

Village Update

SPRING/SUMMER 2005

Community Policing

We thank Chris Jones our Rural Warden for his great efforts in our community and wish him well in his promotion in the service elsewhere in the county. We welcome our new Rural Warden, Chris Lomax, who is regularly to be found walking the streets of Staplehurst. He is here to help residents on any community matter. His

telephone contact number is 07811 271254. Staplehurst is also served by a dedicated Police Officer, P.C. Tim Stanley, and a Special Constable Ken Baker. There is a Police and Council Surgery at the Library between 10 and 12 on the last Saturday of each month where parishioners can raise issues or ask for advice face-to-face.

Planning Guidelines

Planning Guidance Note 10 states:

The space between dwellings, is just as important as size, form, position or the design of the houses in creating visual interest in any residential street. 2-storey side extensions to a house have an important effect on such spaces, and their loss has an adverse effect on the adjoining property and the street scene.

Staplehurst housing estates have evolved over the past forty years – When in the early nineteen sixties developers were given the green light to build new homes for families moving to the country from London and surrounding areas the emphasis was placed on providing comfortable, manageable homes with gardens and space.

This was important as the design of the estates were crucial to maintain an open rural feel, and not to emulate the over crowding of the London boroughs. Because the design and positioning of these houses gave the opportunity for people to live in a close knit community, it also gave them the space between the houses to ensure privacy when required.

As the years past and the price of housing in the South East grew, many people living in or purchasing these original estate houses decided that it was more economical to add extensions to their homes instead of moving, the space, in most cases is adequate and pound for pound the initial out lay is compensated by the increase in the value of their property. That being said with the increase of people adding extensions to

their properties a lot of that important space was/is being lost. In planning terms this 'space' is referred to as the 'visual gap'. If you visited Bearsted five years ago you would have seen housing estates with open spaces between the houses, open aspects and room to breath; however over the past five years these 'visual gaps' have gradually disappeared and all you find is one mass housing estate which is contrary to the ethos behind the design of these estate's. Over the past three years more and more people have been applying for extensions to their properties and there is nothing illegal or wrong with that, however as with Bearsted, Staplehurst is gradually being enclosed with brick, our open design rural estates are being built on and the important 'visual gaps' are being lost. Many will say what's wrong with that, well nothing, but when the original designers designed our estates they wanted to offer something different, they wanted to create a rural quality of life, they wanted people to have space to breathe to bring up their children in clean air, away from the oppression of inner city and urban living.

It is important that we are responsible for the future of where we live and that it is understandable that people wish to extend their properties or even build in their gardens, the damage that is done now can not be reversed. It is therefore vital that whenever a planning application for an extension or new build in a garden is submitted, that every care is taken to ensure that the 'visual gap' aspect of the extension etc is not detrimental to the overall existing layout of the housing estate.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

Meet the Councillors - Now is your chance



Margaret Arger - Chairman

My husband and I have lived in Staplehurst over 25 years. I am honoured to have been re-elected to the Parish Council as Chairman. We need to work closely with our Borough Councillors, Police Authority, County Councillors as well as our MP to make sure Staplehurst moves forward in a positive and constructive manner to the benefit of our community. Your Parish Council has been working hard for the past 12 months and will continue to work to the benefit of Staplehurst.



Barry Franks - Vice Chairman

Married with grown up children I have lived in Staplehurst since 1969 and take a keen interest in local affairs. In the past I have been actively involved with the Football Club and the PTA. I am on the Committee of the Horticultural Society. Semi-retired - I hope to be an enthusiastic and pro-active member of the Council. I am a representative of the Jubilee Sports Field Users Group.



Joan Buller - Member of the Planning & Finance Committee

I have lived in Staplehurst since 1978 and been a Parish Council member for 21 years. I have always taken an active part in village life, particularly the under-5 playgroup and the Staplehurst Society. Formerly a school governor, PTA committee member and treasurer of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, I also taught at the local primary school until early retirement. I represent the Parish Council on the Village Centre Management Committee.



Paul Butcher - Member of the Amenities Committee

As a resident for 24 years and running my own business, I understand the day to day problems affecting this parish. I represent the Parish Council on the Police/Parish Forum, Churchyard Liaison and I am also Chairman of Staplehurst Youth Club.



Wendy Green - Chairman of the Planning Committee

I have been a Councillor for 5 years now serving most of my time on the Planning Committee. I continue to be available for all issues relevant to the progression of growth in the infrastructure of Staplehurst.



Paul Kelly - Member of the Planning Committee

Having been co-opted onto the Parish Council in April 2000, I am taking a keen interest and learning a good deal about parish council activities and projects. I am also a representative on the Carnival & Fete Committee.



Angela Knowlden - Member of the Planning Committee

I have lived in Staplehurst for 30 years and have been involved in the community in various ways, particularly when my three children were young. Currently I am a member of the Staplehurst Society and retired from full time work. Having recently been co-opted onto the Parish Council I look forward to using my time, commitment and enthusiasm in any way that is helpful to the parish.



Trevor Martin - Member of the Amenities Committee

I am a retired Bank Manager and have been a resident of Staplehurst for over 40 years. I also represent the Parish Council at the Mote Lodge Cheshire Home and am Treasurer of the Village Centre Trust.

to put names-to-faces and get to know us better!



Roger Munn - Member of the Amenities Committee

I have lived and worked in Staplehurst for most of my life, as a farmer. This has given me a sound knowledge of the local area. I am married with two children, who have now left home. I am representing the Parish Council on Jubilee Sports Field, Headcorn Aerodrome and Churchyard Liaison committees.



Lin Plant - Member of the Amenities Committee

I have been a resident of Staplehurst for 11 years, having lived, worked and been involved in the community in many parts of England and also in Australia and Luxembourg. I believe that Staplehurst should be a community and not just a commuter village, and hope to do my part to foster this.



John Reardon - Parish Councillor

Councillor John Reardon was co-opted onto the Parish Council at an Extra Ordinary Full Council meeting on 6th December 2004 to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Wendy Brooker. A write up from and photograph of Councillor Reardon will appear shortly.



Chris Rogers - Member of the Planning and Amenities Committees

My wife and I have been Staplehurst residents for well over 30 years, and now that I am fully retired from city life I can devote my time and energy to assisting with the running of the Parish Council. I remain an active member of the Staplehurst Cricket and Tennis Club.



John Stewart - Member of the Planning Committee

Back on the Parish Council after a gap of twelve years I now have more time to devote to village matters as I no longer commute to London every day. My 3 children have all grown up in the village and I have been an active member of many village organisations. I am formerly Chairman of the Friends of All Saints, a member of the Parochial Church Council and a committee member of the Staplehurst Society.



John Swannick - Member of Finance committee

I have lived in Staplehurst for three years. I am a government relations adviser for a major high street bank. Since moving to Staplehurst, I have become very involved in the local community as a local education authority appointed school governor at Staplehurst School. My key interests are in the longer term development issues for Staplehurst and promoting strategic co-ordination of activity between the individuals and organisations who want to contribute to it.



Don Wood - Member of the Planning Committee

I moved to Staplehurst with my family 28 years ago from the outskirts of Maidstone. Our three children who were educated locally have now left home and I now no longer need to commute to Central London every day. I aim to be an active member of the Parish Council and to contribute to making Staplehurst a more pleasant, enjoyable and worthwhile place for all its residents. I am the Councillor representative on the Diagrit Sports & Social Club.



Sue Bassett - Parish Clerk

As Parish Clerk my work involves carrying through the decisions of the Parish Councillors, administration of the Parish Council meetings and being the first point of contact for members of the public at the Parish Office. Having been a local resident and a member of a number of voluntary groups in the community since 1977, my ever-growing local knowledge is of great benefit to my work as Parish Clerk and in dealing with a variety of enquiries made by residents and internet users.



Sue Lynch - Parish Clerk Asst.

As Assistant Parish Clerk I work in the Parish Office on a part-time basis providing support for Sue Bassett in her increasingly busy role as Parish Clerk. Although I have only lived in Staplehurst for four years, I have lived most of my life in Headcorn and so am well aware of many issues affecting the local area. In my new role as Assistant Clerk I am enjoying getting to know more people in Staplehurst and learning more about how the Parish Council works to maintain and improve the quality of village life for Staplehurst residents.

Summer Playscheme

Are you dreading the prospect of a long summer holiday with bored, squabbling children to entertain? Worry no more, the Staplehurst Summer Playscheme will be running again this year from Monday 25th July to Friday 12th August - rising 5's to 11 year olds will all be welcome. All our staff are friends and fully qualified to care for children of primary school age - several are

previous Playscheme Leaders who will already be known to you and your children. There'll be a wide variety of activities and guaranteed fun for all. Look out for registration details towards the end of June on the website at: www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk or direct from the Parish Office.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting took place this year on 9th May and was a very interesting and well attended event. Chief Inspector David Pascoe of Kent Police gave a summary of the policing structure with crime statistics for this area. The Maidstone & Malling area achieved a 2% reduction in crime over the past year, but Staplehurst had an increase of 39 crimes giving a total of 279 crimes for the whole year. The type of crimes reported had changed over the years and the policing structure had been changing also. Kent had already made huge steps forward with Neighbourhood Policing Units already in place.

PC Tim Stanley then spoke more specifically on the issues he had been dealing with over the past year. Working in partnership with Community Warden Chris Jones (now replaced by Chris Lomax) incidents such as anti-social behaviour, bogus callers, parking on the footway and speeding were addressed. The Community Warden had also helped out at Youth Club when adult volunteers were not available. Residents then raised a variety of questions on policing issues.

County and Borough Councillor Hotson then gave a report of his activities on behalf of the parish at County and Borough level. Borough Councillor Lusty reported that he had attended 129 meetings over the year as well as joining the Village Centre Management Committee. Many planning and enforcement issues had been encountered and pressure put upon the Primary Care Trust to ensure the Medical Centre becomes a reality within the next 12 months. Monthly surgeries

had continued at Staplehurst Library when residents were encouraged to raise local issues for attention. After further questions from local residents a short refreshment break was taken.

Chairman Arger then continued with her own report on Parish Council activities over the preceding year, together with Councillor reports on Planning, Website and Jubilee Field. Over a dozen representatives from local Village Organisations gave summaries of their activities. Although this turned out to be a long meeting (closing at 10.30pm) the best news was kept until last. Ken Collins of the Weald Club for the Disabled reported that the new Mini Bus project could now proceed as The Big Lottery Fund had made an award of £13,260 which meant the order could be placed.

Martyrs Memorial

A volunteer group of councillors and residents gave the memorial on Cuckolds Corner a much-needed spring clean to mark the centenary of the dedication of this landmark on April 26th 1905. Thanks must be given to neighbours who provided power and water as well as to the volunteers. The railings have been cleaned and repainted, bringing this special interest site to everyone's notice once more.

Parish Council Information

The Parish Office is in the Village Centre. It is open on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9 to 11 am. The phone number is 01580 891761. The email address is: staplehurst1@btconnect.com

The Parish councillors are Margaret Arger (Chairman), Paul Butcher, Joan Buller, Barry Franks (Vice-Chairman), Wendy Green (Planning Committee Chair), Paul Kelly, Angela Knowlden, Trevor Martin (Amenities Committee Chair), Roger Munn, Lin Plant, John Reardon, Chris

Rogers, John Stewart, John Swannick and Donald Wood.

Parish Council Surgeries are held at the Library on the last Saturday of each month, from 10am to 12pm. A Parish Councillor, Richard Lusty (our Borough Councillor), or Eric Hotson (Borough and County Councillor), Chris Jones (Community Warden) and/or Tim Stanley (our Community Police Officer) attend, and are willing to talk over any problems villagers might have.