



Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Development Plan

Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government wants local communities to have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The 2011 Localism Act has introduced a new right for communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan.

Last year, the Government invited applications for grants under the Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners scheme. The grants are to be used to pilot Neighbourhood Plans and show how they are likely to work in practice. With the support of Blaby District Council, the Rural Community Council and Leicestershire County Council a successful application was made to prepare one of the first Neighbourhood Plans in the country (under the name of the Blaby South Community Forum).

The Fosse Villages

The Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan area comprises the following 11 Parishes which are situated in the south-west part of Blaby District, Leicestershire:

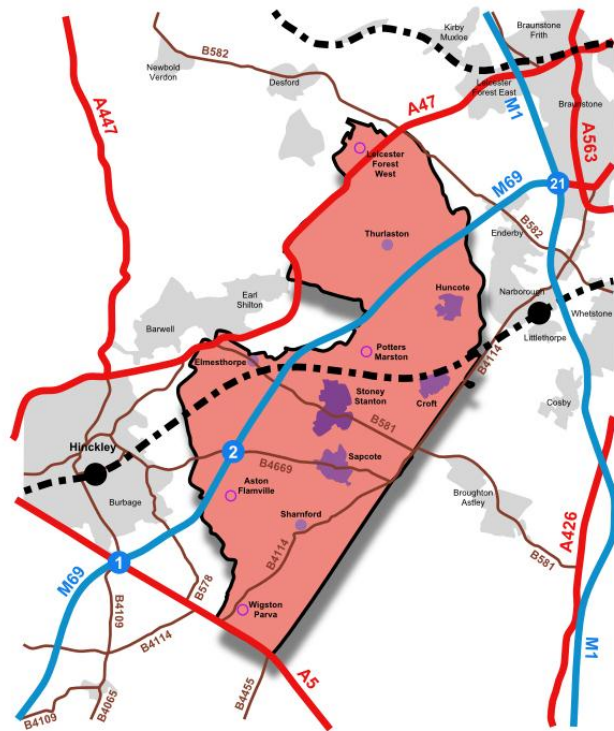
Parish Councils

Croft, Elmesthorpe, Huncote, Sapcote, Sharnford, Stoney Stanton and Thurlaston;

Parish Meetings

Aston Flamville, Leicester Forest West, Potters Marston and Wigston Parva.

The location of the Fosse Villages area (the proposed Plan area) is shown in the maps at Appendix 1. In total it amounts to 5,311 Ha, representing 41% of the District of Blaby. In administrative terms, the area shares a common boundary with parts of both Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and Harborough District Council in Leicestershire and with Rugby Borough Council in Warwickshire along a short length of its south-western boundary.





The Fosse Villages include lively, highly active communities which share common concerns which provide a cohesive and collective impetus to work together on a Forum wide basis.

Character

The 11 settlements within the area each have their own character, although they are generally small to medium scale communities, ranging from hamlets such as Potters Marston (population 30) to Stoney Stanton (population 3,460). The total population of the area amounts to an estimated 11,930, giving an overall population density of 2.2 persons per hectare. It is, therefore, predominantly a rural area.

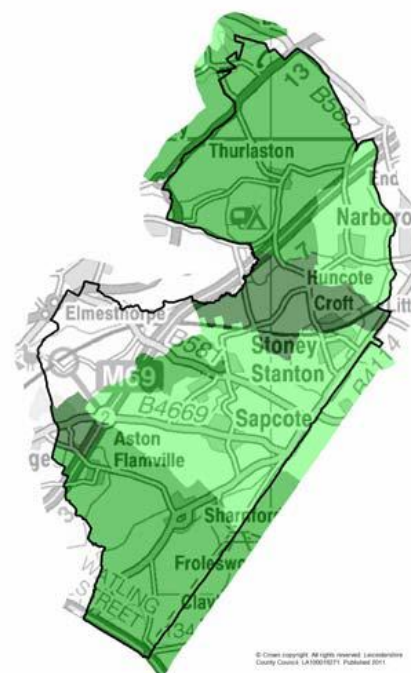
A profile for the area was prepared at its creation in 2007 (when it was known as the Blaby South Community Forum); it contains broad background information on the key characteristics of the area

<http://www.leicestershireforums.org/uploads/314d552648e822f849772864.ppt>

An updated Profile report was prepared for the district in 2009, as evidence for the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy, and is set out at Community Forum area level [http://www.lsr-online.org/reports/places in leicestershire reports](http://www.lsr-online.org/reports/places%20in%20leicestershire%20reports)

The following map shows the rural nature of the Fosse Villages area. All green areas are classified as rural by Defra's Rural Urban Definition 2004. The Local Authority Classification identifies Blaby District as Large Urban but Blaby contains a range of urban and rural areas and the Fosse Villages area is predominately rural.

The larger Hinckley Urban Area (Hinckley, Burbage, Earl Shilton and Barwell), located immediately south-west of the area is important for providing access to numerous "higher order" services and facilities and employment opportunities. In addition Magna Park 10 miles south, Nuneaton 7 miles and Coventry 15 miles south-west are significant employment centres. Leicester City Centre, some 9 miles to the



Rural Urban Definition 2004

- Hamlet & isolated dwellings - Less sparse
- Village - Less sparse
- Town & fringe - Less sparse
- Urban > 10K - Less sparse



northeast, and Rugby 12 miles to the south-west, also provide services and facilities to residents of the area. Broughton Astley just over the boundary in Harborough district is also a local but significant employment, retail and service centre for the more southerly parishes.

Environment

In physical terms, the area is characterised by gently rolling agricultural land interspersed by small to medium sized settlements. More subtle details are identified in Blaby District Council's Landscape Character Assessment (2007) which divides the Fosse Villages into the following 7 areas:

- Aston Flamville – Wooded farmland / rolling farmland with wide expansive views;
- Croft Hill (including Huncote) – Isolated hills set in a predominantly low lying flat landscape;
- Elmesthorpe Floodplain – Large gentle bowl with topography rising around fringes;
- Normanton Agricultural Parkland – Strongly rolling landform; substantial blocks of woodland; formal parkland landscape;
- Soar Meadows and Sharnford – Wide gentle valley of the River Soar. Numerous meandering watercourses;
- Stoney Stanton and Sapcote – Rolling farmland, gently rolling topography. Mainly arable farmland;
- Thurlaston – Rolling Farmland, gently rolling landform. Mainly arable farming.

For further details see

<http://www.blaby.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/environment/countryside/landscape-and-settlement---character-assessment/>

Perhaps the most distinctive landscape feature in the Fosse Villages area is Croft Hill, which although only 128 metres in height, is nevertheless a significant local landmark in an otherwise low lying topography. It is considered to be an area of local landscape value and an SSSI. The adjacent Croft Quarry is one of the largest hard rock quarries in the country. As one of the nearest sources of igneous hard rock aggregate to the South East of England it plays a strategic role in the country's aggregate supply along with Leicestershire's other igneous rock quarries.

There are a number of former hard rock quarries in the area which reflect the importance of the area's geology as a source of aggregate and are a testimony to the role quarrying has, and continues to play, in the area. Some of these former quarries have been infilled with waste but a number are now water filled, one of which, Stoney Cove, has been developed as



the National Diving Centre. Huncote Sand and Gravel Quarry has recently completed its extraction operations but continues to operate as a construction waste recycling and disposal site. Other potentially workable sand and gravel resources exist in the area.

The Fosse Villages area contains three SSSIs designated for their ecological value and one geological SSSI. The six Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) are all associated with former quarries.

The main countryside recreation facility in the area is Fosse Meadows Nature Area close to Sharnford. 57 Ha of former agricultural land was purchased by Blaby District Council in 1986 and has been subsequently developed to both enhance nature conservation and to provide informal recreation opportunities. Burbage Common on the Hinckley and Bosworth District Boundary is also widely used.

Furthermore, in terms of built heritage, two of the settlements have Conservation Areas (Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva) and the area has 56 Listed Buildings.

Transport

Communications have long played an important role in the life of the area. In Roman times Watling Street (the present day A5) and Fosse Way (now a recreational route) met at High Cross on the Leicestershire/Warwickshire border where Venonae, a Roman settlement, was at the centre of Roman England. The present day High Cross is one of 8 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Fosse Villages area.

Communication routes have a significant impact on the area. The Birmingham-Peterborough railway line runs in an east-west direction, although the former passenger stations at Croft and Elmesthorpe are long closed, leaving the only connection to the line being at Croft Quarry which is used for transporting minerals. National Rail Network access is available outside the area at Hinckley, Nuneaton, Rugby, Narborough and Leicester.

Bus services are now extremely limited, and because of the dispersed areas of employment, shopping and other services, in many cases do not now provide a viable transport alternative to the car.

Built in the 1970s, the M69 motorway runs north-south through the area. Junction 2 offers restricted access to the motorway network with north facing slip roads only; south facing slips were omitted because of potential local traffic impacts, in particular traffic being drawn to the M69 through Sapcote from settlements around the southern edge of Leicester.



Other than the M69, the main routes are relatively limited, as the area's road network consists in the main of low classification or unclassified rural roads. The exceptions are the B4114, B581 and B4669, which in practice serve to carry much of the traffic generated in and around the area; provide key links to the strategic road network (i.e. 'A' roads' and the M69); and which are all part of Leicestershire's core lorry network.

However each of these roads have stretches in the villages below which are too narrow for two HGVs to pass without mounting the already sub-standard width pavements; B4114 – Sharnford, B581 – Stoney Stanton, B4669 – Sapcote.

The B4114, the principal road, runs north-south between its junction with the A5 on the Warwickshire border at Smockington Hollow and junction 21 of the M1/M69. The level of traffic using this route, in particular HGV traffic (including from Croft Quarry), is a cause of major highway safety, pollution and environmental concerns to the local communities in the area. In addition the B581 through Elmesthorpe and Stoney Stanton is a very heavily used HGV route which is unsuited to its traffic density as is the B4669 through Sapcote. Whilst these roads are unsuitable to carry the nature of traffic that they do, they currently have to carry the majority of traffic in the area due to the lack of any better quality or more suitable alternatives.

Reflecting the area's rural nature, there is a widespread lack of safe roadside pavements/ pathways between the villages in the area, which in combination with the very heavy traffic levels, makes walking both an impossible and unsafe transport alternative.

Rural Economy

Leicestershire's rural economy cannot be defined solely by one sector. Significant social and economic changes in recent years have meant that the rural economy is no longer reliant upon the land-based/agricultural sector as it was perhaps was 40 years ago. As identified through the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Assessment, Leicestershire's rural economy aligns significantly, in structural terms, to the urban economy with a range of sectors represented. This includes an expanding tourism sector, increased patterns of homeworking, and a growing creative and knowledge-based economy. Despite some key larger employers based within rural areas, businesses are generally much smaller employing up to 10 people. Operating within a rural area does present key challenges for such businesses.

Land-based businesses remain important within Leicestershire, and we have seen an increase in on-farm diversification resulting in improvements to local tourism, food and



drink and equestrian activity. Farmers also help to ensure the management of the countryside and productive agriculture is likely to be of increasing importance as a result of current food security concerns. Within Leicestershire there is also an expanding woodland economy.

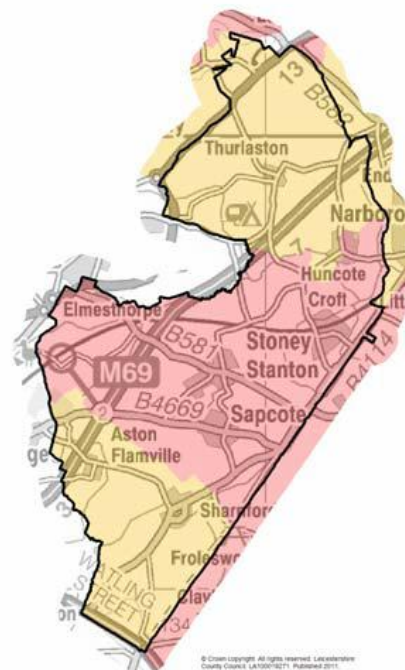
There are roughly 290 businesses and services within the Fosse Villages area representing a range of sectors. This includes 20 hospitality businesses (inc. accommodation providers, pubs and restaurants), 115 commercial services businesses (inc. construction services, ICT and design, personal and consumer services, and repair and servicing businesses), 25 sports and entertainment businesses, 30 education and health services, 60 manufacturing and production services (inc. land-based and industrial products), and 40 retailers (including convenience stores, DIY, post offices and petrol stations). (PointX, July 2010, Leicestershire County Council).

Given the small size of most of the settlements and the rural character of the Fosse Villages area employment opportunities are limited. There are small employment areas in Stoney Stanton, Croft and Sharnford. Elsewhere Aggregate Industries, Leicestershire County Council Highways Depot at Croft and Calor, Stoney Stanton are significant sources of employment.

The average gross weekly pay for the District of Blaby is £532.20, this is above the average for Leicestershire which is £500.20 (Nomis 2010). The

average household income by ward data (CACI 2009) shows that within the Fosse Villages area Croft Hill has the lowest average household income at £33,760, with Stanton and Flamville having the highest average household income at £38,340.

Improvements to the broadband infrastructure are necessary to ensure that all communities can better access on-line services and help support the growth of Leicestershire's economy. The needs of businesses, higher levels of homeworking, issues faced by home-based businesses, opportunities to deliver services remotely (e.g. education, telemedicine, employment/ training support services), and pockets of rural disadvantage mean that



Risk of areas not receiving NGA

- Red Risk
- Amber Risk
- No Risk



improvements to the broadband infrastructure are necessary to ensure that no community is left behind. Connectivity improvements will be essential for the future delivery of all public services. The above diagram shows the risk of areas within the Fosse Villages not receiving market-led super-fast broadband/Next Generation Access (NGA).

Rural Housing

In recent years there have been a number of medium sized housing developments across the Fosse Villages area, applications continue to be submitted and it is felt by the local community that the cumulative impacts are not considered. Adequate information and support for the local communities is viewed to have been lacking and there is a genuine desire to engage in the process to ensure future provision is appropriate in scale, location and type, in line with local needs.

Future development will need to bring significant improvements to infrastructure, to ensure that the communities, present and future, will continue to enjoy the vibrant and dynamic nature of the locality.

Work has been undertaken in several Fosse Villages to identify the need for affordable rural housing. A significant development in Stoney Stanton brought forward 34 affordable homes. In addition a number of Housing Needs Surveys have been undertaken leading to development through the rural housing exception site policy.

Planning

The Fosse Villages are entirely within the administrative area of Blaby District Council. Blaby District Council has recently submitted the Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) with the Examination taking place in October 2012. The Core Strategy recognises the separate character of the southern rural area of the district and expects the area to accommodate relatively low levels of growth, with a focus on Stoney Stanton, as the District's only Rural Centre and the best served of the villages in the south of the district.

Leicestershire County Council has adopted Mineral and Waste Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPDs. It is not proposed to allocate any new waste management sites in the Blaby South area. The broad spatial strategy for waste is to direct new waste management capacity to the main urban areas of the County and Leicester City and not in the Blaby South area albeit there will be the need for small scale local facilities and the area has a number of such facilities already. The spatial strategy for minerals is to give priority to the extension of existing quarries where there is a need for additional supply.



Who are we?

Seven of the 11 parishes are represented by Parish Councils, with the remaining four having Parish Meetings. In the case of the latter, this is due to the small size of the resident population. All 11 authorities support the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Fosse Villages area.

Collectively the 11 authorities have a total of 88 elected Members, many of whom are active in a wide range of organisations and bodies throughout the local community and therefore possess detailed knowledge of the issues which are important in their respective areas.

There is a long history of cooperation between the Parishes within the area. Stoney Stanton and Sapcote Parish Councils worked together on the original Fitchett Homes planning application to develop the area between them in the late 1980s. Huncote, Croft and Thurlaston Parish Council work together on quarry liaison issues. Although these partnerships are informal, the Fosse Villages developed an idea which was mooted when Mike Lee was Chair of Sapcote PC back in the early 1990s to work together with Sharnford and Stoney Stanton Parish Councils on common issues. More recently, the cooperation has resulted in the realignment of Local Policing Unit boundaries to coincide with the Fosse Villages area.

In recent times, a number of the Parish Councils have had experience of preparing local policy statements for their area, namely:

- Croft Parish Plan (2004)
- Croft Village Hall Feasibility Study (2011)
- Sapcote Village Appraisal (2003)
- Sharnford Village Appraisal (2002)
- Stoney Stanton Parish Plan Survey Data (2008)
- Thurlaston Parish Plan (2008)

It is considered that the Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan will allow opportunities for the experienced Parish Councils to share their expertise with those authorities who have not been through the process of preparing a Parish Plan / Village Appraisal / Village Design Statement or similar. In addition, RCC (Leicestershire & Rutland) has agreed that it will assist in the project. The RCC has considerable experience in encouraging advising and supporting local communities to enable them to produce their own community led plans and deliver local outcomes.

Fosse Villages Community Forum



There are 27 Community Forums covering the whole of Leicestershire. Community Forums are one demonstration of the commitment of the three tiers of local government in Leicestershire to localism and empowering local communities. The Fosse Villages Community Forum is one of three such Community Forums within the District of Blaby. It has met on many occasions since it was formed in November 2007.

The Community Forum gives the public the opportunity to discuss local services with County, District and Parish Councillors and representatives of other agencies, including the health service and the police. The Forum is also regularly attended by community groups, including Community Action Blaby District, Sharnford Traffic Action Group, Stoney Stanton Community Association and Croft Community Association.

The Fosse Villages Community Forum is one of the best attended Forums in the County, with consistent attendance by Parish Councils and public. This shows the depth of residents' interest in service delivery. There has been discussion concerning a wide range of issues, with planning and transport matters being frequently debated topics.

Planning related discussions at the Forum have mostly centred on the traffic impact on the local area, which is already under considerable strain from use by HGV traffic (including quarry traffic) and commuter through traffic.

Many Forum members feel the current planning framework does not provide sufficient possibilities to address the constraints within the local road network effectively.

At a meeting on 1 February 2011 with Blaby District Council, Leicestershire County Council and Parish Councils/Meetings representatives, the possibility of a Neighbourhood Plan was considered. The Parish representatives present were all in favour of creating a Neighbourhood Plan for the area, and those not able to attend subsequently agreed to support the application.

Joint Board

The Neighbourhood Plan is being guided by a Joint Board. Each parish is represented on the Board, and the Board Chairman is Mike Lee who lives in the Sapcote/Stoney Stanton area. The Board is supported by Blaby District Council, Leicestershire County Council and the Rural Community Council. The Board have appointed a Project Manager to help prepare the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan will address different needs and expectations. Likely components include:



- Definition of scope;
- Community planning vision and objectives for the neighbourhood;
- The broad planning context, local facilities and services;
- Key neighbourhood projects, community led initiatives and infrastructure priorities;
- Development management, environmental policies etc.;
- Site specific policies on housing, economic development, transport etc.;
- Community land management and service delivery
- Possible changes to planning designations;
- Delivery plan identifying funding and support priorities.

The Neighbourhood Plan will add a local dimension to the emerging Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) policies and make it meaningful for local people and include elements which would not ordinarily be included in a strategic plan.

Funding

In addition to the Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner grant, we have received grant support from Leicestershire County Council's Big Society Fund and Blaby South Community Forum.

Programme

The Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan will be a new, community-led level of planning for the area, so it is important that local people get involved throughout the process. Later this year, local people will have the opportunity to influence where new development can take place and areas to be protected. The Neighbourhood Plan will eventually be subject to independent examination. If the Plan meets certain safeguards and gets 50% support in a local referendum it will be brought into force by Blaby District Council.

Conclusion

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, the Fosse Village parishes are applying for designation of the Fosse Villages as a neighbourhood area. The Fosse Villages comprises the parishes of Aston Flamville, Croft, Elmesthorpe, Huncote, Leicester Forest West, Sapcote, Potters Marston, Sharnford, Stoney Stanton, Thurlaston and Wigston Parva (see attached plan). As a multi-parish area, this application has been submitted by Sapcote Parish Council. The other parish councils and parish meetings give their consent to Sapcote Parish Council taking the lead in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for their areas. In practice, the preparation of the Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan is overseen by a Joint Board comprising all eleven parishes.



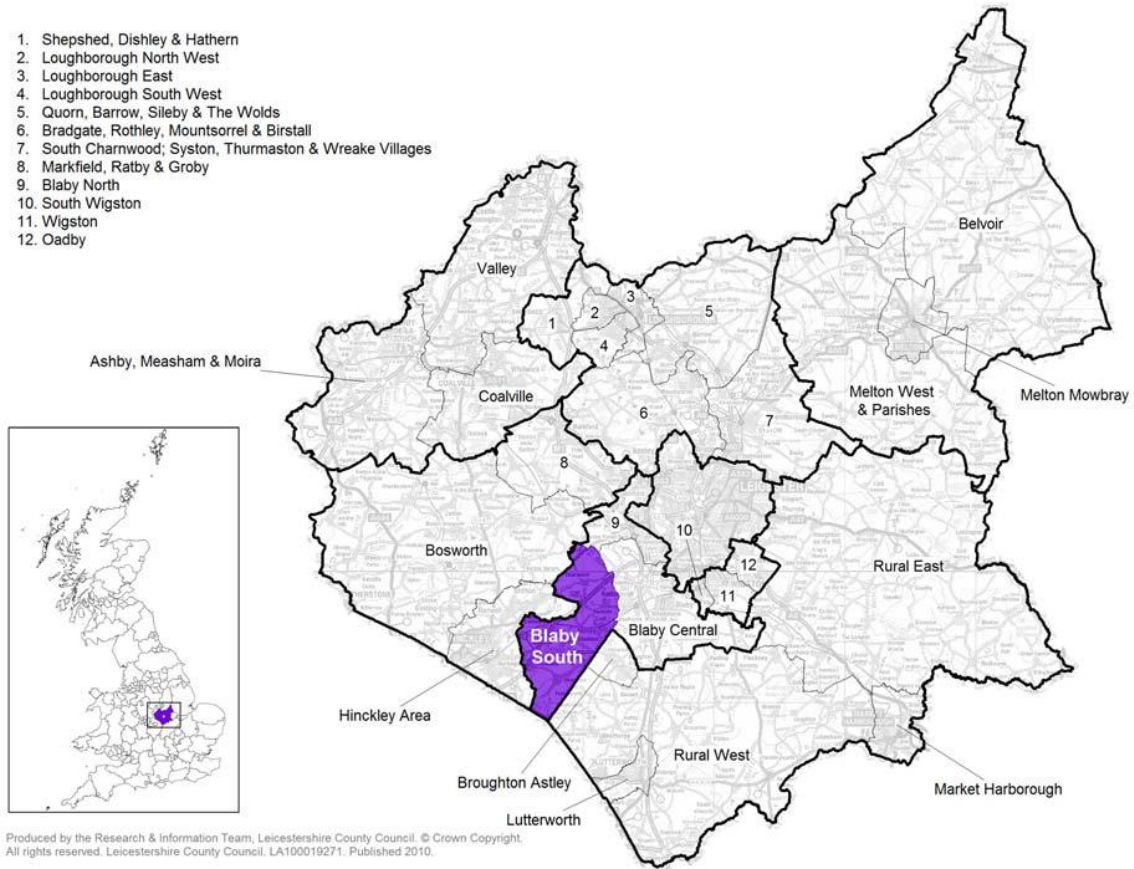
The Fosse Villages is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area for the following reasons:

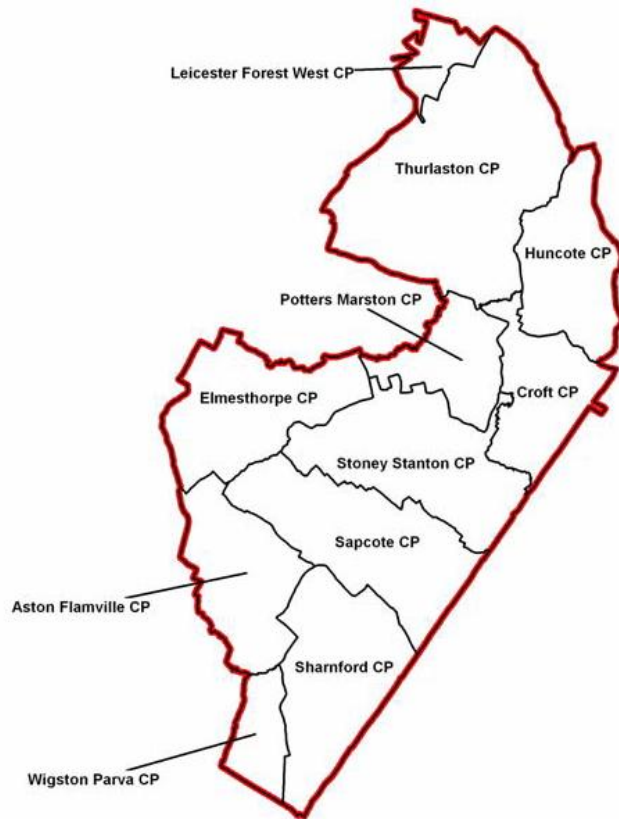
1. The area is rural in nature, where settlements are generally smaller and have fewer services and facilities than other parts of Blaby district.
2. The area shares common issues concerning highways infrastructure and poor public transport services.
3. There is a long history of cooperation between the Parishes within the Fosse Villages area. Stoney Stanton and Sapcote Parish Councils worked together on the original Fitchett Homes planning application to develop the area between them in the late 1980s. Huncote, Croft and Thurlaston Parish Council work together on quarry liaison issues.
4. The eleven parishes comprise the Fosse Villages Community Forum which gives the public the opportunity to discuss local services with County, District and Parish Councillors and representatives of other agencies, including the health service and the police.
5. In April 2011, DCLG selected the Fosse Villages as a 'first wave' pilot for the Front Runners Scheme.



Appendix 1: Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Area

1. Shepshed, Dishley & Hathern
2. Loughborough North West
3. Loughborough East
4. Loughborough South West
5. Quorn, Barrow, Sileby & The Wolds
6. Bradgate, Rothley, Mountsorrel & Birstall
7. South Charnwood; Syston, Thurmaston & Wreake Villages
8. Markfield, Ratby & Groby
9. Blaby North
10. South Wigston
11. Wigston
12. Oadby





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