

renewal.net Case Study: East Midlands 

Designing Out Crime



Case Study

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Summary

This case study examines the achievements of a partnership initiated & led by a group of local traders lobbying to reverse the economic decline of their shopping precinct serving a large estate of 3000 households in Mansfield. Vandalism in the rear car parking areas was frightening off customers which in turn was having a knock on effect on the economic and social climate of the whole precinct. With the help of Council regeneration, libraries and business support officers together with the local police, practical & highly effective solutions including environmental improvements & CCTV were developed in the first two phases.

Contents

Aims/Objectives.....	3
Where	3
How did it do it?	3
Who was involved?.....	6
What did it achieve?	7
Check list	7
Contacts.....	9

<p><i>Reversing the social and economic decline of an estate shopping precinct became the mission of a group of traders.</i></p>	<h2>Aims/Objectives</h2> <p>An important community facility and focal point, the Ladybrook Shopping Precinct was under threat. Unobserved and poor quality parking areas at the rear of this small neighbourhood shopping precinct was encouraging vandalism and the setting on fire of trade bins by young people. This was frightening local people from using the car parking areas and the shops which in turn was having a knock on effect economic and social climate of the whole precinct.</p> <p>Spearheaded by the local traders, a 3 year programme of environmental and security improvements was put in place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing the longer term future of the shopping precinct as a community focal point. • win back customers for the traders. • Cut crime and shop-lifting
<p><i>Mansfield, Nottinghamshire</i></p>	<h2>Where</h2> <p>The Ladybrook Estate is one of five priority neighbourhoods for the Mansfield LSP, designated in 2001 for support from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). The estate has a stable population of 7,000 living in over 3000 households built over the 1950's to 70's. The two wards of Ladybrook and Cumberlands are within the top 10% most deprived in England, ranking 735 & 560 out of 8414 on the index of multiple deprivation. Unemployment levels have remained relatively high at 4.6%.</p>
<p><i>Within short time frames an initial 'Revitalisation Programme' was resourced and instigated followed by a year two programme of environmental improvements</i></p>	<h2>How did it do it?</h2> <p>[Provide a very brief account of structure, funding, operating methods – focusing on those aspects that are innovative or contribute to best practice and activities of the initiative]</p> <p>Laydbrook Place shopping precinct consists of 10 shops with flats above all owned by the Council plus a local lending library. In 2002 the shopping mix consisted of an independent grocer, post office/newsagents, chemist, baker, hardware store, male and female hairdressers, charity shop and café, betting shop, one empty unit and a community focus point run by the neighbourhood management team.</p> <p>For a few years leading up to this initiative the shops in Ladybrook</p>

Place had been suffering from declining turnover due to decreasing numbers of people using the shops. This followed national trends identified by the economic think tank New Economics Foundation in their report 'Ghost Town Britain', but was made significantly worse by local people feeling the precinct was becoming an inhospitable and threatening environment to shop, particularly after dark.

During 2002, local traders, most of whom had been trading in the precinct for many years, became increasingly concerned about the downward spiral of the precinct and its effect on their income. They approached the Council's Business Support Officer for help and soon after the Regeneration Team became involved.

It was felt vital to preserve the shopping mix and together with representatives from the District & County Councils & police the Ladybrook Place Estate Traders Group Organisation (LETSGO) was formed in 2002. Local resident involvement was secured through the small Neighbourhood Management team who were at the same time developing their action plan in which the precinct was one project.

Phase 1 of a 'Revitalisation Programme' came together quickly in the 2002/03 with District Council, NRF and Home Office's Capital Modernisation Fund (for crime prevention activities) totalling £111,000. This enabled security shutters to be installed in all shops, security gates and fencing, resurfacing and new lighting to be installed in the two car parking areas at the rear of the shops. All traders are key holders for the security gates and opening and closing is organised by them along with 2 local residents.

This phase also saw the development of CCTV which the traders were keen on. Initially it was thought unaffordable – a quote to hook up to the Councils VHS system and control room was priced at £30,000 plus running costs. Working with police, however, the District Council shopped around and opted for a standalone digital system provided by a local company at only £14,000. Here the information is put onto a hard disc and over-written every 14 days. The system enables each trader to control the camera angle if they wished, whilst ensuring that shoppers/pedestrians cannot see where the camera is pointing. The proposed camera also covers a pub/hotel opposite and its large car park.

The CCTV system is owned by the District Council, with an annual maintenance fee paid by shop owners – which works out cheaper than shops opting for individual systems.

A number of new protocols had to be learnt by the partnership. It was agreed that the recording equipment would be placed in the library rather than one of the shops, the former being a more neutral location and providing easier access. Data controllers were designated from

the District Council & Library Team thereby avoiding tensions between traders. A local CCTV demonstration was set up before going live.

By the end of this phase a consensus had emerged within the LETSGO partnership, although one particularly vocal shop keeper felt the parade should receive equal treatment as the town centre. He wanted the whole area roofed across even though it was unsuitable because of the flats above the shops and the presence of semi - mature trees.

A small shopping survey after phase 1 showed the importance of the shops for local people with 42% using the shops every day and 54% between 2 and 5 times per week. 31% rely on them to provide most of their needs. The post office/newsagent and Pharmacy were the most often used shops. 84% of respondents said more shops were needed and/or a wider range of products. There were strong indications that more people would use the shops if a butchers and fruit and veg shop (or market stall) was present. There was also support for the environmental improvements planned by LETSGO with 50% of respondents indicating that various improvements would encourage them to use the shops more.

Funding for **Phase Two** of the project which concentrated on environmental issues and modernising the local library, proved more difficult to find, but after appeal to the local LSP, SRB funding (£100,000) was secured in December 2003 together with a match from the County Council for library alterations (£30,000) and £6,500 NRF for a 2nd camera to ensure all areas were fully covered. £35,000 additional NRF was also allocated for shutters & security gates for other shops around the estate.

Using an in-house design team, a bundle of improvements were agreed and all the works completed before SRB funding ceased in April 2004. Whilst it had always featured on long term plans, the short time available to complete the scheme meant that no community art could be included. The improvements were much concentrated on the practical and addressed a number of problems including the precinct's old surface which consisted of a chequerboard of slightly raised featureless areas which were difficult to navigate for wheelchair users and buggies. These were all taken out, only for the partnership to discover that tree routes had grown into them. This necessitated raising the areas immediately around the trees. New off the shelf seating & bins were also provided and the lighting improved by installing new down-lights on the existing lamp-posts.

At the same time, traders all had their individual shop awnings replaced. Their contribution was not in hard cash, but matched efforts by making improvements to their shops .

The traders were keen to encourage street market provision particularly to plug the gap in the retail offer (there was no greengrocer, butcher or fishmongers). The District Council supported this although the town centre market traders did not. Electric supply boxes and water supply were therefore included in the precinct refurbishment for market stalls - which encouraged one butcher to pitch initially, but only for two months. The local neighbourhood Management Team is now handling this and looking into the precinct's potential to sell more local fresh produce.

The County Council was impressed by the LETSGO changes and decided in phase 2 to commit match funds to enable them to go well beyond the improvements they had been considering for the Library. A complete internal refit was carried out, a new computer suite added, the entrance turned round to directly face the precinct and a disabled access ramp built.

A final **Phase 3** is underway in 2005/06. This includes a ramp suitable for disabled access up to the raised playing fields at back of shops together with a path across the latter which many people use as a cut through to the shops. Artwork at the entrance to the precinct is planned and a successful bid for £40,000 for the works was made to Nottingham County Council under their Building Better Communities Fund for environmental schemes on or adjacent to highways.

The Traders Meeting needed a lot of support to keep them going. Mansfield District Council provided a secretariat during the active phases. However, without any burning issues, the group is now falling apart and competition between the shops resurfacing.

The 2003/4 phase concluded with a Mayday Fete to celebrate the improvements

organised by the Neighbourhood Management Team in the precinct complete with bouncy castle and music/entertainer, stalls and people in fancy dress. The sun shone brightly.

Who was involved?

Local Partnership Against Crime

Traders

District Council - Neighbourhood Renewal Team, Design Services, Leisure & Technical Services

	<p>Police Crime Prevention</p> <p>Country Councillors</p> <p>County Council Libraries</p> <p>Neighbourhood Management Team</p>
<p><i>Dramatic increases in pedestrian and car flow, reversal of the decline in turnover and the cessation of vandalism has transformed the atmosphere and future of the shopping precinct.</i></p>	<h3>What did it achieve?</h3> <p>Pedestrian and car flows into and out of the shopping precinct between 2003 and 2004 show increases of 190% for pedestrians and 164% for cars. The counts were conducted on the same days each year, using the same methodology at the same locations.</p> <p>There is full occupancy of all shop units with shop turnover decline reversed and increasing above inflation.</p> <p>The shopkeepers feel it is now a completely different environment. Some shops have grown and developed by improving their displays, putting in air conditioning and Disability Access Act access requirements, others, however are very set in their ways.</p> <p>Vandalism in the rear car parks completely stopped. Day time shoppers now more willing to park and local residents in flats satisfied.</p> <p>Anecdotal information suggests the behaviour of young shoppers has improved although Cautions from the Police still take place.</p> <p>By phase 2 the local Neighbourhood Management Team was really beginning to take off, partly helped by turning an empty unit into an advice centre and community meeting point. Some thirty residents are now volunteering at the project providing support to the local community.</p>
	<h3>Check list</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local residents including children were never directly involved in the LETSGO Partnership and local traders were never successfully recruited onto the Neighbourhood Management Team based in the precinct. Integration of pressure groups into the wider Neighbourhood Management framework at their formative stages is important. ▪ Need to get across to children and teenagers, who were pressing (successfully) for a skate park that other priorities also needed to be carried out. ▪ Beware of individuals in a pressure group purporting to represent the whole group.

- Important for Renewal/Regeneration Officers to have specialist Business Support Officers involved.
- Importance of secretarial & other support to the Traders Meeting needed to keep them going and mediate in competition issues between shops.

Contacts

[Give name, telephone, email – but only with permission].

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