

Summer 2002

Monks Road PLACECHECK Report



Placecheck is a survey carried out by local people, for local people;
a way of looking at one's neighbourhood in a new light.

What are the good qualities?

What's lacking?

Through shared vision, can ideas for change become a reality?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative

Lincoln Community Development Project

Monks Abbey School

Lincoln Beaver Scouts

All Saint's Church

City of Lincoln Council

Abbey Area Renewal Office

Abbey Access Centre

Most importantly

Everyone who took part in the

PLACECHECK

Monks Road Placecheck

The findings contained in this report have been compiled
 from a sheaf of almost a hundred questionnaires
 from notes recorded at meetings
 from observations made during walkabouts
 from conversations
 and from captions accompanying photographs taken
 by school children as well as by adults
 who live and work in the area.

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Encourage more people to walk on bike. Fine
 people for not cleaning up dog muck and make
 special bins. Have people collect up litter. Try
 and make buildings well built. We could
 make a skate park

Monks Abbey School pupil

This Report does not mark the end of the project. *Placecheck* is, by nature, an ongoing enterprise, the first step in bringing about change; and change cannot happen overnight.

MONKS ROAD PLACECHECK

gathering momentum month by month

JANUARY

- Jeanne launches the Monks Road *Placecheck* at a public meeting;

MARCH

- meeting at the Abbey Access Centre (11 attended);
- visit to Monks Abbey Primary School, to arrange a date to take groups of children out with cameras and questionnaires;
- meeting at Neighbourhood Office;

APRIL

- 20 or so local people gather outside the Abbey Access Centre for two walkabouts (afternoon and evening); animated discussion follows at All Saints Church Hall;
- meeting at Neighbourhood Office to assess statements obtained so far, and to work out what next (12 attended);
- photographs, with captions, on display in window of Neighbourhood Office;
- a talk and a walk with Sandra's Beavers (6+7 year-olds), to find out what they think of the place and what they'd like to see;
- questionnaires distributed to give to friends and neighbours;

MAY

- MRNI Public Meeting, featuring an update on *Placecheck* and a display of the first round of photographs and comments;
- volunteer litterpick, starting from the Neighbourhood Office, (grabbers and binbags supplied);
- meeting at Neighbourhood Office; Open Day arranged;
- Year 6 juniors, out and about in small groups, with clipboards, questionnaires and disposable cameras;

JUNE

- meeting at Neighbourhood Office;
- members of the Lincoln cycle campaign group, *CycleLincs*, (with local cyclists among them) walk round the area seeking potential routes for safe cycling;
- video made of a typically bumpy wheelchair journey suffered by a disabled occupant, along Monks Road, up and down adjacent sidestreets;
- Open Day at All Saints Church Hall, with *Placecheck* display and interim report;
- display put up in Central Library, where it stays for one week;
- a group of tree wardens (including two recruits who live locally) consider trees in the area, accompanied by a tree expert;

JULY

- on request, *Placecheck* photographs displayed in All Saints Church for the coffee morning;
- display moved into Church Hall to coincide with a meeting of the Lincoln Environmental Round Table;
- on request, display on show at Groundwork, Beaumont Fee;
- meeting at Neighbourhood Office to discuss what next.

PLACECHECK - THE BEGINNINGS

The idea was thrown into the melting pot in the New Year. A handful of residents had seen the findings contained in Park Ward's *Placecheck* Report and believed a similar scheme could benefit Abbey Ward - not least as a tool to alert the authorities to the wishes of local people.

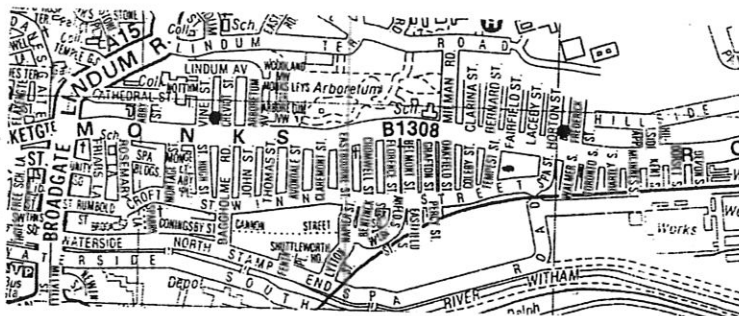
To this end, Jeanne Bain was invited by Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative (MRNI) to speak at a Public Meeting. There, before an eighty-strong audience, she explained how such a survey might work, running along the lines of Park Ward's pilot scheme but adapted to suit the geography of Monks Road. Jeanne, as Community Development Officer, would give guidance throughout, but decision-making would rest with local people. Those willing to pioneer the scheme met a few weeks later at the Neighbourhood Office. The project was under way.

Two matters were considered at that first meeting.

1. The area to be covered

So as not to bite off more than they could chew, those early participants agreed to restrict scrutiny to Monks Road and the terraced houses.

The power station would be included because it was known to be the source of widespread concern.



2. The time-scale

Investigations would be made during April, May and June, with the completion of a Report in September.

The approach would be simple. Ask people what they value most about the locality. Find out which issues cause greatest concern. Invite ideas for making it a better place in which to live, work and play.

What did Placecheckers hope to achieve?

- to foster a greater sense of pride among those who live and work here;
- to gain access to accurate information;
- the creation of better social networks;
- to restore the feeling that Monks Road was a good place to live;
- to have a say in proposals made in the forthcoming Community Travel Zone (CTZ) consultation.

What concerns might come to light?

- the power station;
- houses in multiple occupation;
- parking problems;
- run-down shops;
- empty/dilapidated properties;
- traffic;
- street lighting;
- organisations moving in that cater for the disadvantaged and "no one seems to know what's going on." *

* In fact, it is possible to find out. On behalf of residents, MRNI has made links with such organisations. Information and understanding can go a long way to allay fears based on hearsay, much of which is unsubstantiated.

For the keen, a fifteen-section questionnaire had been devised. For the obsessive, another form with a hundred questions. However, not all people are avid form-fillers; some are more at home airing their views verbally. Their observations – often pertinent in their spontaneity – have been taken on board alongside written statements.

WALKABOUT 3rd April '02

2.00pm and 6.00pm – starting from the Arboretum gates

This event set the ball rolling. In a fanfare of publicity, people were invited to meet for a stroll round a chosen patch, equipped with maps, cameras, and clipboards on which to scribble their answers to three basic questions:

- What do you like about this place?
- What do you dislike?
- How could things be improved?



The first round of observations ranged from obliterated road signs to dog mess; from the need for play areas to a wish for more trees. Traffic came under fire, so did negligent landlords. Well kept gardens were praised, poor renovations condemned and architectural curiosities noticed for the first time.

One wheelchair-user gamely took part in the walkabout, trundling from the Arboretum to the Bowling Green and back again. Note was made of the obstacles she faced:

- inadequate room to swing the chair round a post at the Pelican crossing;
- dropped kerbs 2 inches high;
- pavements dented with gulleys;
- lopsided paving stones;
- vehicles parked on dropped kerbs;
- hedges that flip the face;
- cardboard boxes awaiting collection blocking the way ...

and so on.



By 2004 public places must, by law, offer reasonable access for the disabled – and if a pavement isn't a public place, what is?

A WORD ABOUT FOOTPATHS Pavements flanking Monks Road itself are the responsibility of Lincolnshire County Council Highways Department, whereas those along the side-streets are managed by Lincoln City Council.

The likes expressed in that first round were varied and generous. Evidently people are attached to the place. They like, among other things:

- the proximity to City Centre, Cathedral, and Uphill Lincoln;
- the sense of community;
- friendly people;
- the Arboretum;
- green spaces;
- Victorian architecture;
- lovely woodwork;
- intricate brickwork;
- CCTVs;



- stunning perspectives.



Also on the plus side:

- "The grass and trees in front of my house."*
- "Peace and tranquillity."*
- "River and countryside nearby."*
- "It's possible to enjoy the amenities of the city without needing a car."*
- "Local small shops."*



Alas, (as was pointed out by Placecheckers), this is likely to be the first "local small shop" a visitor comes across on entering Monks Road.

On the dislike side, the three chart-toppers were:

- rubbish (in all its manifestations);
- lack of facilities for young people;
- empty properties with boarded-up windows.

RUBBISH

It's hard to believe that the rubbish problem is insurmountable, since we create it in the first place. We may not be guilty of strewing it round the streets ourselves, but someone does. "Pick up litter."

"Keep the place tidier..." Yes, but we all seem content to let it lie. As one person put it, "Do we live on a rubbish tip?"



A note of cheer: a newcomer to the area finds it clean after London.

A proportion of preventable mess results from binbags being put out too soon. So why not a "twice-weekly refuse collection?" One asked for "dog litter boxes" in streets;* another: "school initiatives to stop litter-dropping." School-children's comments show that they, too, are fed up with rubbish:

"Tyres in the road."

"Alleyways full of glass."

"Syringes."

"Dead pigeons, mushed up tissues."

"Sign says area is monitored but it doesn't seem like it."

"Gas cylinders in front gardens."

"Chewing gum."

"Car park ruined, full of rubbish."

"Dog muck on lawns and paths."

"Trainers hanging from wires."

"Put a fence round the nettles."

What with dog-fouling and broken bottles, our cherished grassy patches are fast becoming no-go areas, sorely regretted by adults as well as children.

* The Animal Warden's advice was sought; dog litter boxes are not feasible.

Dog-fouling is a punishable offence. Apart from being disgusting it can cause blindness if left lying. Many dog-owners in Lincoln have already been prosecuted for not cleaning up after their dogs.

We run Annual Litterpicks and pride ourselves on their success. Passers-by actually thank the volunteers! Even so, one Placechecker challenged the habit: a once-a-year publicity stunt - why not pick litter at other times?

As a result of this simple remark 20 litter-grabbers were sent for, and have subsequently arrived.* With a grabber and a bag, anyone willing to give it a go can make a real impression, and quickly. Taking the view that litter-louts will be less inclined to drop rubbish on a clean street than on a dirty one, the task should become less onerous as time goes by.

* These 20 litter-grabbers are in the safe-keeping of two members of the Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative, from whom they can be borrowed.

One snag about DIY litter-picking: you'll probably have to dispose of the pickings in your own bin. A quick scout round on behalf of *Placecheck* revealed that some streets have no bins, others one or two. Yet Bernard Street is blessed with three smart black-and-gold bins fixed to lamp-posts at helpful intervals. How come? It seems they were requested by a resident wishing to tidy up his street on a regular basis - one step ahead of the rest of us!



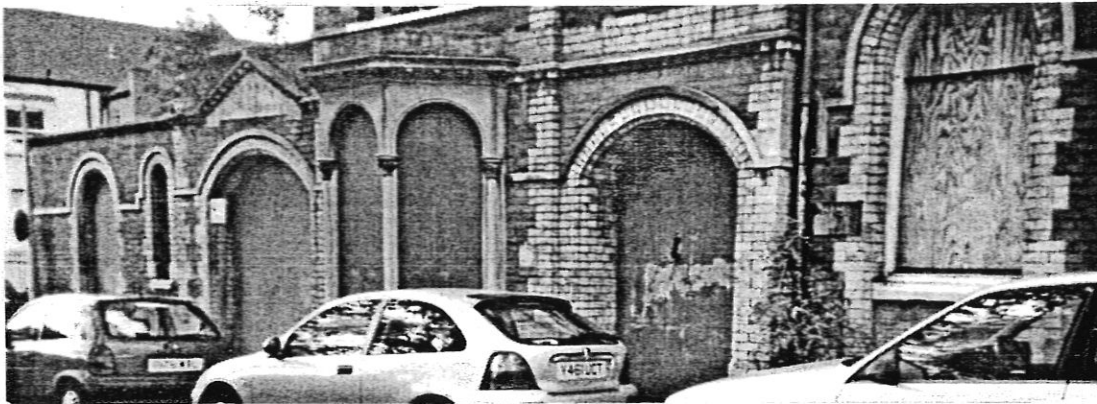
BOARDED-UP WINDOWS AND RUN-DOWN PROPERTIES

*"Derelict and badly maintained buildings."
 "Too many places that are vacant or in poor repair."
 "Properties looking unkempt and uncared for."
 "Abandoned garages."
 "Vonada shop empty for too long."
 "Run-down corner shop."*

Many photographs taken by adults on the Walkabout featured boarded-up windows. Smashed windows did not escape the school children, either.

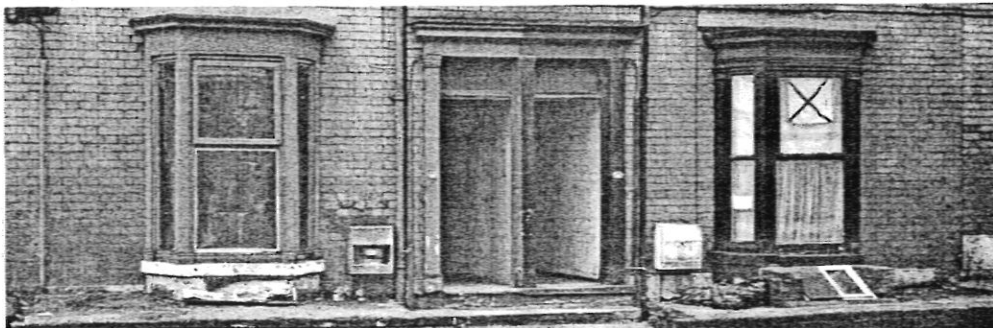
"Broken window - fix it."

Yet many of these old buildings could, if restored, become attractive landmarks in their own right, whether a disused chapel, a deserted school, or a worse-for-wear corner shop. Placecheckers wondered if students from the college might *"link in and offer decorating services to shop owners?"*



"Why is it," asks one resident, "that in a conservation area like this, I'm not allowed to put in plastic windows at my own expense, yet that place down the road has had its windows boarded up for years and nothing's been done about it?" Even the most devoted upholder of sensitive restoration must concede that she has a point there.

We see more and more houses being snapped up by landlords. All well and good, if poor properties are repaired and prettified to accommodate these temporary inhabitants. Tenants deserve good housing, passers-by appreciate good appearance, but: *"Some landlords don't clean up from one year to the next ... they should be encouraged to keep their properties tidy."*



At least one Placechecker would like to see *"stricter rates for landlords."*

THE YOUNGSTERS IN OUR MIDST

"Provide for young people who are often overlooked once past a certain age."

While acknowledging that teenagers often need simply to "hang around", almost everyone would like to see more amenities for young people.

<i>"Play space for older children -</i>	<i>"Summer schools."</i>
<i>Napier street's an ideal site."</i>	<i>"Wild places."</i>
<i>"A skateboard park."</i>	<i>"More cycle tracks."</i>
<i>"Swimming pool and leisure centre."</i>	<i>"Tennis courts."</i>

A cluster of children in the street willingly listed their requirements. New goal posts, trees to climb, and yes, a swimming pool, but only if it was cheap enough, and not too far away. Above all, they longed for *"little places to play all over the place."* The Beavers, aged six and seven, would like *"a safe place to learn to ride a bike"* and *"small play areas close to home"*.

Children dislike *"bad language on walls"* although *"some graffiti's good!"* Both adults and children agreed that setting aside a wall for graffiti artists to use might be a way of diverting unwanted murals. Or, as one shrewd child put it, *"If people are allowed to do it they'd stop wanting to."*



Ten-year-olds from Monks Abbey School expressed dismay that the Abbey Play Park was suitable *"only for small kids"*; they'd have liked something more adventurous: leisure centre, swimming pool, somewhere to explore, drop-in centre, skateboard park and bike area for learners, basket ball court with Astroturf - as well as places to hang around.

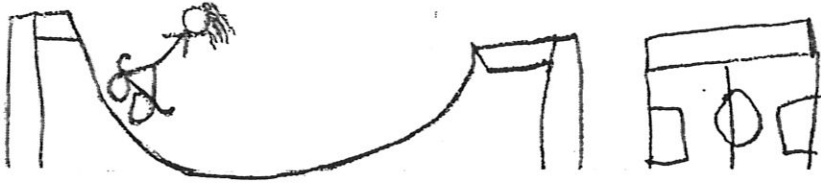
Teenagers questioned in the street thought similarly, adding there should be *more bins, no fights, more sports activities.* They approve of our *good parks, good community/friends, and the 5-a-side pitch in the Abbey.*

If current plans go ahead, some of the above wishes could be fulfilled. The YMCA, already actively involved with young people on the sports front, have outlined ambitious ideas that would transform the buildings on the corner of Rosemary Lane and Croft Street. Given the okay, a leisure/sports/drop-in centre (for adults as well as teenagers) could become a reality.

Other ideas are floating in the air. The Croft Street Community Centre has been earmarked for a facelift, enhancing what is already a good venue, with arts and crafts activities high on the agenda. The Bowls Club is keen to involve young people as a way to combat vandalism. But better fencing is needed, the current fence being a favourite target for vandals. Answers on *Placecheck* questionnaires indicate that closeness to the cathedral is seen as an asset. Meanwhile, cathedral authorities have recognised that, in their efforts to attract tourists from distant places, immediate neighbours have been overlooked. Their Outreach department is putting out feelers with a view to forging links. Fun projects based on music, drama and art could be on the cards, a pleasing balance to the YMCA's sporting presence. All we need is a safe crossing on Wragby Road.

SKATEBOARDS AND SEATS

"Provide for skateboarders (hazardous along Winn Street)." Dozens agree. But the voice that cries, "Stop skateboarding!" is a lone one.



The bulk of adults want good provision for boards, blades and bikes. Anyone who's witnessed a novice practising a new technique over some makeshift obstacle must agree that such persistence is admirable. Watching skateboarders' acrobatics can also be highly entertaining.

So should we aim for a skatepark with sophisticated ramps to challenge the clever ones? Or small, simple parks within easy reach where younger children can learn to skateboard in safety before moving further afield? Bearing in mind that showing off to an audience is part of the act, perhaps we should locate them where passers-by can sit and watch?

However, the provision of seats is, in itself, a controversial issue.

"Remove seats from Napier/Winn Street as this encourages vandalism, drug addicts, drunks, etc."

"Put seats outside Claremont Street corner shop and Monks Vineyard."

No consensus there, yet both views are valid. Why do seats attract types who leave litter and broken bottles in their wake? Why should good folk be denied a sit-down in a pleasant corner because someone else's behaviour is deplorable? The problem is real, the answer elusive.



The other side of the river: picnic seats, mown grass, no litter... *Why?*



Napier Street: smashed kiosk, broken bottles, vandalised seat, litter... *Why?*

One young offender said he knew of a place that was so well cared for no one would want to vandalise it.

A GREENER PLACE

"Give green areas a higher profile, each with some individual feature."

Ours are thickly populated streets. Yet we not only have the Arboretum, but other green areas to provide breathing space. All are looked upon as assets: Fosters Field, the Abbey play area, the college, the old allotments, the riverside, the Viking Way, Rosemary Lane ... One Placechecker views the fenced-off green patch at the lower end of Baggholme Road and wonders *"why are we being kept out of this place?"* Despite neglect, wild areas are seen as amenities. The riverside inspired some enterprising ideas. Could we, with imagination, create a place where leisure activities and wildlife co-exist?

"Pinpoint areas where planting can take place."

"Identify areas for conversion to landscaping."

"Encourage voluntary planting and tending."

"Develop walks on both sides of the river."

"Create wildlife havens and hides to watch wildlife."



Clearly, users of green spaces care passionately about nature, and have the will to play an active role in its promotion. A love of trees is apparent.

The Arboretum is home to 800 trees of about 40 species. A *Tree Trail* would be fun. *Find the Tree of Heaven, the Dragon's Claw Willow, the Paperbark Maple, the Mulberry Bush, the Scarlet Oak and the Black Walnut...*

Mature trees also stand on the bank opposite Lindum Avenue, a green link between Arboretum and college; a safe haven where children swing on trees, build dens and play imaginative games as we once did. *"Green areas must stay green,"* says one resident who does not wish to see it turned over to skateboarders. Seats would improve the slope, plus *"a few flowerbeds and a proper path similar to the Arboretum."* The mud track cutting obliquely up the green certainly needs upgrading. Steps on either side of the bank are negotiable neither by pushchair nor bicycle, and too steep for the breathless. (It's puzzling that the grass is kept mown but no one - apart from the odd volunteer - ever clears away the litter.)

Another restful sanctuary devoid of seats is the old graveyard along Rosemary Lane, aptly described by one young scholar as *"a field for the dead."*

The line of poplars by the railway form a distinctive landmark. One person would like to see *"a Tree Preservation Order put on them."* (Enquiries revealed that they are not at risk.)



"Plant more trees on pavements."

The planting of street trees needs to be done with one eye on the future.

Tree Wardens on walkabout found:

- a tree in poor health with concrete surrounding its base;
- a house darkened by a lovely tree, but which came first, tree or house?
- trees planted so close together none will flourish.

SAFER STREETS for people on foot

"Too much heavy traffic."

This summer the Community Travel Zone (CTZ) will focus on our area to devise "a programme to reduce car use for very local journeys ... through new walking, cycling and bus networks ..." and they need your views,

Each day 45,000 vehicles use the Broadgate/Lindum Hill corridor, and pollution is causing concern. We don't know how many lorries rattle along Monks Road daily but those who walk or cycle don't need statistics to alert them to the presence of fumes. Residents would like to see HGVs directed round the bypass instead of cutting through a home patch like ours.



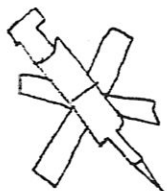
*"Slow down traffic."
"20mph limits outside the school."
"Put in speed ramps."*

Heartfelt requests, echoed by many. The traffic islands (presumably put there to calm traffic) have proved a mixed blessing. Hairy for cyclists, they're welcomed by the many who cross Monks Road - but there again, to be stuck in the middle of a road, thinly sandwiched between grinding HGVs, is hardly a life-enhancing experience.

Students crossing to the tuck shop take a different tack. They side-step the traffic island and stream over as though on an invisible Zebra crossing. Perhaps a Zebra here would be no bad thing? Having a surging tide of traffic obliged to part like the Red Sea the instant your toe touches the kerb-edge seems a pretty happy compromise when you're on foot.

A visually impaired participant, interviewed for *Placecheck*, praised the reliable Pelican crossings, and the Tactiles, which would be even more useful if spread right across the pavement. She enjoys living near the city centre. However, like everyone else, she's worried by heavy traffic and the amount of smashed glass that's left lying, endangering the feet of her guide dog.

Suggestions for making our pavements more pedestrian-friendly included: *improve the outlook, make footpaths more attractive, put seats at intervals, flowers, plants, trees, public works of art by local artists ... also:*



*"Better lighting, which I do believe is on the agenda."
"Improved timing on the Lindum Road crossing."
"Well maintained paths, dropped kerbs."
"Walkers given right of way wherever possible."
"Footpaths cleared of dog mess and drug paraphernalia."*



There are hints here that the creation of vibrant walkways and the abolition of unsavoury clutter should go hand in hand if we're to attract these "new walkers" on to our pavements. Whether such embellishments will do the trick is anybody's guess. No matter. A high percentage of householders in this area don't own a car, and it's time their needs were recognised.

SAFE ROUTES FOR CYCLISTS

"... if cycling and walking are to be increased, safety is paramount." (CTZ)

"Cycle routes should be given greater priority in the scheme of things."



It takes guts to ride along Monks Road. But cyclists are resourceful. They have ways of seeking out safe routes for themselves. A sign saying NO CYCLING will indicate a useful thoroughfare, for sure – the Viking Way, Monks Pathway, the corner where St Rumbold Street meets Broadgate – all tried-and-tested links, suitable for upgrading to accommodate legitimate cycling?

Our steep terrain poses big problems. Whether freewheeling down or pushing uphill, most choose the gentle zigzag through the Arboretum; others take the mud path facing Lindum Avenue. Upgraded to cycle-path standards, it would benefit those unable to cope with steps (useful, too, should the Arboretum ever be locked at night.)

At the top, Wragby Road presents a formidable barrier. Most cyclists *"cross with the lights by the Peacock."* Fine, going up – but coming back? Pottergate, despite its downhill lane designed for bikes and buses, ends at a hair-raising junction. The Langworthgate exit is no less dicey.



On Broadgate, cyclists' favourite crossing runs from St Rumbold Street to St Swithins Square. It's also heavily used by pedestrians. Segregation of the two streams would ease movement for riders and walkers alike. Placecheckers biking south to work tend to use the hump-backed bridge over the Witham, cannily avoiding High Street traffic by circling behind Dragons before picking up the Sincil Bank route. A clear contender for a well-signed link.

Would-be cyclists have not been easy to pin down, though one volunteered that she'd need *"lessons on how to cope in traffic,"* before daring to venture forth after a long lapse out of the saddle; *"but I'd rather bike than drive."* The wish is wholehearted. The bugbear, undoubtedly, is traffic.

...and it's the absence of traffic that makes off-road cycling so blissful for those rediscovering leisure-cycling, for keep-fit commuters opting for a stress-free journey to work, for families with young children out on a Sunday jaunt.

100,000 non-motorised trips are taken each year on the Washingborough track.

One Placechecker would like to see a second track on our side of the river, with cycle hire, barbecue areas, boating and other pursuits – the kind of place where our six-year-old Beavers could happily learn to ride in safety.

PARKING for bikes

Cycle parks, where sensibly placed, are well used. Throughout the city provision is generous; in this quarter, less so, with seven cycle stands outside the college, one outside Ian's paper shop, elsewhere - none.

Surprisingly, there is no such amenity outside the YMCA Fitness Centre, where cyclists have little choice but to chain their bikes to the handrail, effectively blocking disabled access - an easily resolved problem compared with those faced, and caused, by motorists.



PARKING for cars

"More lock-up garages to help prevent car theft and double parking."

"What about the abandoned filling station? Could lock-up garages be a nice little earner for someone?"

The Residents' Parking Scheme currently operates in the streets on either side of Monks Road, from Lindum Road to the Arboretum. When the scheme first took off, not only was there a choice of gaps, suddenly, to park your own car, but the air quality improved appreciably. Hitherto, cars moseying up the steep streets in search of parking spaces must have been emitting fumes nonstop. Petitions asking for the scheme to be extended seemed a natural outcome.



In streets where the scheme doesn't operate, cars are typically double-parked, two wheels up on the pavement, narrowing the way for emergency vehicles and pedestrians, and seriously restricting wheelchairs and buggies.

On the Walkabout *"A car park not being used for cars!"* was spotted in Napier Street; *"Cars parked on verge"* at Stamp End Garage; *"Derelict garages"* in John Street. One Placechecker suggested that if a carpark by the Cannon Street council flats *"could be marked out properly more people could park there."*

Clearly, parking is a burning issue - for motorists and non-motorists, for those within the scheme as well as those beyond its bounds.

"When you pay £25 a year, it should be 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also 10 visitor permits is a joke, when extra permits are £1.50 each!"

"There is no provision for garaging in this area to relieve congestion in the streets and it's often difficult to park near one's own property which for the elderly and disabled makes life difficult; this is caused by second cars and works vehicles."

Roadcar claimed that cars parked along Winn Street caused such hindrance they were forced to cut what passengers considered a vital service. Those deprived passengers are doggedly campaigning for the service to be resumed.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

49% of households in our zone are without access to a car

... yet our bus services continue to dwindle. Those that still run often pass by empty. Something, somewhere, is going seriously wrong.

"A bus needs to go where people want to travel ... it's complicated to go anywhere bar the hospital up the hill, which was not always the case."

"... alternate routing of bus via Monks Road/Winn Street."

Reportedly, other cities (two in Yorkshire were cited as being exemplary) have excellent provision: frequent buses with cheap fares (30p whatever your destination), alongside a network of first-class cycle routes. Traffic moves freely. Air quality is much improved.

How did those cities do it? *"They penalise lone drivers by making them wait."* Drastic measures? Perhaps, but as a result, the private car is used primarily for long out-of-town journeys or for carting heavy loads.

Most journeys are relatively short. 75% of all journeys are under five miles; half are under two miles. 9% of all trips are under one mile. These journeys could easily be undertaken on foot, by bicycle or by bus, if a more integrated transport system was in place. (CTZ)

"Coming to Lincoln was like stepping back into the sixties," said a newcomer from Huddersfield who complained bitterly about speeding in Lincoln, inconsiderate drivers, abysmal bus services, pitiful cycle tracks, polluted air, too few bus lanes ...

So what observations did our Placecheckers come up with? Put together, their list of suggestions alone indicate the inadequacies we suffer:



*"Make buses cleaner and cheaper."
 "... predictable and frequent."
 "Bus shelters (not just posts)."
 "Better access for the disabled."
 "Buses running on time."
 "More bus stops."
 "Try free days on buses."
 "Generous family tickets".
 "Timetables - available from the
 Abbey Access Centre."*

Certainly, Lincoln is smaller than most cities, and any solution will need to be tailor-made to suit requirements. Still, compared with what's being provided elsewhere, the above requests come across as fairly modest. Perhaps more inventive thinking needs to be done at higher levels if we're to see our buses become such an attractive alternative that drivers choose to leave their cars at home.



RENOVATION v RESTORATION

"House-owners should be encouraged to improve derelict and badly maintained buildings..."

"Some keep their properties tidy, some don't."

"Restore iron railings...slate roofs...windows..."

"Stone cladding - enforce restrictions."

"Get back to brick."



The cladding of brick façades provokes mixed reactions. Some see it as a clean and neat solution, a statement of individuality in a row of look-alike houses. Others regard any kind of rendering as serious disfigurement. Terra cotta brickwork, left unadorned, adds warmth to a townscape. It ages well, and appears not to attract dirt. As a material it's closely linked with the city's history, the way our steeply stacked streets knit into the geography.

Doors and windows prompted equally divided opinions. Original frames are valued as an attractive feature of our terraced houses. The woodwork is often decorated, each street having its own variations. Wood also lends itself to colour, and coloured doors and windows do much to celebrate the charm of our streets, whereas PVC is uniformly white.

On the other hand, wood rots. Paint peels in sunlight. Setting up a ladder on a steep gradient to keep up with repairwork is a task only the young and fit would wish to tackle. Not surprising, then, that PVC is seen as a low-maintenance alternative.



Ironically, the most neglected dwellings are often the very ones able to claim having kept their original features intact.

THE ARBORETUM

There can be little doubt that the Arboretum is our most treasured amenity. Children praise *"the rose garden"*; *"the Urban Ranger"*; *"lots of space"*; and its *"peaceful places."* Everyone involved in *Placecheck* gave it a huge plus. Just one adult mentioned the rats: *"Urgent attention required to overcome rat population."* The children, however, were already wise to the the situation.

"There are RATS in the Arboretum and on the streets."

"Rats eat the baby ducks and they could bite people and children."

"What we could do is get a rat exterminator to get rid of them and don't throw litter."

"They should be put in a special place for rats where they can't escape."

Rats feast on bread thrown to the ducks by well-meaning but misguided people. Bread is, in fact, bad for ducks. The rats are being dealt with by the Pest Control Officer.



Restoration work on the Arboretum began with a Turf-cutting Ceremony in early August. Grand Opening Celebrations are already being planned, but no one wants the festivities to end there; they'd like to see regular events. It is recognised that the disabled, the elderly, the very young, and families without transport, are often unable to join in with fun events in other parts of the city.

"Extend Christmas market."

"Dog training days."

"Dramas, football, picnics."

"Treasure hunts."

"Tree trails."

"Fun runs."

"Bands in the park."

"Fun days for children."

"Summer fairs."

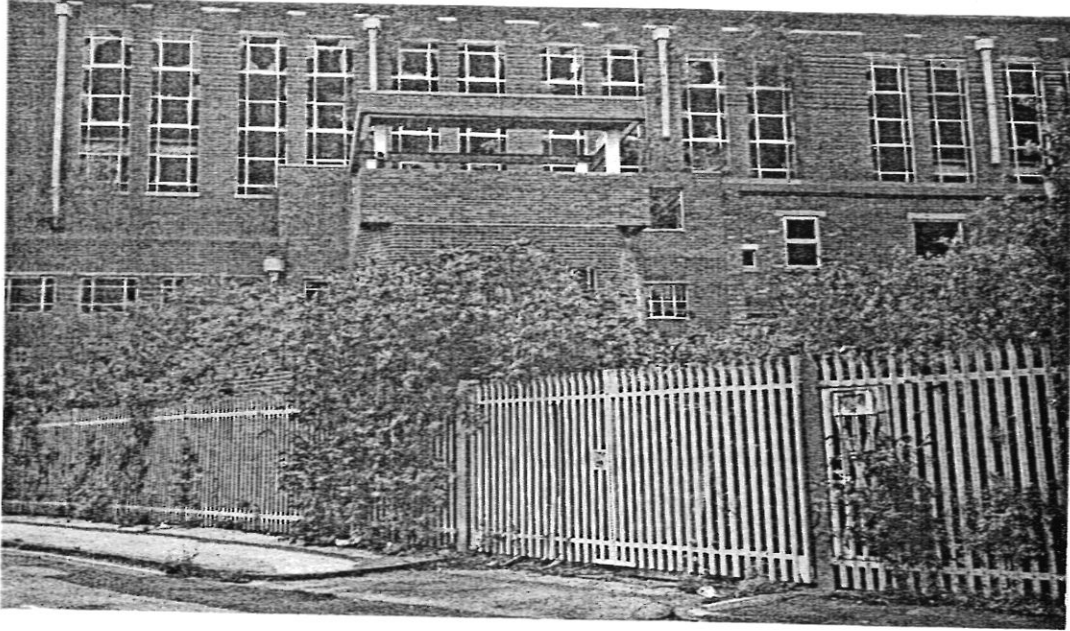
"I-spy birds."

... not forgetting the universal pleasure of simply *"hanging around"*.

Plans are brewing to rope the Arboretum into Lincoln's tourist scene by way of the Temple Gardens. With scarcely an inch to spare for extra parking an attractive walkway is vital. This should be of huge benefit to local people.

*"Compile a wish-list; ideas thrown up may be more adventurous than those merely assumed to be viable."
 "Take a long term view of a beautiful area, adjust and change as appropriate, but never lose sight of the vision."*

How can such advice be applied to this blot on the landscape?



THE POWER STATION

"Community facilities."

"Family swimming pool."

"Sports complex."

"Urban woodland."

The Beavers were taken for a walk as far as the Power Station. Their verdict: HORRIBLE! Everyone agrees it's a depressing edifice we could well do without. With its *"insecure railings"* it's a risk to children who venture inside, intrigued by its atmosphere and mystery. Once inside, who knows what dangers lie in store, what crumbling brickwork, what cocktail of contaminants?

"An eyesore, a health and safety hazard."

"Couldn't someone make the owners of the land clean it up?"

"Can't anything be done?"

It's been allowed to deteriorate for so long the surrounding land has returned to the wild. Owls have been heard. Self-seeded trees have taken root. Assuming that the eyesore will, eventually, be demolished (cross fingers), would it not be environmentally wise to pick up where nature left off, manage the site as a natural habitat and allow selected trees to flourish? To conserve it as a home for wildlife alongside leisure pursuits - for the sake of the community's wellbeing? From all accounts urban wildlife is flourishing, putting a refreshing buzz into many of our cities and having a positive effect on health.

"Easy access to wildlife relieves stress." Chris Baines, Radio 4

It could be that local people have suffered the depressing eyesore for so long they'd be willing to settle for anything that smacks of change. Chances are, the land will be given over to housing, which might strike a tad unadventurous to the person who nursed visions of an artificial ski slope.

At the outset of this survey Placecheckers were asked what hopes and concerns might come to light. So what emerged? What's moved on?

A sense of pride

With work on the Arboretum at last under way, hopes are high. Many recall that houses along Monks Road *"used to be posh."* To see them being restored to their former elegance is especially pleasing.

Information

It is hoped that this survey - as well as airing local wishes, grumbles and aspirations - has in itself opened up channels and clarified a few points.

Social networks

Coffee mornings have been suggested; also the setting up of a Local Economy Trading Scheme (LETS) so people can swap skills. A list of local tradesmen is being drawn up at the Neighbourhood Office, to keep local jobs in local hands.

Community Travel Zone

Members of local groups were among those invited to consider ideas for travel in Abbey Ward. The aim is to promote walking, cycling and public transport in order to alleviate the present impossible traffic situation. Look out for further public consultations. Don't miss the chance to have your say.

Houses in multiple occupation

The trend continues. *"These are good family homes,"* is a phrase often heard. It would be sad if families and first-time buyers were squeezed out of the picture altogether.

Street lighting

Local voices have made themselves heard - the funding bid was successful.

Caring organisations

The YMCA, the Nomad Trust, Addaction, Mencap, Provision and Support for Asylum Seekers... Many local people hold fund-raising events in aid of these groups; others wonder how many such organisations can be absorbed by a community like ours.



These young men think the area's okay, but the people? *"They see our black hair and .."* Still, they like going to college, and playing football. They expressed a keen desire to learn about British culture, and offered a warm handshake on saying goodbye.

The Abbey Access Centre, praised by children and adults, already seems a vital heartbeat in our area, working positively towards a more inclusive society with its learning programme and range of volunteering opportunities.

MONKS ROAD TEN YEARS ON
one person's pipe-dream

Summer 2012

A sense of unstoppable **pride** has blown across our patch. Our streets have been transformed. One minute it seemed that run-down buildings would forever hold sway, like decay in a mouthful of otherwise good teeth. Then came the turning-point. **Landlords** woke up to the fact that their neglected properties had kept those original features that are now so highly valued. Full-scale **restoration** soon followed, with family homes in mind, rather than multiple occupation.

Street rubbish is a thing of the past since businesses cut down on wrapping paper. Craft workshops committed to using waste materials in innovative ways have become the latest leisure craze, especially popular since the launch of our Landmarks Competition to seek out designs for items of **Public Art**.

So we now have a thriving **Arts Trail** – just follow the line of bricks, and you'll happen on adventurous pieces of sculpture, mosaics, seats, resting places, mobiles, flower containers and fountains, leading finally to our colourful **Graffiti Wall** (winner of the 2011 National Graffiti Prize).

All this has meant that **Walking** has become more pleasurable. What joy, to walk the length of Monks Road without once having to stop for traffic! The odd motorist needing to exit a side-street courteously stops as we cross with our shopping, our buggies, our children, our Zimmer frames, our wheelchairs, our elderly relatives. Now that **HGVs** have been redirected, cyclists no longer need to take to the pavements. **Bus services** are reliable and frequent, **buses** and **shelters** attractive. **Small local shops** that have reopened are doing good business. With so many amenities handy there's scarcely any need to go into town. But if we do, we can cross **Lindum Hill** without being stranded in the central cage waiting for a sluggish Green Man to appear.

Front gardens are blooming, evidence of the success of our annual Prizes for Small Gardens. Backyards are havens for wildlife. Goldcrests are regular visitors, also long-tailed tits, song thrushes and greenfinches. Butterflies of all sorts glide from bush to bush. Children keep a count for national records.

Kitchen waste ceased to be an environmental headache with the setting-up of a **community composter**. Doorstep collection of **garden refuse**, too, is a blessing. It is significant that waste put out for recycling by far exceeds the rubbish heading for landfill sites.

The **riverside** has a barbecue area, boating and other water-sports, with cycle tracks along both sides. **Cycling** is cool. The new shared-use footbridge with its gentle slope is elegant and safe. A **wheelchair user** no longer has to trek all the way to Broadgate then double back just to cross to the other side. The **power station** has been demolished. The wild strip is being managed by conservationists as a **neighbourhood copse**, with good learning opportunities. **Tree planting schemes** offer scope for volunteering, alongside craft workshops where ancient wood-skills are taught. **Leisure facilities** on the site offer a mix of affordable pleasures for all ages. **Cars** are discouraged.

Local surgeries have been reporting a steady decline in stress-related illnesses and asthma.

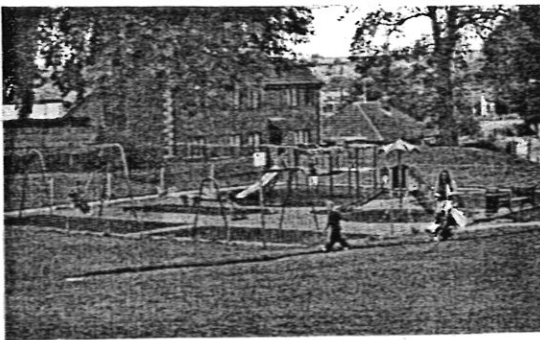
We have good reason to sing hallelujahs to our achievements. We are at last on a par with Bailgate.

ODDS and ENDS

CCTVs Business people have noticed a sharp reduction in vandalism since cameras were installed. One shop-keeper feels so reassured he no longer pulls down his blinds at night. Pedestrians feel safer in the evenings and the more who walk, the safer our pavements will become.



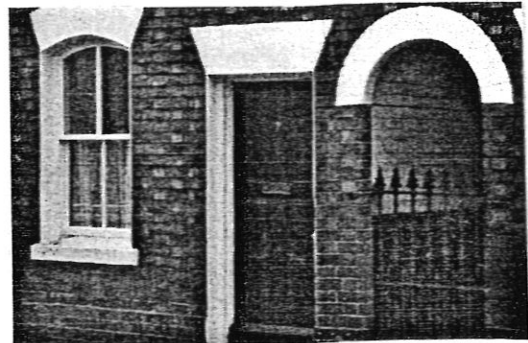
INFORMATION First point of contact for any queries: Frank Hanson, at the Neighbourhood Office, who can answer pretty well everything!



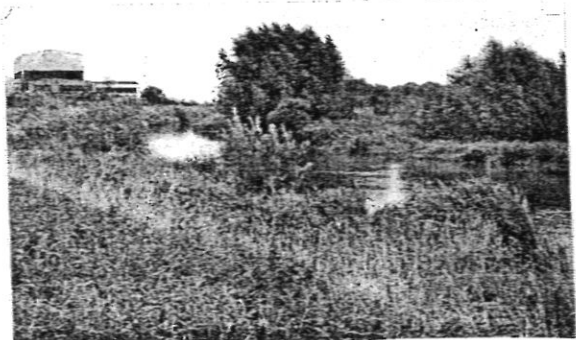
AN OUTDOOR NOTICE BOARD was requested by Placecheckers, with Abbey Access as a likely venue. This is being looked into.



The ABBEY ACCESS NEWSLETTER: delivered to every house in the ward quarterly. Don't mistake it for junk mail - it contains information people claim they never see.



PUBLIC MEETINGS organised by Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative are held three times a year. They're well attended and *well advertised*. Look out for notices.



TREES The Lincoln Tree Warden Scheme is a year old, with two volunteer wardens for this area. Training includes identification, seed gathering, Tree Preservation Orders, risk assessment, finding out where to get advice and other gems of tree lore.

ANSWERS TO THREE BASIC QUESTIONS

What do you like?

The closeness to town centre.
 The Arboretum.
 Friendly people.
 The location being so close to the cathedral.
 The grass bank and trees in front of my house.
 Closeness to city centre for transport and shopping.
 River and countryside nearby.
 Local small shops.
 Arboretum.
 It's possible to enjoy all the amenities of a small city without a car.
 It's an easy bike-ride to open spaces.
 The nearby Arboretum.
 The promise of safer cycle routes, despite difficult terrain.
 A growing feeling of community, with incentives to join in.
 The areas of green open spaces and proximity and access to the river;
 providing leisure opportunities for young and old.

What do you dislike?

Derelict or badly maintained buildings.
 Bad street lighting.
 Dog turds.
 Litter, particularly along the river Witham and in the grassy area
 by Riverside North.
 The litter.
 Car parking; when you pay £25 a year, it should be 24 hours a day,
 7 days a week, not 8.00 to 18.00 and Sundays not counting.
 Also 10 visitor permits a year is a joke, especially when extra
 permits are £1.50 each!
 Too many buildings vacant or in poor repair.
 Too much litter.
 Monks Road - too much traffic for a residential area.
 Too much traffic, and too few efforts to reduce car dependency.
 The amount of traffic, noise and fumes.
 The several properties looking unkempt and uncared for.

What needs to be improved?

Proper litter bins needed by Riverside North.
 Litter bins - if people can be bothered to use them.
 Parking permits.
 More encouragement for people to repair and decorate their
 property - extend awareness of grant aid.
 School initiative to discourage litter-dropping.
 Advertise more to encourage people to use Neighbourhood Office
 and Abbey Access Centre.
 Better street lighting.
 Cycle routes could be given greater priority in the scheme of things.
 Pedestrian priority along all Monks Road pavements where
 side-streets join.
 Small, open spaces could be made more people-friendly, with flowers,
 seats, landscaping etc.
 Nurture a feeling of goodwill.

THE PEOPLE**a. Who needs to be involved in changing places for the better?**

- Local people; local authority; local schools and college; local police;
- The council/police force;
- A majority of residents; councils; existing involvement; schools;
- Householders, shopkeepers, landlords, tenants, neighbours, professionals; experts, minorities, juveniles...
- Residents; local community;
- Greater involvement by all in community projects eg Neighbourhood Watch, Youth Club type functions etc;
- County Council; everybody in the community - Police, Parents, Kids
- Ourselves and friends in the group. Involve local councillors;
- Everyone, the whole city. Monks road area needs to be perceived as a good place, full of ideas, where people get things done, and which has good facilities and is the place in Lincoln to be.

b. What resources are available locally to help people get involved?

- Abbey Access Centre; Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative; Abbey Renewal Area Office in Belmont Street;
- Neighbourhood Watch; Neighbourhood Initiative Group; Placewatch Group; injection of money to these groups?
- The setting up of Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative (and Placecheck itself) might have emerged precisely at the right time - alongside the regeneration programme, grants etc;
- Council; Abbey Access Centre. Community Centre; Belmont Street; Schools.
- Core group, Church, Abbey Access Centre;
- I am very unsure on this. I have the feeling you have an office on Winn Street somewhere, but I feel an easily accessible focal point and drop-in centre needs to be brought to the notice of residents; it should not be complicated to try and locate nor should its address not be on all things related to the area.

c. What other methods might we use to develop our ideas about how to improve the place?

- House-owners to be encouraged to improve derelict and badly maintained buildings; local publicity about what is going on; encourage people to report problems to appropriate authority;
- Frequent advertising, shops, local press; notice boards for community information;
- Tap into the expertise of specialist groups - Cycle Campaigners, Wildlife Groups, Tree Wardens, Biodiversity experts, Drug Rehab etc;
- Neighbourhood Watch; frequent residents' meetings; more community involvement; better interaction between community and city council.
- Encourage unemployed to partake in community clean-up programmes eg paint over offensive graffiti;
- Print in papers if meetings on and any events;
- Leaflets, posters, word of mouth, the press;
- Hope and inspiration are the keys;
- Do not miss an opportunity to sing the praises of those who are doing what you want;
- Make everyone believe tending and renovating are what people in the Monks Road area just love to do;
- Inspire people with a sense of history and community by enthusiastically proclaiming this; praise the fascinating architectural detail of the buildings, make them believe if you live in this area then you are somebody who has certain standards - high ones!

d. How can we make the most of other programmes and resources?

- Better liaisons between council and local community;
- Let's be ready to learn;
- Advertise in Echo;
- Try and get involved in some way, listen out;
- Positively bring them to the notice of all; 'push' all the good, do not be anything but fully enthusiastic; get everyone to tell their neighbours how they will benefit from these good ideas. Get the whole city talking about them.

e. How can we raise our sights?

- By putting more finances into the ward and less wastage of funds
- Compile a wish-list; ideas thrown up may be more imaginative than those merely assumed to be feasible;
- Spend more money on area;
- Have faith, speak out, discuss new ideas and don't be afraid to look long term;
- Dream bigger dreams, make our goals higher;
- Believe absolutely in what you are doing, never think in terms of the best of a bad job;
- Take a long term view of a beautiful area, adjust and change as appropriate, but never lose sight of the vision.

f. What other initiatives could improve the place?

- Could anything be done with the land where the power station was sited at the far end of Monks Road?
- Foster the notion that "every little counts";
- Cleaner streets; better lighting; better contacts with council and police;
- Summer School facilities during summer holidays (EU funded?);
- Prompt maintenance and repair of street lights, kerbs, roads and pavements etc;
- Urgent attention required to overcome the rat population in the Arboretum;
- Area for skateboards (hazardous along Winn Street) - site of old power station?
- Get the community involved;
- See what other schemes have done, like other parts of the country; ask about sponsorship;
- Raise the public standard, reward and praise streets and individuals who meet it; look how villages do this;
- Give the residents something to live up to & feel proud to be part of it;
- Make everyone know there is something in it for them;
- Produce a newsletter (advertisers may pay for it) to keep the elderly and house-bound informed as they are proud of the area - villages do this, eg Nettleham.

THE PLACE

g. How can we make this a more special place?

- Allow youngsters space to invent their own games;
- Improve the appearance of our own houses - a lick of paint can make a difference;
- Create attractive walkways into the city;
- Give green patches a higher profile, each with some individual feature;
- Having trust in the community; lowering crime and vandalism; making residents welcome; better relations in the community;
- Take pride in community;
- Be more open, open our houses more, evangelise around the area, invite more people, put invitations out;
- Do more social events in the Arboretum: dramas, football, picnics etc;
- Tell people the place is already special; that the more one looks, the more one realises what there is: the Arboretum, Monks Abbey and all they provide, shops, clubs, school societies, churches and their activities;
- Provide venues and attract more activities to the area;
- Provide for young people who are often overlooked once above a certain age.

h. How can we make this a greener place?

- Pinpoint small areas where planting can take place;
- The green areas that we do have must stay green; the grass bank opposite my house (Lindum Avenue) only needs a few flower beds etc. and a proper path similar to the Arboretum, not a skateboard park as someone suggested;
- Identify areas for conversion to landscaping;
- Encourage voluntary planting and tending (schools);
- Discourage traffic;
- Nurture wild (even untidy!) gardens and hedges;
- Provide information about attracting birds and butterflies into backyards;
- Spend more on environment;
- Better use of wasteland;
- Improve cycling;
- Monthly collection of garden rubbish (Green Bags not currently collected; most people have "gardens" within their backyards);
- Rebuild as appropriate to save land, use less resources, create less waste;
- Reduce car dependence;
- Develop riverside walks on both sides of the river;
- Create hides to watch wildlife;
- Facilitate walks to enable all to enjoy natural flora and fauna;
- Warden patrol along (redesigned) river walk to ensure safety;
- Have a *Plant a Tree or Shrub*;
- Pick up litter;
- Keep the place tidier;
- Environmentally:- perhaps some simple means for those without transport to dispose of larger unwanted items and garden waste;
- Horticulturally:- maybe less is more in the case of certain overgrown frontages!

i. How can the streets and other public spaces be made safer and more pleasant for people on foot?

- Better street lighting;
- The police need to do more to control the homeless/beggars etc;
- It is not nice having a walk and being harassed for money;
- Pedestrian priority from the School to Lindum Road;
- Something drastic needs to be done about *dogs*;
- Better lighting; cleaning footpaths of dog mess and drug paraphernalia; more CCTV cameras; more policemen in the area;
- More lock-up garages to help prevent car theft and double parking;
- Set up "dog litter boxes" to prevent fouling on pathways;
- Better lighting;
- More police on foot;
- Slow down speeds on roads; put speed ramps on roads;
- CCTVs; lights, improve the outlook, make it more attractive;
- Better lighting, which I do believe is on the agenda;
- Inexpensive facilities and activities if appropriate for those who may otherwise not make it safe;
- Well maintained paths and low kerbs at corners for those with pushchairs and invalid carriages.

j. How else can public spaces be improved?

- More litter bins; more liaisons with urban rangers; less vandalism;
- Plenty of seats with attractive surrounds;
- Create designated area where the local alcoholics can congregate;
- Have Park Keepers as before;
- Landscaped, kept clean and brought up to date;
- Make them safe and reassure people that is what they are.

k. How can the place be made more welcoming and easier for people to find their way around?

- Local community notice boards; map of area indicating one-way streets;
- Signposts;
- Attractive signs with our own logo?
- Local access centre; better signposts/street signs; map of local area;
- Direction signs;
- Signs;
- Get people passionately involved in where they live;
- Clear street signs, attractive business premises, a well advertised information centre.

l. How can the place be made adaptable to change in the future?

- Sustainable transport and energy should be high on the list - but attitudes must change too;
- Keep having meetings;
- Government funds; grants;
- Make people believe in the area so that they feel they are the sort of people who keep the best of what is old and improve it with what is new, if appropriate;

m. How can better use be made of resources?

- Increased publicity about available grants;
- Make the buses/trains cleaner and cheaper;
- Information needs to be readily available and interesting - not forgetting word of mouth;
- Holding summer fairs; using local community centres; bands in the park;
- Organising fun days for local children;
- Commendation message in community journal for initiatives and innovations (in our street, the residents all donated £3 per household to rebuild a wall at the end);
- Have written vote at meetings; what is needed in the area;
- Parking is a problem. There is no provision for garaging in this area to relieve congestion in the streets and it is often difficult to park near one's own property which for the elderly and disabled makes life difficult; this is caused by second cars and works vehicles;
- What about the abandoned filling station? Could lock-up garages be a nice little earner for someone?

n. What can be done to make the most of public transport?

- Try free days on buses; family tickets (these need to be generous to make bus/train journeys preferable to car trips);
- Electronic times at bus stops;
- Bus shelters (not just posts);
- Better access for the disabled and people with pushchairs;
- Buses running on time;
- More bus stops;
- Timetables available from Access Centre;
- Alternate routing of bus via Monks Road/Winn Street;
- Put bus back for pensioners on Winn Street route and bring back North Circular;
- Make it cheap, predictable and frequent;
- It needs to go where people want to travel, which it does not do now, and it is complicated to go anywhere bar the hospital up the hill, which was not always the case.

A miscellany of selected statements

Inconsistent lamp-posts.

Signs need to be higher.

Some gardens not too well tended but probably great for biodiversity.

Wild flowers, shrubs, blossom, butterflies (Viking Way).

Nice frontal arrangement (college).

Elegant Victorian houses.

Conversion of Church Hall into flats is good.

Attractive houses, pleasant outlook over field and Arboretum (Milman Road).

Nice original front garden walls.

Lovely corner shop, colourful array of flowers, vegetables and fruit on pavement (bottom of Frederick Street).

Second-hand goods should not be allowed on pavements (Nomad).

Stop riding on footpaths, stop football in street, stop people spitting ...

Chimneys should not be allowed to be removed.

Car park on corner of Napier Street ugly and useless.

Tuach & Bowness frontage needs replanning.

Building needs renovating (Crop Shop).

Original features on houses, slate roofs, chimney pots, brickwork.

"Pang City" - clean front.

Clean houses (Lindum Avenue).

Too much traffic, going too fast. Difficult for pedestrians at junctions with sidestreets.

Path between Vine Street and college needs a good clean.

Pedestrian lights on Lindum Road badly timed.

Make grassy area into park for skateboards and BMXs (Lindum Avenue).

Impose tighter speed limits, especially past school.

Well appointed houses, intricate brickwork, lovely woodwork.

Houses simple in design, well kept (Bernard Street).

From roof to road, the most tastefully renovated building in the entire stretch (Tattoo Shop).

Old school needs restoration.

Crumbling wall in car park (St Rumbold Street).

Unsympathetic conversions. Boundary walls falling down.

Gardens near flats look nice, but could be nicer (Thomas Street).

Re-brick the wall on end house in Winn Street.

Move Spa Road away from river to make use of riverside.

More litter bins needed. Rubbish by railway.

Bad crossroads at bottom of Baggholme Road.

Upgrade shop fronts. Put gates on alleyways.

Put restrictions on windows to preserve original features.

Install more benches. Repair road signs.

Fence bridge over railway, current path is dangerous.

Cars parked on dropped kerbs and double yellow lines.