provide a focus for discussion, fund raising and action. Help the parishioners find advice and information.**
- **Set a goal to make Witton Gilbert a model village by encouraging new community energy projects, recycling and low carbon initiatives.**

11.9 Built Environment

11.9.1 Village Identity

The Community clearly wishes to preserve the village as an identifiable and separate settlement distinct from Sacriston. Some 90% of respondents feel it is either important or very important to keep or enhance the separation from Sacriston.

How important is it to maintain an identifiable separation from Sacriston?

Answer Options	Response %
Not important	9.2%
Important	25.5%
Very important	65.2%

11.9.2 Green Space

An even large percentage in our survey felt it very important to protect the green spaces in and around our village. 97% considered it important or very important.



Is it important to protect the green space within the village?

Answer Options	Response %
Not Important	2.8%
Important	22.7%
Very Important	74.5%

11.9.3 Action

- Engage with the Planning authority to get protected status for the remaining open space between the settlements. Review and oppose any proposals which may erode green spaces around or in the village

11.9.4 Parish visual character.

When we asked “did Witton Gilbert Have a recognisable identity” 75% said that it did and gave almost as many reasons as there were respondents, however some stood out and they are listed below in order of popularity.



- **St Michael and All Angels church**
- **Rural character and separateness**
- **Front Street**
- **Green Spaces**
- **The Dene**
- **The people of the village**
- **War Memorial**
- **School**
- **The History of the village**
- **The Post Office**
- **The Pubs**

11.9.5 Action

- **Endeavour to protect these features. Make them an integral part of the Planning Strategy for the Parish.**

11.9.6 Improvements

When the Community was asked for their suggestions for improvements to the Parish they responded with a range of positive suggestions and ideas. These are listed in the Appendix.

11.9.7 Action

- **Review the Suggestions, prioritise and examine for their practicality, Include in Planning Strategy and Parish Action Plan.**
- **Prepare a design Guide for the Parish, a document which sets out the parameters for future development, which will help us protect the things which give Witton Gilbert its character.**

12 Conclusions & Action

In this section we gather together the ideas developed in the previous sections into an action plan which we can work on during the next few years.

Witton Gilbert Action Plan

1.0	<i>Amenities and Services</i>	<i>started</i>	<i>complete</i>
1.1	Improve information about support available for access to medical services.		
1.2	Explore the possibility of developing a village centre.		
1.3	Develop a village and parish web-site.		
1.4	Consider the possibility of establishing additional shopping facilities.		
1.5	Consider additional tree and flower planting.		
2.0	<i>Security</i>		
2.1	Explore ways of reducing litter problems especially on the fields		
2.2	Explore ways of eliminating the problem of dog mess at various places but especially near the school area		
2.3	Ensure people are aware of how to contact Warden and Community Police.		
3.0	<i>Transport</i>		
3.1	Explore further traffic calming possibilities on Sacriston Lane		
3.2	Improve quality of bus shelters		
3.3	Improve bus information in the village		
3.4	Improve and widen footpath adjacent to Chapel		
4.0	<i>Business</i>		
4.1	Encourage the promotion of new shops and businesses in the parish.		
4.2	Promote local knowledge of shops, services and businesses available in Witton via website.		
4.3	Maintain or enhance, as appropriate, parking facilities near to shopping areas in the village.		
5.0	<i>Recreation and Leisure</i>		
5.1	Investigate best practice for the design and location of children's activity areas. Seek funds to implement the proposals.		
5.2	Engage with the older children and teenagers to provide activity and meeting places which will meet their needs in safe and sustainable way without disadvantaging the immediate neighbourhood.		
5.3	Examine the current methods of communication; See where there are gaps or methods which will suit our catchment better than the existing systems.		

5.4	Examine the feasibility of forming interest or activity groups and arranging group transport if necessary.		
5.5	Examine the suggestions made in the Public Consultation for their feasibility. Where appropriate add these to the action plan so that they can be progressed.		
5.6	Reintroduce the village Fete and ensure continuity of the bonfire. Examine the feasibility of creating other events which bring the community together.		
5.7	Examine the possibility of providing a MUGA for school & community use		
6.0	<i>Built environment</i>		
6.1	Examine options and opportunities to recreate a village centre. Ensure that future developments will either help to make this possible or they will not hinder this objective.		
6.2	Set up Planning and Development Action Group whose aims are to clarify the Planning issues for Witton Gilbert. Ensure that the village and Parish Planning strategy is properly informed by a clear understanding of the Community's wishes.		
6.3	Explore with the community the changes which will affect the parish and how we can protect and benefit from these changes. All developments should be examined to ensure they do not create barriers to community cohesion but actively encourage it.		
6.4	Changes to layouts and services within the parish should be interrogated so they do not disadvantage the elderly but make improvements where possible.		
6.5	Ensure that any housing development fits in with the views expressed by the Community.		
6.6	Engage with the providers of services and amenities to encourage them to look at Witton Gilbert next time they require a location for this type of provision.		
6.7	Examine strategies to expand and improve the facilities within the village.		
6.8	Examine pathways and make proposals which address dog fouling, litter and security. Provide new or improved links to important places in the Parish.		
6.9	Antisocial behaviour: Look for initiatives which bring home the disrespect and waste displayed by the members of our Community who carry out these acts.		
6.10	Planning Group to help coordinate and provide a forum for community consultation.		
6.11	Set up an Environment section of the Planning & Built environment to provide a focus for discussion, fund raising and action. Help the parishioners find advice and information.		

6.12	Set a goal to make Witton Gilbert a model village by encouraging new community energy projects, recycling and low carbon initiatives.		
6.13	Engage with the Planning Authority to get protected status for the remaining open space between the settlements. Review and oppose any proposals which may erode green spaces around or in the village		
6.14	Protect the identified important features within the parish. Make them an integral part of the Planning Strategy for the Parish.		
6.15	Prepare a design Guide for the Parish, a document which sets out the parameters for future development, which will help us protect the things which give Witton Gilbert its character.		
6.16	Review the community suggested improvements, prioritise and examine them for their practicality, Include in Planning Strategy and Parish Action Plan.		

Sept 2011

Appendix and Results

The full survey results will be published on the Witton Gilbert Parish web site