

Community Builder Neighbourhood Profile

Mincinglake & Whipton 2021-22



Introduction

Welcome to Mincinglake and Whipton! This neighbourhood profile draws on the work of the Wellbeing Exeter Community Builder to bring you a community's eye view of the neighbourhood and what happens in it. You'll not find statistics here on demographics, health, education, etc. Please read this alongside the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) tool from Devon County Council, which provides a wealth of quantitative data.

Our focus here is on local knowledge: what is it like to live here; what informal community activity there is; where the important community focal points are; and what's missing, or of concern to local residents.

This is a snapshot rather than a directory, so may not have exhaustive listings (although we've done our best to avoid errors and omissions). It aims to highlight community strengths and areas for growth. It also aims to provide an informed commentary on the health of community life.

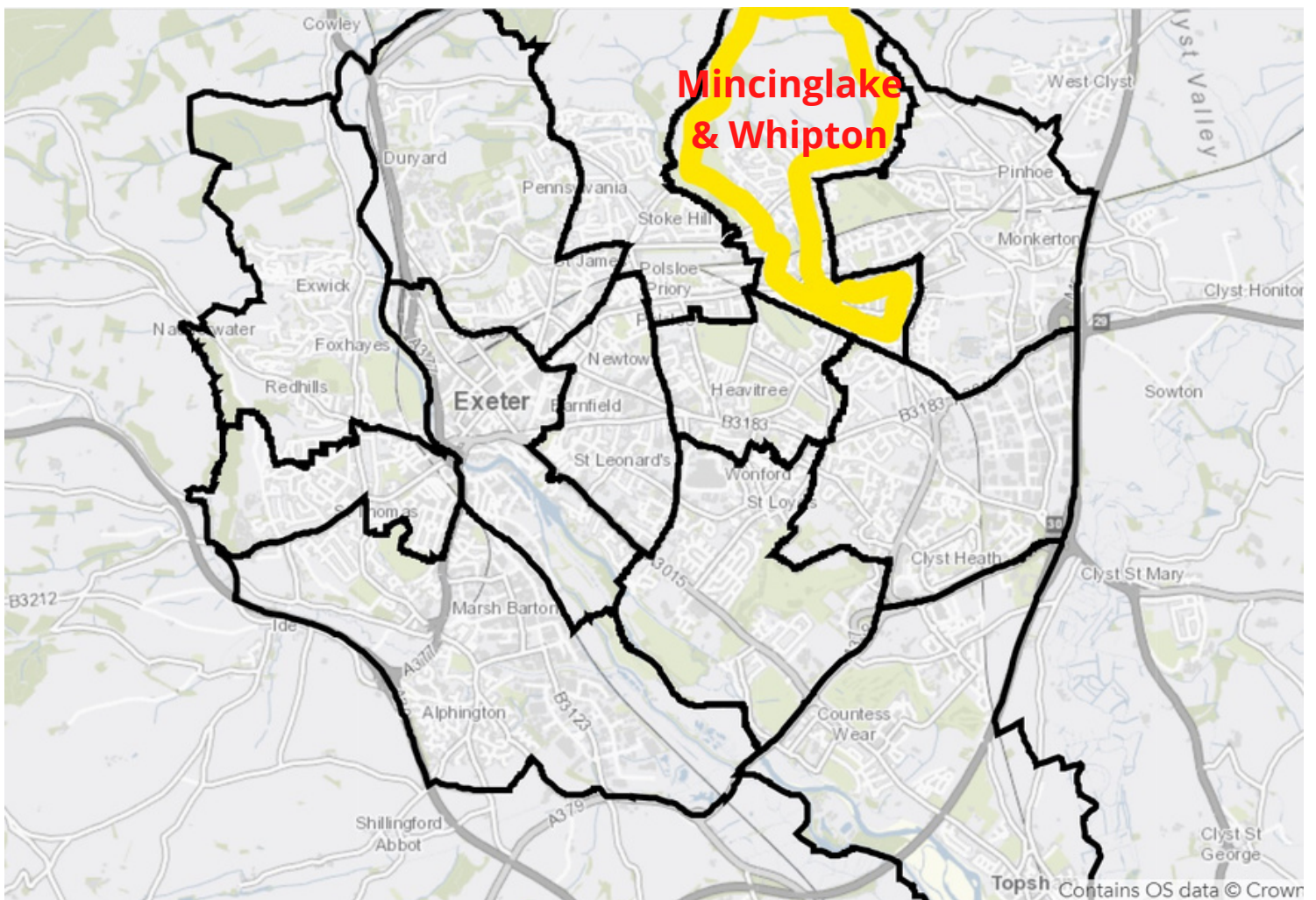


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Picture Of A Place

The Mincinglake and Whipton ward boundaries are a peculiar shape and fragment the ward, cutting out many of the original assets. The western boundaries of the ward which take in Mincinglake Valley Park and run to Cheynegate Lane on the eastern boundary hold true to residents' sense of place and identity. People who live in Arena Park, Summerway, Thackeray Road, Vaughan Road, Bodley Close and around Thornpark Rise tend to refer to themselves as living in Whipton rather than Pinhoe, St Loyes and Heavitree. Many residents have commented that 'my postcode is still a Whipton postcode, I've always lived in Whipton, why have they done that?' For this reason, the Community Builder for Mincinglake and Whipton has taken on the area of Summerway and Summerway park.



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The northern area, known as Mincinglake or Beacon Heath, has left many residents feeling out on a limb with no real community hub. The area is hilly, and the design of the estate is very self-contained, with only a small row of shops at one end on Beacon Lane, including a Co-op, pharmacy, hairdressers and fish and chip shop. There are buses that serve the estate but it's a long way up or down the hill on foot especially if you are elderly, have a disability or have a number of children in tow. In the past year there have been some changes made to the frequency of the F1 bus service which have negatively affected some residents.

Whipton Village on the other hand has many more shops, two pubs, a cafe, hairdressers, barbers, vets, takeaways and a doctor's surgery. This is one of the main bumping spots in the area. The pubs have darts and pool teams but also have a high turnover of management and are known for having issues with violent or abusive customers. One resident shared a story of how there were 13 police incidents in the Full Moon pub in a two-week period. The Full Moon was closed down at the end of 2019 and remained boarded up until the end of 2020. It has new landlords who are community-minded and have completely renovated the pub with the aim of changing it into a community and family-friendly pub. They have supported the new Whipton Defibrillator group and the new defibrillator is located on the outside of the pub for use by the community.

There are two junior schools, two infant schools and three nurseries in the ward. Whipton Barton Infants, Juniors and Oasis Nursery make up the Whipton Barton Federation. Willowbrook School has infants and juniors, the Spring Nursery serves families in Beacon Heath and Little Ones childcare off Pinhoe Road is used by many families in Whipton. Stoke Hill infants and junior schools border Mincinglake Road and are attended by children from both Stoke Hill and Beacon Heath. St James is the largest secondary school in the area and serves Beacon Heath and Whipton as well as attracting large numbers of students from Exwick. St Luke's just over the border in Pinhoe is attended by a number of Whipton residents.



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There are five churches within or bordering the ward. Three of the churches have very elderly congregations of between 10 and 30 individuals. The Beacon Heath church has a slightly larger but aging congregation. ISCA church has a growing younger and largely family-orientated following. The majority of community groups in the area are run in church-owned buildings by people from the church, many of whom live outside the ward but are active in the area due to the church links. There is a large redevelopment due to start at St Boniface Church with a new Reverend appointed in September 2021. The church has ambitious ideas to adapt the space for community use and build a community hub in the area to support residents living in Lloyds Crescent, Hillyfields, Brookway and surrounds. The Community Builder had plans to support the development project by setting up community drop-in sessions outside the church for residents to talk about what groups and services are missing in the area and suggest ideas about how the community could use the space. There were also plans for a flyer drop and door knocking to reach out to a range of different residents. Unfortunately all plans and renovations were postponed due to the pandemic.

ISCA and Beacon Heath church both run youth groups and activities for secondary-aged children. There is still a lack of youth provision in the area, and some teenagers or families are put off the clubs due to their church connection.

There are many vulnerable individuals with complex needs in the ward. This can make it more difficult for some individuals to lead or attend community groups and activities. Many residents have become accustomed to agencies and charities providing services for them. In addition to this the pandemic has caused a higher level of anxiety in these individuals and reduced the number of people who feel comfortable engaging in public spaces. The Community Builder set up listening posts outside the shops in Whipton village, Beacon Lane and in the local greenspaces after the second lockdown from March-June 2021 to gauge the level of confidence people had in returning to community spaces and events. Whilst certain individuals seemed happy to return to a sense of normality other were far more cautious.



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Food poverty and child welfare are a concern in certain areas of the ward. Whipton Barton and Willowbrook School provide magic breakfasts to all students. This includes bagels or cereals donated by the large supermarkets during term time to ensure all children eat before starting the school day. During the pandemic, schools continued this support outside of term time and on top of the government voucher scheme to ensure all children had access to food. Community volunteers who came forward in the pandemic and joined the Beacon Heath and Whipton Covid area support hub helped to deliver the weekly food parcels. The Hot Food Project was also set up by volunteers across the Pennsylvania and Beacon Heath area and provided food to many families in the ward. It was based at St Katherine's Priory and the Beacon Centre.

Many parents locally suffer from poor mental health or social and domestic problems which can affect child welfare. There is an above average number of young carers at both primary schools due to these issues. Whipton Barton School used to have a dedicated family support worker who spent a lot of time out in the community supporting families. Unfortunately, this service has been cut due to a lack of funding. All the community playgroups and baby weighing services run by Whipton Children's Centre have been cut, as has Sure Start provision, which is likely to exacerbate issues further. A new midwifery service started at the Beacon Centre in 2021. It is hoped that the centre will be able to grow the services available to families and provide more opportunities for baby and toddler groups in the future to meet demand.

Free or low-cost space for community activity has been hard to find but this is starting to change with the resurrection of the Whipton Community Association and the new development at St Boniface Church. The Community Builder has been supporting the evolving Community Association and much work has been done to update the hall, heating system and kitchen facilities. A new Meet with Mummies coffee morning has been popular but so far the Association has found it difficult to engage the community with events at the hall, despite their best efforts.



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There is an abundance of sheltered and council-owned accommodation in the area, but Rennes House is the only building with a community room, and it is not open to the general public. This can make socialising and getting the community together on a hyper-local scale more difficult across the ward.

Green Spaces

Mincinglake Valley Park - Devon Wildlife Trust took over the management from Exeter Council in 2019. It is by far the largest green space in the ward and is used by both the Beacon Heath and Stoke Hill communities. The area is used by dog walkers, families, cyclists and walking groups and is part of the Exeter Green Circle walking route. The only structure in the park is the Sylvan Hut, which is on the Stoke Hill side, and is therefore used less by Beacon Heath residents. Many long-standing residents remember the adventure playground in the park and reminisce about how great it was for the children and how much of a shame there is nothing like that now. The pathways leading to the park from the Beacon Heath housing estate can sometimes be overgrown, which can deter residents from using the space. Bollards and stiles have been put in place to stop motorbikes/vehicles getting into the site and to deter anti-social behaviour, but this has also restricted access for residents with disabilities and parents with cycle trailers who would like to use the park more regularly.

Green groups and interest in local greenspace have increased in the area since 2019. Friends of Mincinglake Park have taken over the maintenance of the Mincinglake Valley orchard from the Wildlife Trust/Council. With the support of the Community Builder the group have held two apple festivals, wassails, regular maintenance sessions, tree adoption days and juicing events. They acquired a large community apple press and equipment with grant funding from Devon County Council which can be hired out to other groups. They remained active during Covid with the chair of the group single-handedly running individual juicing sessions on her driveway in Mile Lane. The core group has shrunk and changed due to the pandemic, but new people have attended events. It is hoped that events and numbers will get back to pre-pandemic numbers in the future. The latest festival was held in September 2021 at Beacon Heath church hall. There was apple-pressing, crafts, music and cakes made from locally foraged fruits.



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A resident who moved to the area during the pandemic set up the Beacon Heath Litter Picking Facebook group to clean up local green spaces such as Mincinglake Park, Betties Mead playing fields, Arena Park, Exhibition Fields and Hamlin Lane. They have since set up Facebook groups for Pinhoe, Newton, and Heavitree and have created a new Exeter Litter Picking page. Friends of Eastern Fields continue to run a monthly litter pick and a Facebook group has been set up by a resident interested in meeting other dog walkers called Dog Walkers of Eastern and Exhibition Fields.

Off the back of Friends of Mincinglake, [The Exeter Greenspace Group](#) has been set up to try and bring all the green groups together, share resources, events and to gather information about how people use the local green spaces. The driver behind this has been the proposed housing developments on the green space in the area. Residents in Mile Lane, Celia Crescent and Iolanthe Drive set up a 'save the Bus Stop Fields' Facebook group in 2020 as it became apparent that more of the fields around them were to be developed. They started a petition and have been lobbying ECC to try and save the green space. There are 400 Facebook members in the group. It is hoped by showing the City Council how local people use the green space it will better inform decision making in the future and protect the areas they love and reduce environmental impacts.

The privately-owned fields that back on to Pendragon Road, Celia Close and Pinwood Meadow Drive are used just as much by residents for walking as the valley park. Residents living close to Pinwood Park - a green space at the top of Pinwood Meadow Drive - started a dog walking group and a walking group called Pinwood Walkers. There is a history of community activity in the park, with stories of residents having cream teas, BBQs and playing sports games on the green space surrounding the park. A resident bought a sit-on lawn mower to keep the grass down when the council reduced its cutting regime so the community could continue to enjoy the space.

[Betties Mead Playing Fields](#) are used by dog walkers, families and a number of different football teams as there are changing facilities onsite.



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Hamlin Lane Playing Fields/JLC just over the border into Heavitree are regularly used by Whipton residents. The park is used by dog walkers and families and is a popular place to take children to use the cycle training area.

There are a number of small parks dotted around the ward, some used more than others. Pendragon Road MUGA & Play Park ('top park') is popular, as is the park off Lloyd's Crescent in the southern part of the ward. Similarly, Exhibition Fields are now part of Pinhoe ward but are used a lot by residents from Mincinglake and Whipton. It has a good-sized play park and picnic benches and there are stories of residents holding community picnics here.

Community Hubs and What Happens In Them

Community hubs can be buildings, spaces, organisations, even people. They can be community-owned and run, council property, and commercial businesses. What they have in common is that they bring added value to the activities and energy associated with them by bringing people together in ways they might not otherwise do, being a focus for local expertise and connections, and facilitating the casual encounters that fuel fantastic community action.

The Beacon Community Centre is funded by ISCA Church Community Enterprises. It took over the running of the building after the Knight Club youth centre closed down. ISCA was keen to create a community space that would not be seen by the community as church-orientated, as it is felt that the religious association puts residents off attending. The space is used by St James' School, autism groups, the Rotary Club and Beacon Centre volunteers run the Meet and Remember group which is very well attended by older residents in the area with dementia or memory issues along with carers. A wellbeing group and cafe for people with anxiety and depression runs on Mondays and a toddler group on Thursday. Members of ISCA church along with youth workers from the YMCA run two youth clubs and a community cafe runs every Friday morning alongside the Exeter Food Bank and Toy Library. The wellbeing group and foodbank were the only services that remained active during the pandemic.



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The centre switched its services to hosting the Covid-19 area support hub and worked alongside St Katherine's Priory to deliver the Hot Food Project. The centre also hosts two Wellbeing Exeter Community Connectors and has many rooms for hire.

St Katherine's Priory is run by the Stoke Hill Community Association, despite being formally in Mincinglake and Whipton ward. Before the pandemic, the building was used regularly by a range of groups, including a very well-attended model railway club, engineers club, whist group and craft group and held community events and a cafe. The space became very active during the pandemic as a community larder and attracted large numbers of residents from Beacon Heath and Whipton who were affected by job losses, reduced income or needed more food to feed children when not in school. It has remained a popular venue after lockdown due to its outdoor garden space where people are able to remain socially distanced and attend the community cafe on Mondays and Fridays. The engineers have built a model railway in the grounds and can offer rides to families and children.

Whipton Community Association Hall - the hall is rented by a number of community groups including a women's A Cappella choir, an art group, dieting group, exercise groups and martial arts. The hall can also be hired out for private events. A new chair has been appointed to the Community Association with the help of the Community Builder and has been working hard to start a new community cafe, meet with mummies coffee morning, community events including craft fairs, Halloween and Christmas trails, Christmas events such as Santa's grotto.

Beacon Heath Church - before the pandemic a weekly Age UK social group, coffee morning, ladies light lunch and community brunch group and craft group were run in the church hall. The hall is available to the community to hire.



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What Else Is Happening?

The skate park at Exeter Arena, on the boundary of Beacon Heath and Pinhoe, opened in summer 2018. It is well used by children and young adults in the area. It is largely seen as a positive thing for the youth in the area but some residents have raised concerns over anti-social behaviour.

Devon Yeoman Pub hosts quiz and music nights as well as a football, pool and darts teams. The local Age UK swimming group has a roast dinner every Wednesday in the back room after swimming.

The Knit & Natter Ladies is a network of women who met via the old wool shop in Whipton (now closed). Many of the women, who meet weekly at the Beacon Centre or the Snug café, are pivotal in supporting and running community groups or events in the area. They share/pass information across ward boundaries and teach the community knitting skills in the community café and at the wellbeing group.

Whipton Chapel runs a weekly community coffee morning, toddler group and youth club. The space is not available for public hire.

Holy Trinity & St Boniface Churches (part of the same parish) - private groups hire the halls for keep fit activities. There is male voice choir and craft group at St Boniface church and a community café, friendship group and quiz night at Holy Trinity Church. ISCA Bowling Centre attracts older people from across Exeter and further afield. A number of groups and events such as quizzes and board games groups derive from the bowls group.

The Labour Club in Whipton village has a whist group and is mainly attended by the elderly population in the area. The Whipton and Pinhoe Labour Club on Vaughan Road, now located just over the border in Heavitree, is also used by the older generation but hosts music and Karaoke nights and is trying to build up a skittles team.



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Spreading The Word: How Do People Connect?

Word of mouth is the main method for spreading the news about community events. Many residents, especially the elderly, do not use social media. Many people say they don't know what's happening locally and do not appear to know about community buildings, groups and events happening in close proximity to where they live. The majority of people in the ward believe the Whipton Community Hall is still an active church and are unaware of the local café in Whipton Village called The Snug. The Beacon Centre is slightly better known but more so because of its history as the Knight Club which was once the biggest youth club in Exeter. Many residents still do not know what happens there and many people are also unaware of St Katherine's Priory. St Katherine's Priory has however grown in profile and popularity during the pandemic due to the weekly community run larder and the large outdoor space which has allowed people to interact in a socially distanced manner. This is something the other community venues lack.

There was an increase in social media use during the pandemic with the creation of new Facebook groups which allowed people to communicate and share news. The Spotted Beacon Heath Facebook page has the largest number of followers - 3,900. Posts are geared towards reporting lost pets and objects, crime in the local area and humorous signs or notices rather than community events or groups. Whipton Community group is the second largest group with 1,200 followers. Most other Facebook groups in the area have roughly 700 followers. This includes The Beacon Heath News page set up by ISCA church with the intention that the community would take ownership of it. The Beacon Community Centre, St Katherine's Priory, Friends of Summerway, Whipton Hall and Community Association, Beacon Heath Together and most of the churches and schools have Facebook pages. Events are seldom shared between the different groups or pages. The Community Builder shares information between the pages for this reason.



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There are very few functioning notice boards in the area and they are rarely updated. There are boards outside most of the churches and the Beacon Centre. There are boards outside of the Co-op in Beacon Heath and Londis in Whipton although they have no protective covering as they have been vandalised and posters are quickly removed or pulled down. The removal of posters in the area is an issue. The Community Builder has been working with Friends of Mincinglake Park, Friends of Summerway and the Whipton Community Association to secure funding for three new boards for Mincinglake Park, Summerway Park and in Whipton Village. The funding has been granted but the process has been slow due to gaining permissions to erect them on City or County Council land and boards needing to be made to organisation or council specification. It is hoped the boards may be in place in 2022.

The Beacon Heath & Whipton Newsletter that was started in 2019 with the help of the Community Builder has come to an end in 2021. Copies were delivered to all areas of the ward but there was not enough financial support to keep the magazine running and not enough interest from local residents to support the project long term.

The Community Builder writes a bi-monthly email newsletter to share events and updates with residents in the area and has a Facebook page. It is another method of communication the Community Builder uses to reach individuals who may not use social media. Although feedback from the newsletters is low, other organisations have fed back that people have heard about groups, workshops and events from the Community Builder.

Where Are The Gaps and Concerns? What Potential For The Future?

As is echoed across most of Exeter, many believe there is a lack of provision locally for teenagers. During the Covid pandemic there was a spike in antisocial behaviour across the ward. It caused a lot of tension between residents and the local youth who had been damaging community buildings, pulling down newly planted trees, smashing glass bottles in the greenspaces and setting fires in parks and to bins.



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Residents in Beacon Heath would like to see more opportunities for yoga and tai chi that are accessible for people who live up the top of the hill. There are no community spaces on the housing estate so activities would need to be run outdoors in green spaces. Before the pandemic the Community Builder spoke to the local children who were interested in activities such as football being run in Lancelot Park. The Community Builder was able to arrange this with Exeter City Football Club but only two sessions happened before lockdown. The sessions have now been moved to the Beacon Centre. There is an opportunity for more organisations to engage with the residents in this area if they are willing to offer activities closer to people's homes.

The building of new houses on the green space in Mincinglake is a concern and there is increasing awareness of food poverty in the area.

The PTA struggles to engage parents at Willowbrook and there is no PTA at Whipton Barton School. Volunteers can be hard to come by in the area which can be difficult when starting new groups or when trying to grow Community Associations. There are a handful of "super connectors" in the area who start up and manage many of the Facebook pages, groups and events. There is however a limit to the number of projects or Facebook pages one individual can realistically manage and this can sometimes lead to people becoming disheartened at the amount of effort they put in and the lack of community support or engagement they sometimes experience.

