

Annual Parish Council Report 2005-6

The report is split into the following sections:

- Planning
- Progress on the Village Plan
- Conclusion

Planning. Initially I would like to briefly summarise the planning and development activities taking place that affect the make up, size and appearance of the village. Currently there are approved plans for 25 new dwellings in Denstone and Stubwood.

Of these 25, 9 are already substantially built namely:

- 1 at Stubwood, 3 in Marlpit Lane, 5 on the Tavern site

Plans for the remaining 16 are for houses as follows:

- 1 at Stubwood
- 2 on the Site of Denstone Garage which will be demolished
- 5 behind Brook House and the Garage site
- 1 at the Rick Yard on the corner of Alton Rd and College Rd.
- 1 at the top end of College Rd
- 3 more houses on the Marlpit Lane site.
- 3 chalet bungalows on the Lady Meadow Estate

When all this building is completed the total number of dwellings in the Parish will increase from 370 to 395 - about a 4% increase per annum depending on when they are all completed.

During the year, we received 29 Planning Applications in total but 16 of these involved extensions and alterations to existing dwellings and also to some of the larger properties such as Denstone College and the Nursing Home at Barrow Hill. Another important event regarding planning and its effect on Denstone was the ESBC Local Plan Review which has just been issued. This review has resulted in a tightening up of the Village Development Boundary by taking out some land that was previously available for Development, namely the large kitchen garden adjacent to the Vicarage and the land to the north of Brook House bounded by the B5032. This really means there is now no land within the village for normal development other than that within the curtilage of existing dwellings and expansion of the village will inevitably slow down in the immediate future.

Another important aspect of this Local Plan Review is that the Inspector was of the opinion there was no justification for the Alton Towers Relief Road and reference to this has also been taken out of the plan.

Progress on the Village Plan. Now moving onto the Village Plan and the needs of the community as a whole. You will recall that the village plan identified seven areas which were to be addressed, all determined on a democratic basis, as being the most needed improvements in the Parish.

- 1 Play areas for the children
- 2 Communications within and without the Parish
- 3 Community Transport
- 4 General Appearance of the Village
- 5 Availability of Local Produce
- 6 Improvements to the old Railway Track
- 7 Traffic Problems affecting the Parish

1 Play areas for the children. Substantial progress has been made and thanks are due to the Denstone Youth Fund who have been driving this project. The Denstone Youth Fund known as the DYF is a Charitable Trust and the Trustees are Debbie Andrew, Sarah Bentley, Liz Ratcliffe and Suzanne Smith. In co-operation with The Tom Boden Memorial Sports Trust and willing assistance

from many of the Parishioners they have completed and equipped a Children's play area adjacent to the Bowling Green, of which we can all be proud. The next part of this project is the provision of another play area for the older children. The main difficulty here is finding a suitable piece of land but this is being actively pursued. Denstone College have submitted a planning application for a new playing field which we support. This field is close to the college and will be made available for use of the village when not being used by themselves. Not an ideal solution but an arrangement certainly worth having, particularly for organised games or team events. The old railway track just beyond the platforms and one or two other possibilities within the village are also being considered. I cannot say more than that at this stage as naturally land procurement, initially, is a very confidential matter with the landowner.

2 Communications. The aim is letting all the parishioners know what is going on in and around the village. To this end we now have a Denstone Village Web site where the Minutes of the Parish Council meetings are available together with a Monthly newsletter written by our hardworking Parish Clerk, Bob Beaumont. This newsletter is also included in the Weaver Magazine. Derek Barker is the Web Master and he will shortly be joined by Rupert Evans who has agreed to help, as we work to further improve and extend the content of our Website. On the subject of communications we are hoping to have a new notice board near the Post Office which Willie Radcliffe has kindly offered to make. The existing board has deteriorated and was noted by the judges in last year's Best Kept Village competition albeit we did win third prize. The village will be entering the competition again this year.

3 Community transport. I am pleased to report that this scheme is now up and running.. The scheme is aimed at, but not restricted to providing transport for people who do not have access to any other suitable transport and no means of attending doctors surgeries and hospital appointments without this type of assistance. 22 Parishioners have volunteered to assist in this work using their own cars. This scheme was set up by Dennis Parker with backing from the Staffordshire County Council. Dennis is the main co-coordinator and Wendy Forrester has kindly agreed to act as the standby coordinator. It is the kind of operation where a back up system is essential for the system to work reliably. Talking of medical needs in the village and although it was not in our village plan, I am pleased to announce that we now have our own first responder resident in the village. This is Cliff Bailey who has recently qualified as a member of Churnet Valley First Responders group and when he is on duty he has a specially equipped vehicle available here in the village, a great asset for Denstone. I would like to thank Cliff on behalf of the whole community for giving up his time for our benefit, training for this kind of job is a long and arduous business and we congratulate Cliff on completing it. Note when calling for a first responder always use the telephone number 999 which will get you into the system so that the nearest first responder on duty will be called out. ie. Do not use home telephone numbers.

4 Maintaining and improving the appearance of the village. There is now a group of about 15 volunteers who have taken on the task of litter picking throughout the village. The co-coordinator for setting up this scheme was John Wetton. John has had to relinquish this activity and Nancy Turner has kindly offered to take up the running of the scheme, keeping the volunteers informed and co-coordinating their activities. This group also needs all the support we can give them, as they continue to do a very good job, in keeping the village tidy.

5 Local produce. The aim was to encourage some enterprise to provide local produce within the village. In this regard a planning application is in the pipeline for a Farm Shop which in due course will include a Full Time children's nursery and also a tea room, all needs identified in the village plan. This venture has been initiated by Rupert and Emma Evans and the location of the facilities will be at Denstone Hall Farm. We wish Rupert and Emma every success in this major undertaking.

6 Improvements to the Old Railway track as an amenity for both the Parishioners and visitors.

Grants have been received to provide notice boards outlining points of historical and natural interest in the Churnet Valley. Again these kind of activities just do not happen unless someone is prepared to give up their own time to make it happen, in this case Rose Nandi, Bob and Jean Wright, together with Ian and Cynthia Gustard have worked hard on this project, hampered somewhat by the debate going on at the present time regarding the conflicting requirements on the use of the Railway Track. The DYF see the area immediately to the North of the platforms as the only site currently available where they could build a 'kick about' area and an amenity for the older youngsters. The situation has been complicated by a requirement on Staffordshire County Council to reinstate a bridleway that used to run from Saltersford Lane across the old railway and the River Churnet to Prestwood. The only practical option that the SCC can afford is to run the Bridleway down the railway track into Denstone. The SCC understand this could compromise our plans for a play area, and are therefore prepared to help in the construction of the Play Area regarding preparation of the ground both through the platforms and the play area itself together with the necessary fencing that may be required to demarcate the Bridleway.

7 Problems associated with traffic in the village. A task force of Parish Councilors headed by David Boden was set up last July to concentrate on this problem and to come up with possible changes that could alleviate them. They have examined all the problem areas and would like to present their findings and possible solutions to you here, this evening, for your consideration.

Conclusion. I feel the village has progressed well this year. We are fortunate that there are so many of you are prepared to get involved and help make the village a better place for us all. The community spirit within this parish is second to none and we must strive to keep it that way. I have outlined the positive aspects and it is only fair to say we do also have grumbles and complaints, which we in the Council take seriously and do our best to rectify the causes. Whether it is about dog fouling, unpleasant smells, potholes, mud on the road, antisocial behavior, etc, etc. On the antisocial behavior topic, I can report that Inspector Mason and our local policeman Graham Johnson now have regular meetings with both ourselves, Rocester Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Watch organisations of both villages. Graham Johnson now has information on the youngsters who recently were hedge hopping in the village and I hope we have now seen the end of that.

I learnt over the weekend that the Post Office in Ellastone has closed down and would like to take this opportunity to remind you that our own Post Office is only viable because it is subsidised from the Parish precept, to which we all contribute by paying our Council taxes. This subsidy amounts to about 10% of the Parish precept. It is therefore important that we use our Post Office as much as we can. With the exception of those holding accounts with HSBC and Nat West you can use our Post Office for cash transactions. In addition, although you cannot tax your car directly at Denstone you can purchase Car Tax stamps which puts the turnover into our own office. There are other ways of keeping our turnover up and Bel will be happy to explain these to you when you visit the office.

That is the end of my report. I have mentioned quite a few people by name but there are many, many more of you who are not here this evening who work hard and freely give their time to make this village a wonderful place in which to live. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the whole community to publicly thank every one of you.

Read by Cllr John Ashmole (Chairman Denstone Parish Council) to the Annual Parish Meeting on 24 April 2006