

APPENDIX 1

Status of Previous Appraisal Recommendations

Key:

red – not yet achieved

green – achieved

black – no known change

Staplehurst Village Appraisal –Recommendations made in 1993

Housing

1. As over half of the respondents wanted no new housing, the development of the site north of the Marden Road allocated by the Borough Council should be resisted.
2. One third of respondents accepted limited infilling within the built up area of the Village but, with the exception of the land behind the Village Centre, as few sites are available this should be on a modest scale
3. The land behind the Village Centre should be used for community recreation facilities and not housing development.
4. Future development must provide a wide variety of housing which should release small estate houses for first time buyers.

Shopping and Commercial Services

1. Shopkeepers should be mindful of residents' comments. Customers are appreciative of efficiency, variety of stock, reasonable prices, good quality products, agreeable staff and attractive premises.
2. Residents must support the shops here if a variety of shops are to be retained and new shops attracted. Any opportunities to expand car parking facilities in the centre of the village should be investigated. The presence of a supermarket complemented by specialist shops is essential for those residents who do not have access to a car. A prosperous shopping centre provides vitality at the heart of the village, and the convenience of corner shops through the length of the village is important in the daily life of our community.

Comment: Although over half the respondents were dissatisfied with restaurants, from reading the written comments this dissatisfaction stems more from the lack of opportunities to eat out rather than any adverse reflection on enterprises already here. Here again problems of viability and building up a clientele from a wider area are essential, but difficult to establish in adverse economic circumstances.

The recent formation of the Staplehurst Business Association can provide a useful link between the Parish Council and local businesses with a view to investigating these recommendations or their implementation.

General Amenities and Services

Short Term

1. Adult Education to be asked to expand courses to meet demand, enclosing a copy of the Appraisal findings.
2. Parish Council to provide a public notice board.
3. A map of the village should be placed in the window of the new information room at the library.
4. Police to be requested to improve manning (N.B. From 1991 2 policemen have been stationed in the village).
5. Parish Council to actively consider improvements to the amenities using the information gathered.
6. Write to the relevant organisations catering for the elderly and disabled with detailed information.

Long Term

1. Toilets at the Parade.
2. In future planning, greater regard should be given to the needs of the disabled and elderly.

Leisure and Recreation

1. Local residents should support the Jubilee Field Committee to bring forward the building of a Sports Hall.
2. Surrenden Road Playing Field should be reorganised to provide more interesting and separate areas for children's play, gardens for sitting and dog exercising.
3. The land behind the Village Centre should be used for community use. However, it would seem that the County Council which owns the land is obliged to sell for the highest financial return, i.e., housing. This is despite the land originally having been given to the village for building a school.

Public Transport

1. Staplehurst bypass should be built.
2. Traffic control at Cuckolds Corner required.
3. Businesses and residents in the vicinity of the Parade car park should ensure their cars are parked elsewhere to release parking spaces for shoppers.
4. Investigate traffic calming measures.

Environment

1. Grass cutting to be carried out more frequently.
2. Comments on the Parade to be drawn to the attention of the landlords and the individual shops concerned.
3. Further activities to be considered for young people (ask them what they want.)...
4. Campaign for "Poop Scoop" Scheme and encourage all dog owners to use it.
5. Encourage Maidstone Borough Council and local charities further to extend recycling schemes. Ask for an aluminium can bank.

6. Improve advertisement of skip collections; seek more frequent timetable.
7. Ensure more frequent emptying of litter bins and provide a wider coverage of the village.
8. Expand street cleaning to take in a wider area of the village.
9. Work with Parish Paths Programme, to ensure improved maintenance of the footpaths.
10. Produce a guidebook and plan of the parish's footpaths (Parish Council to liaise with Footpath Group who are already active in this area).

Employment

1. As only 37% of respondents were in favour of further industrial development, any expansion here should be on a limited scale. Whilst unemployment may be comparatively low in Staplehurst, there is a need to retain local employment opportunities and this will required a degree of flexibility when considering the nature of development.
2. Any further development should be conditional on the construction of the bypass with a direct link to the industrial estate.
3. Preferred development should be light industry and small workshop units, particularly if this provides job opportunities for local people, school leavers and part-timers.
4. Quality low-level design of buildings and good landscaping should be sought.

Staplehurst Village Appraisal – Recommendations made in 2000

Housing

- New housing developments should be resisted, especially without improvements to local facilities.
- If new housing is built, the preferences of local people are that it should be:
 - not too expensive;
 - suitable for young, first time buyers; suitable for the elderly, perhaps sheltered housing;
 - suitable for single people;
 - small developments of individual houses are preferred to large groups of houses;
 - a few respondents specified the need for bungalows and flats.
- Respondents would like to see a village character retained in Staplehurst.
- The conversion of redundant buildings for residential use is acceptable to most people

Shopping and Related Amenities

- Easily accessed, attractive amenities must be a priority in future planning.
- **Clamp down on underage drinking and pavement parking.**
- Encourage householders and the local authority to maintain their hedges and bushes.

Leisure Activities

- Investigate ways of making after school clubs and other leisure facilities more accessible for Staplehurst children, perhaps by negotiating a free or low cost bus pass scheme.
- **Improve the facilities in the Surrenden Road playground and either provide a lockable enclosure or police patrols.**
- **Impose heavy fines on dog owners who either do not control their dogs properly, or who allow their dogs to foul public areas.**

Public and Consumer Services

Healthcare:

- **Increase the provision of Doctors' services in Staplehurst and examine further whether a health centre would best serve the needs of the community.**

Emergency Services:

- Improve 999 Fire and Ambulance services to an acceptable level of public confidence.
- **Bring back effective, designated policing to rural areas,**
- Improve the quality of the Police 999 service to a level acceptable to the public.
- Police should improve their handling of non-999 calls to a level acceptable to the public.
- **Parents should be made responsible and accountable, both legally and financially, for their children's actions, and this should be enforced.**

Environmental Services:

- Improvements are required to road and pavement maintenance.
- Improvements are required to street cleaning, particularly at the Parade where shopkeepers may be able to assist with this.

- Consider expanding recycling facilities to include a door-to-door service.

Postal Services:

- A second postal delivery would be desirable
- Further post boxes should be installed

Consumer Services:

- Use your local facilities or lose them!

Roads, Traffic and Public Transport

Reducing levels of local traffic:

- Investigate the provision of cycle routes where practical to do so.
- Safe cycle and pedestrian routes should be an integral part of future planning.
- Improve local shopping facilities.

Traffic calming:

- Install speed cameras on A229, and also on other through-routes.
- Impose 20mph speed limit on estate roads.
- Encourage safer parking arrangements on major estate roads.
- Be aware of possible abuse (use as a playground) of Home Zones.

Improvements to public transport:

- Press for reduced rail and bus fares and improved services (*e.g.* services aimed at specific usage, such as shopping, leisure pursuits).
- Provision of disabled and pushchair access to both station platforms.
- Increase parking provision at the station.

Reducing through traffic:

- Press for the provision of an alternative route past Staplehurst (This need not necessarily be the former proposed bypass, but could be a new route serving to reduce traffic in neighbouring communities as well.)

Environment

Planning – Domestic:

- Much more publicity should be given to planning applications/issues, perhaps followed up by public meetings concerning larger development or long-term strategies.

Planning – Commercial/Industrial:

- Before any planning permission is allowed to go forward, a comprehensive outline for the whole area should be proposed, discussed publicly and approved - particularly at local level.
- It cannot be emphasised enough that there will only be one opportunity to develop this important area, and the decisions taken now will play a major role in the future of Staplehurst.
- Suggestions as widely diverse as more parking/less parking for commuters, a supermarket, leisure centre, senior school and industrial development should all be considered as part of a long-term strategy for Staplehurst.

Burial Provision:

- Examine ways of increasing burial provision in Staplehurst.

Cleaning/Waste Services:

- MBC employs two Civic Wardens to cover an area of 52 square miles, whose duties include dealing with litter and dog fouling offences. Notwithstanding this daunting task, it is understood that the officer in charge is able and willing to target Staplehurst on a regular basis for a short period in order to tackle this problem, and this service should therefore be requested.
- The school could be asked to emphasise individual responsibility for litter.
- The Parish Council could liaise with the school and sponsor a poster design competition.
- A general litter awareness campaign could be initiated with 'Keep Staplehurst Tidy' posters and notices with details of fines.
- An increase in the budget for caretaking should be given serious consideration. Many people thought a full-time caretaker was needed, and the strength of feeling on this matter suggests that residents are willing to pay for this.
- The Parish Council should continue to write to all shopkeepers/owners asking them to spare a little time to keep the outside of their premises clean and tidy - especially those shops whose packaging helps create the problem.
- The additional, larger bins and existing bins provided by the Parish Council should be monitored as to the frequency of need of emptying, and this should be acted on. The public must be made to use them.

General Landscape:

- Whilst no doubt the village would benefit from some additional floral interest (and the Parish Council may wish to encourage or initiate some improvements), it is important that we should not lose sight of the very fine buildings in and around Staplehurst. Many villages and towns have recently taken the route that 'more is better' so far as floral enhancement is concerned, whereby they are in danger of all looking the same and losing their very Englishness.
- We are fortunate in having so many buildings of historic interest, with businesses and residents contributing much to the appearance of the village with their attractive gardens and frontages. This aspect of Staplehurst must be preserved.
- It is clear that the single most important visual impairment is the buildings at the shopping parade. It is therefore suggested that a professional and realistic re-design of this area should be sought, in consultation with the property owners. Grants or other funding should be explored for this important project which could regain Staplehurst the credit it deserves, and thus revitalise the village.

Footpaths and Bridleways:

- The Parish Council should write to all landowners and ask them to consider the requests in this survey, if appropriate.
- The Council should also study the comments drawing attention to specific new or improved paths which residents have identified, which are the Parish Council's or local authority's responsibility, and take action where possible

The Local Authority

- KCC to repair roads effectively and introduce a thorough maintenance programme.

- KCC to clear and maintain all drainage systems.
- KCC (Education) to consider siting a secondary school for the Weald in Staplehurst.
- MBC to review its allocation of funding of capital projects in rural areas to provide real facilities e.g. Sports Centre.
- MBC to appoint a Development Officer to attract business/leisure services to rural areas in a similar way to the one in the town centre.

Youth Section

- Maximise the use of the Jubilee Field by giving serious consideration to the provision of multi-use sports surfaces, **changing facilities, skateboard half-pipe and mountain-bike trail.**
- **Appoint a youth worker for Staplehurst who could provide liaison with the Parish Council and other bodies, and enable the re opening of the Youth Centre which would provide a range of activities to suit all tastes and inclinations, within a structured timetable.**
- Investigate the possibility of an IT Facility (perhaps like the Computer Cottage at Egerton), which could provide IT/internet access for all, and training facilities. Opening times would need to be sufficiently flexible to cater for daytime and evening users
- Investigate, through Kent Children's University, the provision of tutored arts/crafts/general interest skills sessions.
- **Maintain liaison with police regarding the clamping down on vandalism, anti-social behaviour and littering offenders.**
- Negotiate free or cheap public transport arrangements to allow all youngsters the opportunity to participate in after-school recreational/study activities.

Education

- The system for allocating secondary school places requires urgent revision.
- Provision for additional secondary school places must be made in the near future.