

EVIDENCE FOR USE IN THE APPLICATION FOR A DISPERSAL ORDER IN
FLITWICK (Part 4 – Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Completed by PC 423 Jon Birch
Neighbourhood Police Officer – Flitwick SNT

The area of Flitwick Town Centre has for over six years and possibly longer, been regarded as a place where much of the notable anti-social behaviour takes place. This is more noticeable at weekends on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Key areas that attract problems are Coniston Road near to Tesco Store and the road next to the recreation ground, Coniston Road near to the Russell Centre shops and Bumble Bee public house, also the area of the Village Hall car park. (Map at annex A).

The number of calls to the police regarding anti-social behaviour, violent crime and damage in these locations is a reflection of how much they can be a problem, mainly on the days mentioned.

With all of these areas being classed as designated public places and alcohol free zones, an effort has been made to enforce the issue of alcohol consumption which commonly is a cause to some issues. Penalty notices have been issued and a number of youths referred to the youth register for being found with alcohol, but clearly these measures are not having a long lasting effect.

At the root of most calls and reports about anti-social behaviour to this area, is the issue of youths gathering. The congregation of a small group frequently grows to a large group and in simplicity a crowd grows and problems start.

Recorded police incidents to this area with a group issue from the start of 2008 to January 2009 amount to over seventy. Most of these relate to the top end of Coniston Road near to Tesco.

Details from Mid Bedfordshire showed that the locations mentioned are within the higher concentration areas for anti-social behaviour and criminal damage (From September 2008 – details at annex B).

In the first six months of 2008, Tesco logged 68 incidents of anti-social behaviour. A number of people have been banned by Tesco with support of the Police over 2008, and some arrests have been necessary over issues in Coniston road, including one breach of an ASBO.

More importantly, public consultation and engagement with young people and adults alike, has shown that there is concern amongst many of the public about the groups and behaviour in the Coniston Road area.

Problems have continued despite various approaches, and in late 2008, I consulted the District Council about the possibility of a Dispersal Order. The idea for this had already been presented at the Flitwick Community Safety Panel, which gave it full support along with Flitwick Town Council.

The District Council took the initiative of organising with me a problem-solving group at the Flitwick Police room and a number of agencies attended. This took into account all the concerns mentioned in this document and a number of agencies went away with actions. Most actions related to youth working and diversionary activity. Tesco also took on some preventative measures for the area of the store. (Minutes of the problem-solving group attached)