

Earley [and its] Adopt-a-Street Initiative: EASI !

The organizer



The town



The "problem"



The "solution"



The team



The future



Presentation to Zilch on EASI by Peter Soul, 20120920

My general plan ...

Word about me / retired 7 yrs ago / immediately became editor of local newsletter – finger on pulse / annoyed by litter for many yrs / 3 yrs ago I started to think about how to start a litter-picking group

Early in 2010 got together with two other equally motivated people – Brian, Secretary of Resident's Association + Grahame, town-council staff responsible for a lake & nature reserve in mid of town – started building up EASI / more later.

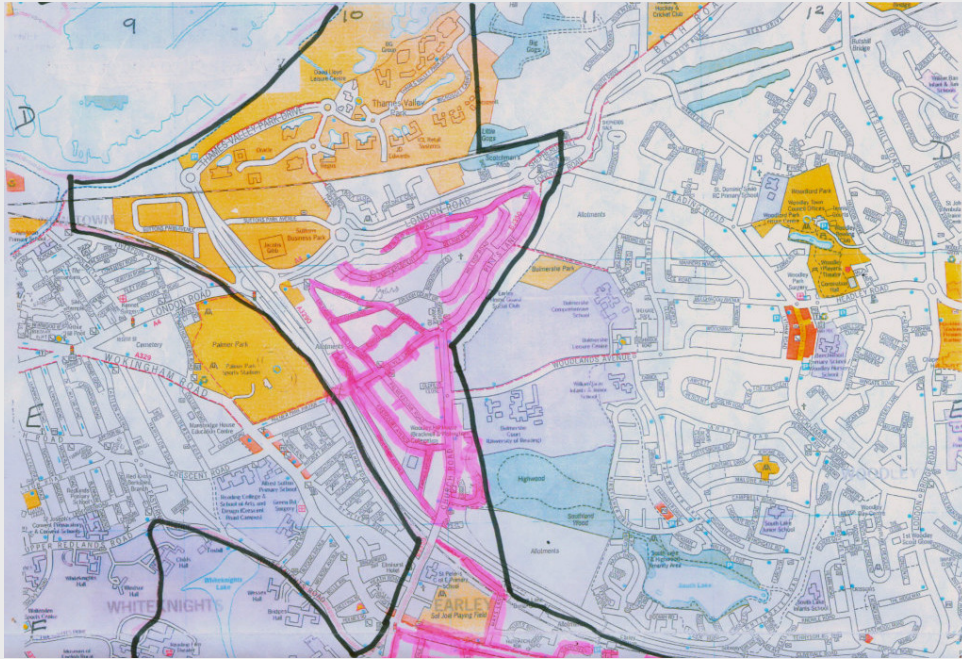
I'll tell you about our town in a minute / then the problem – we all know what "the problem" is, or do we? Because real problem isn't litter but the litter-droppers / similarly, the solution isn't really litter-pickers but stopping the drop / but we are contributing – I will explain and tell you how EASI got going & how run

Then I'll describe our team / again picture is misleading, because never meet, or hardly ever! Finally I'll touch on ideas for the future

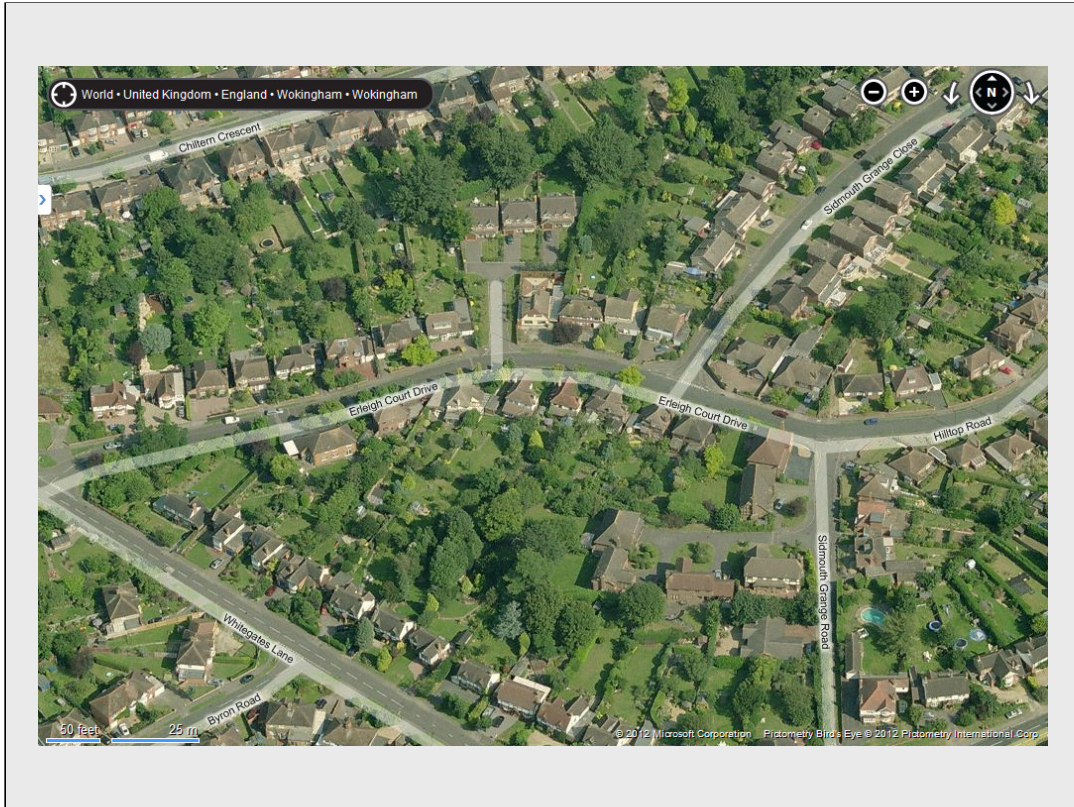


Our town / strange shape, historical r, head of Martian / Thames, M4, Reading Borough (no administrative connection), Woodley (to the south), to the SW Wokingham Borough / R university split between Reading & Wokingham – don't know how anyone copes administratively!

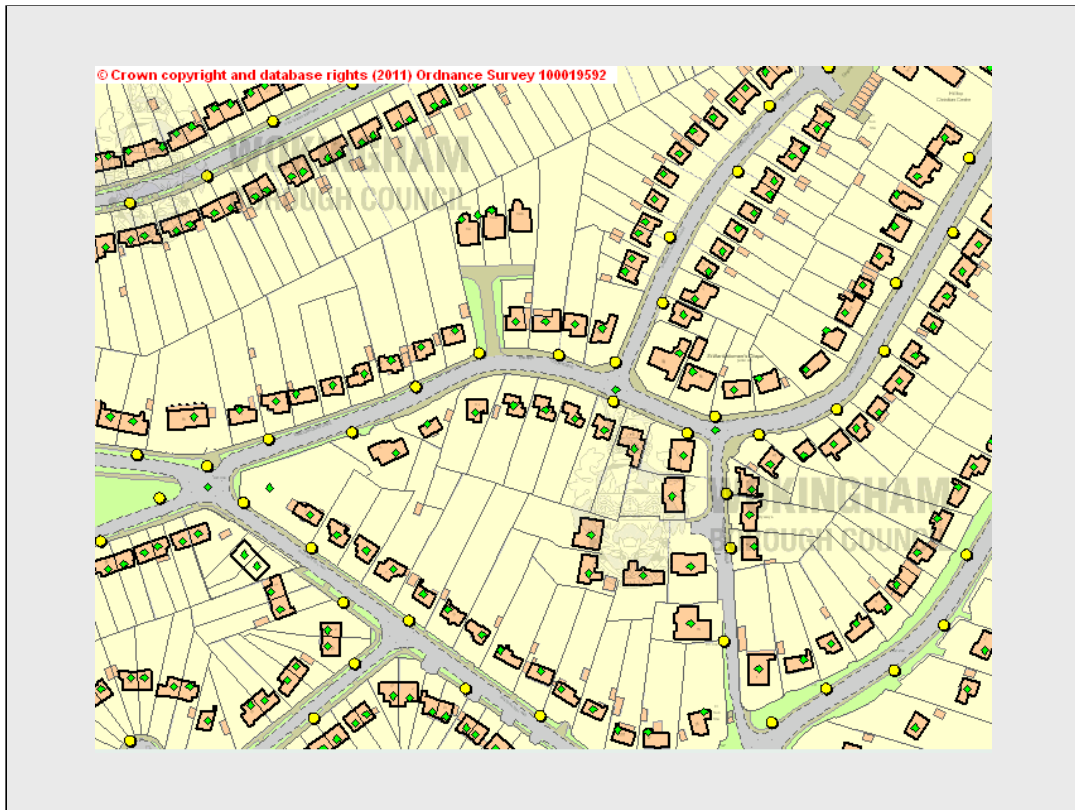
33K residents, 380 named roads, town council, borough council, both making some attempt at litter-picking, both v supportive of our much better attempts.



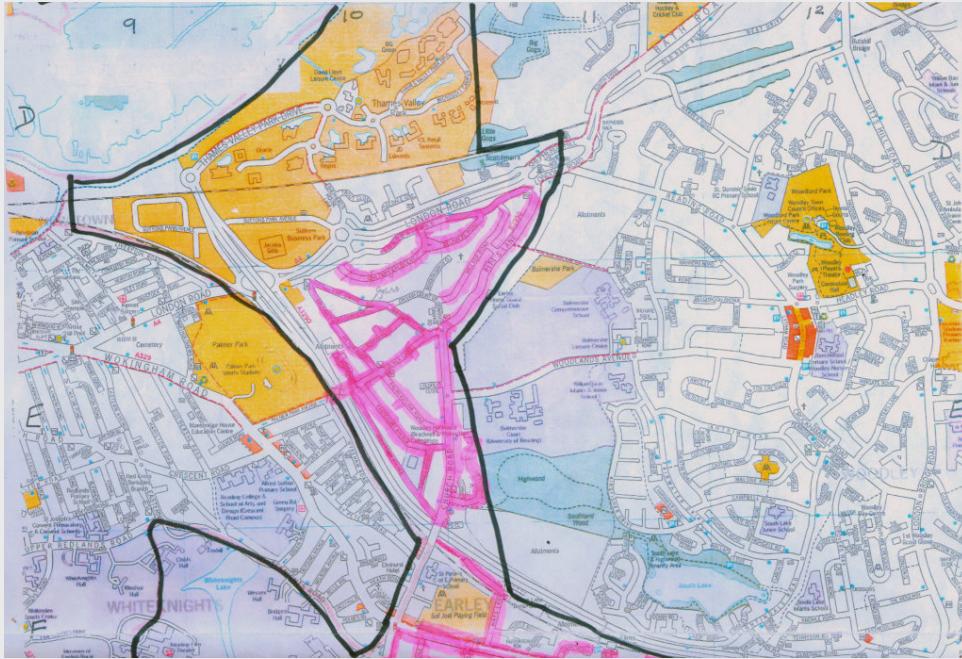
zoom in 1st on N Earley: ind areas N of A4, residential streets S of it, also bounded by A329M / may look squeezed in but quite spacious streets / pink = EASI-streets, successfully found & recruited I-pickers for them / mainly just little group of 3 left to sort out...



Let's zoom in / thanks to Bing maps – birds eye view – we know where you live /
by the way Erleigh not spelling mistake – there are 3 ways of spelling Earley /



Thanks to Wokingham Borough Council map. If zoomed-in further, you read off every house number and this helps us plan our leaflet deliveries... Actually, already we've leafleted to nearly every house. The next move after we have tried that is to try adjacent road / but I'm getting ahead of myself...



Back to N Earley / just a single road (+ path) linking N & S. The road not in pink is a busy narrow road, few residents, put on list for town council to concentrate their slim resources on.

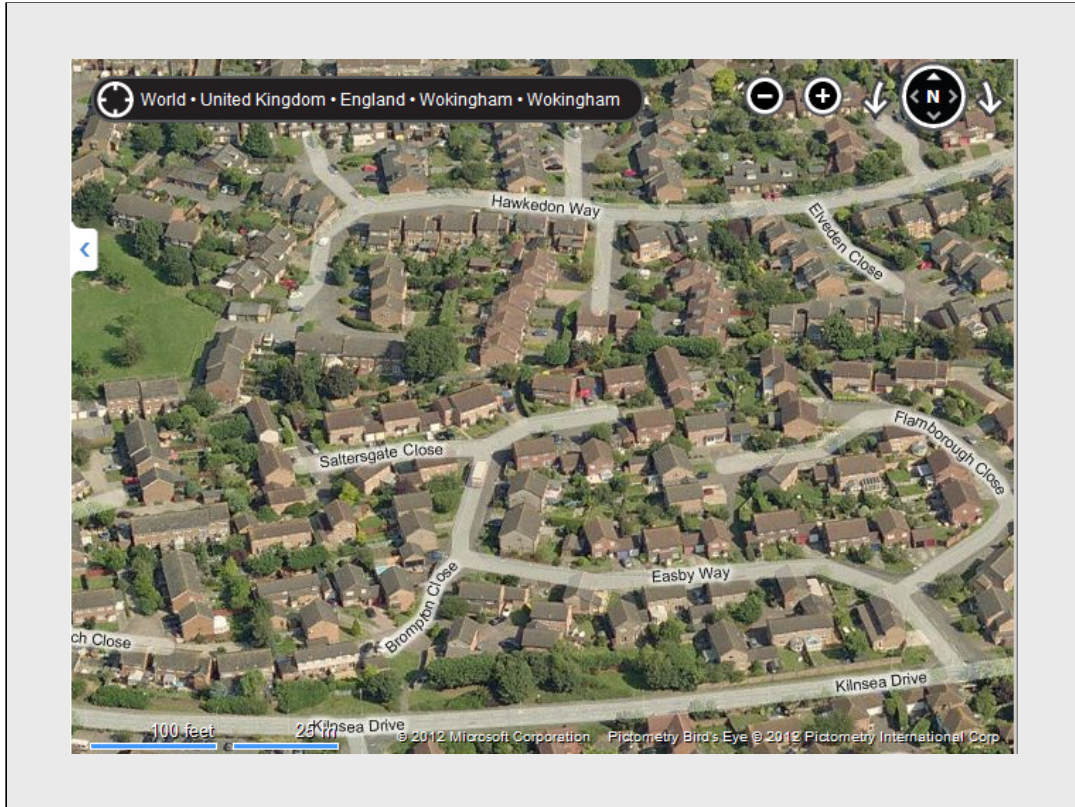


Visit rest of Earley: upper 1/3 = Maiden Erlegh where I live (lake & NR) / lower half = Lower Earley: in 70s became biggest housing development in Europe / rabbit warren / years ago (before geogr), set off for SW exit, ended up far E... Can see (a) largely pink & I-picked, just a few areas remaining, (b) estates laid out quite differently



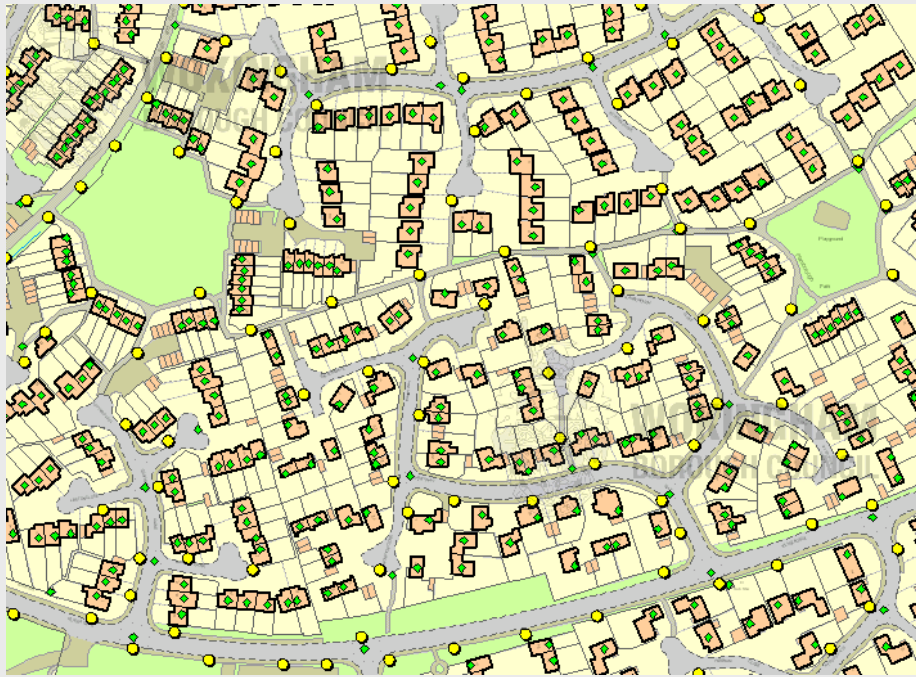
Let's just look at this one, not yet tried to recruit

Not just one estate but hugely complicated, incl green spaces & not just long path but many short ones – litter builds up most. My problem is firstly planning how to divide it into manageable stretches per person / 2nd where best to put leaflets in, 10 at a time usually, to achieve this.



Also, roads like along bottom: no houses! So we'd need to reserve some off-road houses in my leaflet plan for this – and hope someone will come out.

Perhaps getting ahead of myself again, but ought to say: a diff person might have tackled all this quite diff – putting out general leaflets & posters, see who responds from where & what they are volunteering to do. But this is how my mind works – and it enjoys challenge.



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Now to prob of litter Seems to be dropped by school pupils (M/Erleigh School close by: they do their best), general passers-by, groups get together in secluded spots / also seasonal problem: leaves will soon fall, revealing some of summer's littering.

Mentioned councils: Earley Town Council get outdoor staff to do ~20 hrs/week total – not much, but will focus on where we say we can't / Wokingham Borough Council in theory litter-pick every road in the borough every 6 weeks, but again just scratching surface (literally) / also have 500 litter-bins across borough – don't know N in E, but they do listen if we ask for more...

Anyway, our litter-problem is probably typical of most places. But our solution: rather diff.

The screenshot shows the website for LitterAction.org.uk. At the top left is the logo for 'Campaign to Protect Rural England' with the tagline 'Standing up for your countryside'. To its right is the main logo 'litteraction.org.uk' with the tagline 'working together to beat litter'. Further right is the 'CleanupUK' logo. Below these is a green navigation bar with links: home, get involved, volunteer groups, information centre, news, contact us, search, help, blog, login.

The main content area is titled 'All groups in UK'. Below the title, it says 'Page: [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]'. A list of 33 groups follows, each with a number and a name followed by a location code in parentheses:

1. "Pick it up" Cardiff - CF23 9US
2. 'Shore' is a load of rubbish! - CT8 8EH
3. 1st Long Stratton Beavers - NR15 2JB
4. Aberdeenshire Litter Initiative - ALI - AB51 4EW
5. Aberystwyth Dirt Destroyers - SY23 2NF
6. Act on Litter - ST1 6AU
7. Addlestone & Chertsey Area - KT15 1RL
8. Adopt a Street, Forres - IV36 1NH
9. Ainsdale Civic Society - PR8 3HX
10. Aintree Roamers - CV37 9FN
11. ALCG - DG1 4TB
12. All Hallows Catholic College - SK11 8LB
13. Allington Alligators - ME16 0GE
14. Alton Action on Litter - GU34 2RL
15. alverstoke litterpickers - PO12 2HF
16. Alveston Litter Busters - BS35 3JQ
17. Anfield Trash Army - L4 2RZ
18. Anti-litter-clayton-village - BD14 6AL
19. Appleby Litter Pickers! - DN15 0AR
20. Ashley Village Residents Litter Group - TF9 4LQ
21. Askham Bryan/Copmanthorpe - YO23 3QS
22. Aston Ingham Cleanup - GL18 1PG
23. Aubrey Road Residents Association - E17 4SL
24. banburycrew - OX16 0TZ
25. BandH! Stop the Drop - DN5 7EW
26. Barkisland and Area Anti Litter Strategy - HX4 0AS
27. Basildon Berkshire - RG8 8
28. Basingstoke - RG21 3JW
29. Battledown Park - GL52 5FT
30. BBC Lancashire "Clean up the County" - BB2 2EA
31. Beach Care - LA9 4TN
32. Beat litter in Newent - GL18 1TS
33. BEAT Up On Litter - BN23 8DQ

Certainly if look at the LitterAction website & scan through the >500 litter-picking groups, only tiny fraction are adopt-a-street groups / rest seem to organize regular get-togethers to blitz neighbourhoods.

Story of EASI

- took advice from other groups
- three of us: Peter, Brian, Grahame (council staff)
- annual spring litter-pick, Earley Green Fair, Environmental Group, press & radio publicity
- Grahame suggested leaflets through doors...

Let's now run through history /

First I took advice from some of those adopt-a-s groups / mostly either one-man bands ("don't go near the council") or council-run & not very effective! Can understand: who wants to appear to work for the council for free? Several useful tips: get publicity/map/ distinctive clothes

Mar 2010: got together with Brian H & Grahame H to plan things / stood up in front of town council planning committee: our aim is to get at least 20 people to volunteer to pick own street – will you provide equipment? Certainly! In contrast, Wokingham Borough Council didn't really want to know / eventually realized our value to community, and now both councils support us to the hilt: even though we are >10x our initial target size, still supply litter-pickers /vest/gloves/bags continually whenever we ask.

Could explain that BH has job of delivering equipment, while I keep the database & do the planning as you will see. Grahame H I will mention in a min.

So how did we manage to expand?

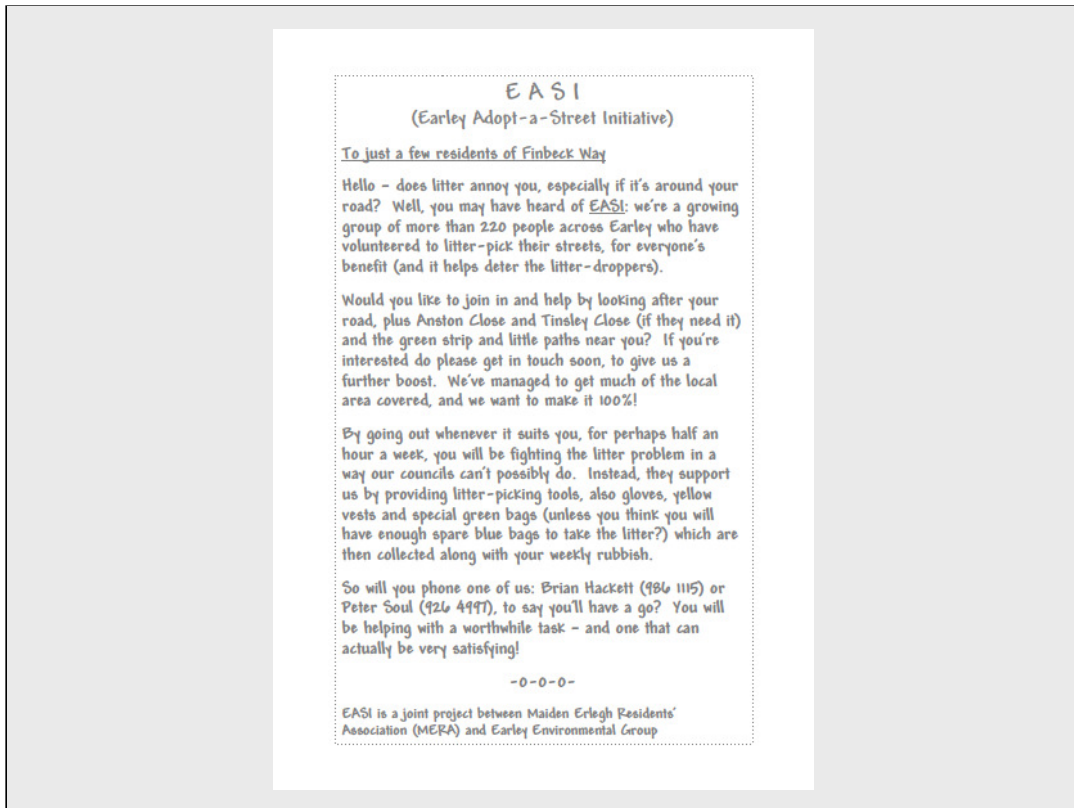
First year: mostly happened at special annual events / people turned up for a big group litter-pick, then afterwards felt hand on shoulder: why not do this along your road to keep it tidy? Can hardly say no.

Then Green Fair gave us another boost in August: organized by Grahame H & seems to attract people minded to volunteer for this – every yr have had 8-10 p signing on. And of course the Earley Environmental Group has given us good publicity resulting in more members.

Quite a bit of press & even radio publicity that first yr – but not much response. Like to think though it prep p for when leaflets reached them later...

Anyway, after 6m or so, actually expanded to >60, and that's when Grahame H started suggesting putting leaflets thru doors – few in each road. At first, thought more trouble than it's worth, then began to make sense. So from start of last year, I've been tailoring a standard leaflet for every new street to be targeted, --> Grahame H, he runs off 10 copies at the council, & is willing to deliver them too – fair enough as his idea. Though I help with delivering, and other EASI members do too.

Then if no response from street after 1 month (which can be as long as it takes, sometimes), deliver to next 10 houses, and so on. Our average: 1 volunteer from around 25 leaflets. We could del more than 10 at a time, but would it increase chance of more than response in a street? Is our delivery plan a good thing or not?



Here's sample leaflet – short & friendly as possible, not easy to achieve with all the info I want to put in (pause), anyway, after 20 m of delivering these,

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- 70 more needed to cover the town?
- poster on notice-boards, shops, buses

We now have nearly 240 members.

Of course this doesn't equate to 240 roads – some people cover several roads / some are couples sharing the load / some roads need quite a few people to cover them. Anyway, my latest guess is: 70 more people needed to cover all the residential roads & paths in Earley (except for few given up on).

Something we shd have thought of producing before we did was a poster.

An EASI* request

Please put your litter
in a bin



(or if possible, take it home)

*EASI = Earley Adopt-a-Street Initiative -
a growing group of more than 200 residents
across the town, who have volunteered to
litter-pick their own roads so that they look
nicer for everyone. You can help as well by
not littering them...

If your road isn't yet an EASI-street, you
could adopt it yourself: call 0118-9264997

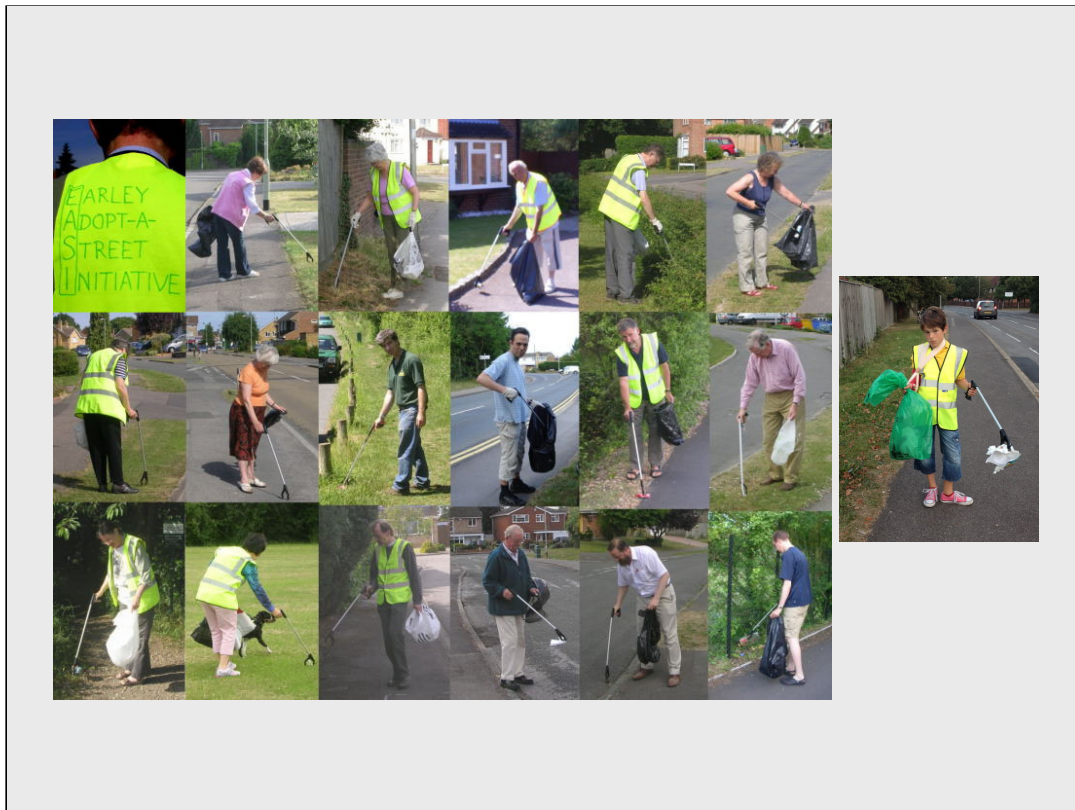
Here it is – double message, don't drop litter, do support EASI

Put up in many useful places, but often not for long – need to keep spreading them around, more than we do.

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Now a bit about the team: ages (or the ones I know) range from about 9 to 92 – though in practice we don't count the youngsters (but don't tell them), and the 92yr-old only clears outside her corner plot.



Here's a montage from about 2 yrs ago.

Some of them are posing rather, but anyway probably represents the age-spread even now – plus lad on R photographed on very 1st I-pick yesterday.

Considering broken wrist in sling, doing well.

Can tell you also we have 10 town & borough councillors on list of members, including the last 3 town mayors. But apart from these public figures, in theory almost no-one knows who else is on list, because of course we keep all the contact info secure – just telling people names of those litter-picking near them.

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- ...comes together for an annual party!

So we had the idea last year of a summer get together, repeated this yr. Bringing & sharing the food, and of course some find they know other EASI-people, while others discover how easy it is to get to know them.



And this is sort of thing the press love to report – so last July we had both local papers competing with stories & photos – focusing on two ladies who had just joined, being presented with their tools for the job.

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- we issue guidelines on what to do & not to do

On more serious note, we give everyone detailed Guidelines with information, suggestions & warnings about what not to do / perhaps bit nannyish, but it's a genuine attempt to reduce risk of accidents. We do emphasize we can't yet provide insurance cover – seems to be no practical way of obtaining this, especially as we don't have any finances nor want them. In fact, not sure we exist at all, officially!

Looking back

- cleaner town – much noticed
- increasingly high profile for EASI
- many EASI-people report reduced rate of litter-dropping
- five other new adopt-a-street groups in borough!

Looking forwards

- aim to have all of Earley covered by EASI next year
- get shops & schools on board
- education by all possible methods
- out of our team of hundreds...
- Big Society now, not just an Initiative!

Here's something else: v rough guess, about half our members have said (or I'm sure they would if asked) that amount of litter dropped has decreased since they started. This is an example of what's been scientifically proved: clean streets stays cleaner, dirty ones not only get dirtier but are likely to suffer from other anti-social behaviour.

And there are now 5 other adopt-a-street groups in Wokingham Borough, copying us though on much smaller scale.

Now let's look forward:

I hope to have all the town's residential roads & paths covered by mid of next year. Then perhaps we should start liaising more with shops and schools (though we have had notable success with some of these already).

Which reminds us that real weapon in tackling litter is education, education, education – and here can link up more with aims & intentions of Zilch, to stop the drop in its tracks.

Because out of our team of 100s, some I'm sure will be prepared to join in and support you, as well as just picking up the litter.

Finally, I'm wondering whether to change our name now, because surely we are the ideal of a Big Society, & certainly now not a mere Initiative.