

Annual Parish Council Report 2007-8

This report covers the main activities of the Council affecting the Parish over the last year and the way developments in the near future are seen.

Planning

The following developments of new houses have taken place in the village.

- a. The seven houses on the site of the old garage and Frances Close are now all sold and occupied.
- b. The five houses adjacent to the Tavern have also been completed and with one exception are also now occupied.
- c. Two houses have been completed in Stubwood.
- d. Two of the three new Chalet houses on the Lady Meadow estate are completed with one occupied and the third one is close to completion.
- e. The four 4 bed houses on Marlpit Lane which were completed in the previous year are not yet occupied.

In addition to the 17 houses completed during the last year there are Approved Planning Applications for 12 new houses. These include:

- a. One in Oak Rd. on the site of the old slaughter house.
- b. One 4 bed house on the Rickyard site. (Jct. Alton Rd/College Rd.)
- c. Three bungalows in Marlpit Lane.
- d. Three 4/5 bed houses. Old Filling Station site. Jct. Marlpit Lane/Alton. Rd
- e. One 3 bed house Stubwood Lane.
- f. Two 4 bed houses Marlpit Lane.
- g. One 2 Bed house The Westlands.

In addition to the planning applications associated with new dwellings there were also six more involving enlarging existing houses.

Taking into account the houses being built and the approvals for further building the number of dwellings in the Parish continues to increase at an annual rate of about 3%. This will result in around 410 dwellings when they are all completed.

The only remaining land in Denstone earmarked for development in the current East Staffs Local Plan is that adjacent to the west of Alton Rd between Marlpit Lane and College Rd. As yet there are no applications in, for the southern half of this site.

Progress on the Village Plan. The seven elements to this plan are as follows:

1. Play Areas
2. Communications
3. Community Transport
4. Appearance of the Village.
5. Availability of Local Produce.
6. Improvements to the Railway Track.
7. Traffic Problems.

The current situation on these activities is as follows.

1. *Play Areas.* As reported last year the Denstone Youth Fund and the Tom Boden Memorial Sports Trust agreed to pursue two complementary approaches for the provision of play facilities for the older children once the Toddlers playground had been completed. These were an area including play equipment on the old railway line and an open area suitable for

kickabout on land off Oak Rd. The DYF are busy raising funds for the Railway Line project and should be starting work on this site this year. The Sports Trust have successfully leased land between Oak Rd. and the Lady Meadow estate to provide a kickabout area. A formal opening of this open area is scheduled for Bank Holiday Monday May 5th.

2. *Communications.* The village website has been further developed by Paul Andrew, the new webmaster, assisted by Jacquie Payne. Financial assistance with the cost of the software was provided through the Local Member Initiative Scheme. The website covers the vast majority of the activities within the village in addition to those of the Parish Council and the Vital Village meetings. It depends on the various organisations to continuously update their individual inputs on activities through Paul in order for the site to be effective. A Welcome Pack for new residents can now be downloaded from the website. Those of you who are not online will find a summary of the Parish Council meetings, together with updates on the main activities in the village, in the Weaver Message which is published monthly.

3. *Community Transport.* This scheme continues in operation but the usage of it has fallen off in the last 6 months.

4. *Maintaining and Improving the Appearance of the Village.* A most important activity here is the scheme for volunteers picking up litter in their various local areas. Co-ordination of this scheme has recently been taken over by Jenny Richardson and she is anxious for existing volunteers, and any others who are prepared to help, to please contact her. Tongs and plastic bags are available to make light work of this task. It is a good time to remind you all that we are once again entered in the Best Kept Village competition. Judging starts on the 1st of May and continues through until the 25th July – let us do our best to make the village as presentable as we can especially our front gardens. Stubwood have again elected to enter the competition in the small village category independently of Denstone. Last year Denstone were second in this class and Stubwood was placed third.

5. *Local Produce.* Due to their enterprise and many hours of very hard work, Rupert and Emma Evans have succeeded in building and commissioning a Farm Shop and Tea Room offering a large selection of local produce and home cooking. This is a tremendous asset to the village. It must be the finest farm shop in Staffordshire and does the village proud.

6. *Improvements to the Railway Track.* Additional seating has been put in place on the old platforms. Once the new play area has been completed we are planning to provide a hard surfaced footpath from the entrance in College Rd. as far as the Church Porch. This is to enable the children when walking from the school to the Church to avoid walking along the busy main road.

7. *Traffic Problems.* The most important problem area has long been identified as a lack of footpaths particularly along College Road. Children going to school in the morning have to share the narrow roadway with the heavy traffic travelling to and from the College at this time of day. There is now a plan to provide a footpath on the south side of College Road from the Shop and Post Office as far as Richmond House. At the last Annual Parish Meeting, it was reported that a group of Parishioners had formed a Denstone Traffic Calming Action Group. This group inspired by Joe Lewis and Caroline Salt were instrumental in securing funding from both The College and JCB. This in turn enabled the SCC Highway Authorities to make a special case for funding the rest of the project. Previous to this local funding being obtained, SCC reckoned it would be three years before they could allocate the money required from their resources. We now have a firm promise from SCC that this work will be carried

out this summer during the College vacations. Another parishioner connected with the scheme, and I would like to thank on your behalf is Cliff Bailey, who freely donated land to make this scheme possible. A consultation exercise is now in progress and we are looking for your support for this scheme or at least constructive comments. Large copies of the plan drawings are available here in the hall for those who have not yet seen them.

Our Speed Camera teams are now up and running and we are confident that once they have got into their stride they will have deterrent affect on the regular speedsters. Not only on College Rd, but Stubwood Lane and other areas of the village.

On the subject of traffic, we had a meeting with Alton Towers early this year where they presented their plans for future development of the Theme Park. The new owners Merlin Entertainments Group made the following points.

- a. The number of visitors has decreased over the last four years and is now down to the level that existed in 1984.
- b. The plan is to make Alton Towers the No 1. Short break destination in attracting families who will stay two to three days at a time. Similar to the Centre Park attractions.
- c. Merlin stated that they are unable to make a business case for an Eastern Access. This means the proposed new road, which would have terminated in Denstone, will not happen in the foreseeable future.

Post Office. Last year you were all urged to use the Post Office just as much as you possibly could and I think some of you must have taken note because I am pleased to say that Bel has received a letter from the Post Office Authorities stating that our Post Office will not be closed at the present time. To keep it that way, the message is the same, do everything you can to use it. Cash can be withdrawn from most of the major banks through our Post Office and every transaction adds to the turnover so maintaining our Post Office as an efficient unit.

Noise Pollution. A recent problem some of you are experiencing is the increased Noise and Light pollution associated with the expansion of the JCB Stock Yard adjacent to Hollington Road at the end of Stubwood Lane. We are in discussion with JCB who are addressing these problems.

Conclusion. I would again stress the main factor in making Denstone a good place to live is the strong community spirit we enjoy. It really is important to become involved in the many activities within the village and I would like to thank all those hardworking folk in the various Funds, Trusts, Clubs and other associations who give so much of their own time for the benefit of us all. Thank you.