

# Phil Hope MP

Mr David Oliver  
East Northamptonshire District Council  
East Northamptonshire House  
Cedar Drive  
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25 July 2007

OliverEAST01015.

Dear David Oliver

## **Improvements to Irthlingborough**

I recently wrote to local residents in Irthlingborough with whom I have had contact in the past asking them for their views on:

1. The improvements being proposed to Irthlingborough town centre by East Northamptonshire District Council and funded by special government regeneration grants.
2. The top five issues of wider concern in Irthlingborough that need to be tackled.

I was astounded by the flood of letters, faxes and emails that I received over 200 people have responded, many making detailed and thoughtful remarks on both the plans for the town and other concerns that they would like to see addressed.

Many of the respondents also remarked how pleased they were to be asked for their views and were greatly encouraged by this opportunity.

## **Improvements to the Town Centre**

In general there was a broad welcome for the plans for the town centre and recognition that the general smartening up and re-shaping of the shopping area would be of real benefit to local people and help to attract more retailers. Concerns that were expressed fell into four main areas:

- **Parking:** Many felt that taking away parking spaces could lead to illegal parking; there should be designated bays for disabled parking; traffic might divert to inappropriate areas such as near to the Infant/Junior schools; a few suggested pelican crossings to ensure traffic does actually stop.
- **Maintenance:** The physical changes such as new trees were welcomed but it will be vital to ensure proper maintenance of the centre to ensure good standards of cleanliness; litter removal; extra police community support

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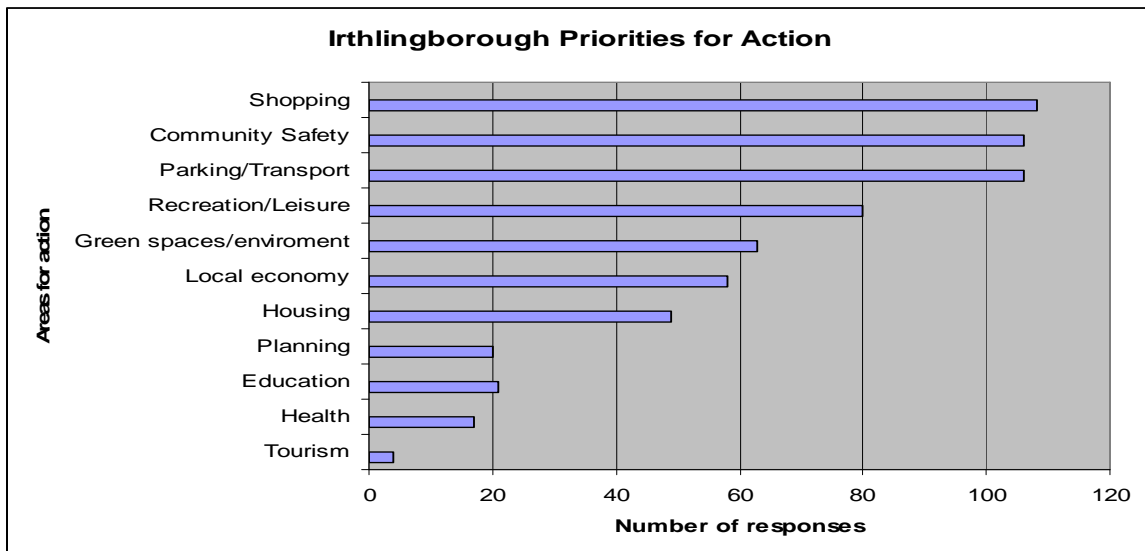
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officers in the town to prevent vandalism and anti-social behaviour; good footpath and pavement maintenance; and cleaning the drains.

- Additional changes: Additional ideas proposed included: re-painting 'tired' shop fronts, introducing a weight restriction on heavy lorries using Irthlingborough as a 'ratrun'; more incentives for new shops to occupy disused sites; discount schemes for local residents to improve 'footfall'; a marketing strategy to promote shops locally; rent/rate relief schemes to attract new shops.
- New Town Square: Views seem evenly divided between those in favour and those against. Many could see the attraction of this proposal. Others, that it would not work in the way intended.

## Other issues of concern

The graph below summarises the main themes identified as issues that need to be tackled in Irthlingborough and the surrounding area:



- As the comments on the town centre improvements show it is clear that very many people want to see the shopping area as it stands substantially upgraded; many others want to see more and better quality shops in the town; some respondents made very constructive suggestions on new initiatives that the Council could take to improve use of shops by local residents that might, in turn, attract new retailers and create a positive cycle of improved quality, range and number of shops in the town.
- A very strong theme that emerged was the need to tackle low-level nuisance, vandalism and anti-social behaviour around the town. There is clearly a need to increase the number of uniformed officers-Police Officers and Police Community Officers- in Irthlingborough.

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I would, once again, repeat my request on behalf of my constituents that, in light of this clear concern, East Northamptonshire District Council agrees to invest some resources in co-funding additional Police Community Safety Officers in Irthlingborough to tackle anti-social behaviour.

- In addition to their earlier comments many raised concerns about the need to improve parking and transport links in the town. One specific issue on buses was the need to restore direct services from Irthlingborough to Northampton.
- The concerns raised by residents for action to stop anti-social behaviour are matched by a desire for recreation and leisure facilities in the town to provide constructive alternative activities and places to go for young people in Irthlingborough. I would like to see the district and County Council work more closely together to give priority to this gap in services.

As the survey results show concerns about the quality of the environment, the provision of more jobs and improvements to housing locally also featured as issues that Irthlingborough residents saw as needing attention.

Finally, I appreciate that some of the concerns are not the direct responsibility of East Northamptonshire District Council and I will be circulating copies of this letter to the County Council and Northamptonshire Police for their information and comment.

Yours sincerely



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