

Village Update

AUTUMN/WINTER 2004

More than a beautiful Wealden Village

Two recent conversations have highlighted just what makes Staplehurst so special. Living in the village it is easy to forget the many benefits and the reasons why so many of us have chosen to live in Staplehurst, and then not move away, when those original reasons have long since ceased to be valid. There are problems of course and many things could be better.

A Village Design Statement is being produced and other initiatives being made which will ensure that Staplehurst continues to move forward. You will be asked to comment on these plans soon. In the meantime you will shortly be receiving through your letter box a questionnaire about the halls at the Village Centre. Do please take the trouble to respond.

Your views on both initiatives are important.

This work is all being undertaken by a band of dedicated volunteers. It is the volunteers in our community that make Staplehurst - 'more than a beautiful wealden village' It is they who make Staplehurst special and run the 50 or more clubs and organisations, many of whom are listed on the Parish Web site. Why not join in yourself? There is everything from Art Clubs to Yoga. Your participation is essential if these groups are to remain viable. Next time you see an event being organised please come, join in and give your support.

Barry Franks, Vice Chairman

Staplehurst Medical Centre

As many of you know we have been waiting for the first sight of work starting on our promised Medical Centre all summer. However no work has begun.

We have been advised that all planning permissions have been sought and approved.

We have just heard from Nigel Howells, Chief Executive of Maidstone Weald Primary Care Trust stating that "Environmental considerations have, of necessity, delayed the start on the site but the latest position I have from our developers is that they anticipate a start in January. It will involve, in the first instance, work on the proposed improvements on the school buildings. Completion of all the work on the surgery is to be anticipated to be November next year."

All this sounds fine but it is still subject to the detailed agreement of the School Governors.

If you have any strong views regarding the lack of progress with the Medical Centre being built, please contact Miss Anne Widecombe via her office at the Houses Of Parliament. The more of you who write to her the more attention she will have to take at trying to find out why Staplehurst always has to have the problems which drag on and on to the detriment of everyone.

Surrenden Playing Field

At the September meeting of the Friends of Surrenden Playing Field, four parishioners met with the Parish Council representatives and PC Tim Stanley to share ideas for the area. These included an open air Farmer's Market, theatre productions, 5-a-side football pitch, skateboarding, a refurbished pavilion to encourage diverse use, a community notice board and CCTV.

The Parish Council will also be drawing up a five year maintenance plan for the boundaries. There are many aspects where your input can influence the use of this valuable open space for the benefit of all residents and visitors. Don't just leave it to others. Please join in by contacting the Clerk to register your interest now and become a FRIEND OF SURRENDEN PLAYING FIELD.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

Traffic Calming Schemes

Traffic calming is an issue everywhere. In Staplehurst the KCC have introduced the illuminated 40 sign at the southern end of the village plus road markings to slow traffic entering on the A229.

On the estate roads we need to slow down and discourage through traffic.

There are several options:

1. Speed humps-not popular with nearby residents because of the noise caused.
2. Blocking off through routes - which could hinder emergency services and inconvenience residents.
3. 20mph zones – are they effective, drivers ignore 30mph restrictions: will they take anymore notice of a lower limit?

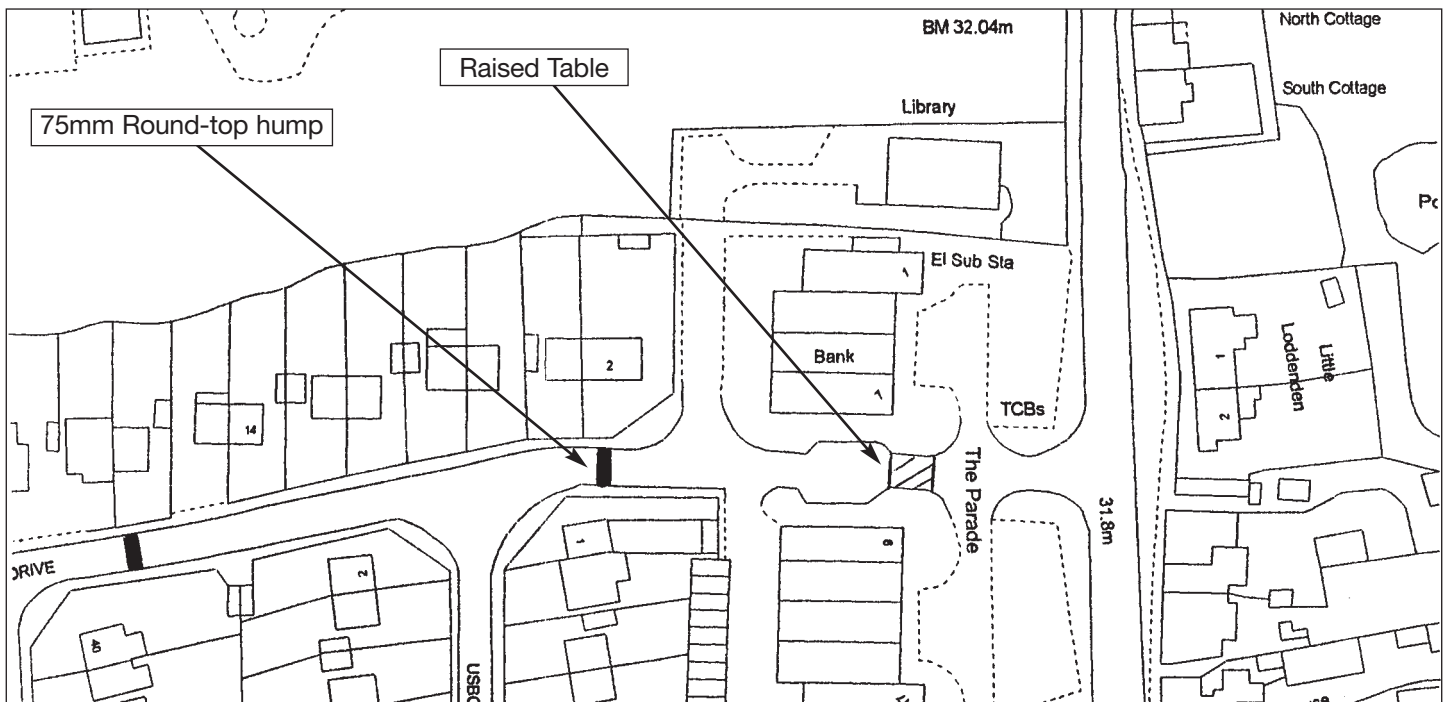
The KCC drew up ideas for Hurst Close and the residents couldn't agree on what was acceptable.

Now the KCC are exploring other areas in the village where traffic calming is needed – particularly Hanmer Way, Bathurst Road and Clapper Lane.

There is some money in the budget for traffic calming measures and we need to decide how to use it before we lose it.

Plans maybe viewed at the Parish office and we hope to have them displayed from November 22nd at the library. Please forward any comments to the clerk at the Parish office.

Offens Drive Projected Plan



Thank you Hedge Cutters

It was good to see the efforts of many parishioners who responded to our request for the cutting back of hedges, shrubs and trees that overhang the public footpaths or block the street lights. Garden plants should all be inside your boundary. By your efforts there are safer places to walk. Thank you! However, there are still some difficult passing places which we hope will get attention, and of course as plants grow they need regular maintenance. It's a good start and we hope that unruly hedges will become an unusual hazard in our community.

Also mentioned for the safety of both young and old pedestrians was the habit of some motorists of parking on the pavements. Discussion at Parish Council meetings has alerted the local police to this problem.

Youth Forum – HELP needed

The Youth Forum is looking for a new adult leader from the New Year, to carry on with the work carried out by Lin Plant.

If you are interested in encouraging the young people of Staplehurst, please contact Lin on 01580 893155 for further details.

The video that the young people made during the summer was shown at the Staplehurst Art Exhibition in October.

We have some money left over from our funding from the Kent Community Fund, and hope to arrange some first aid training for youngsters and youth leaders.

Staplehurst Village Centre Management committee

Over the past year attempts have been made to find and secure new people to come in and take over the responsibility of the village centre.

Many of you may not be aware of the history of the village centre and why and how we obtained it for the village.

The building was originally the village school which was built and paid for by the villagers in 1872, it ceased to be a school in 1988 and was offered to the Parish Council for purchase. The land to the rear of the building used to be the playground for the school this was bought by the then Cheshire Foundation and is now the Mote Lodge Cheshire Home.

The Parish Council decided to buy the old school for the village to be used as a village community Hall, this was to replace the old village hall that was deemed to be inadequate for the growing community. The old village hall is now the Free Church.

In 1988 the then village centre committee obtained a mortgage to buy the old school, this mortgage was underwritten by the Parish Council. The Old School was deemed as an important historical building that merited saving and utilising for the village as a whole. The village centre became a charity in 1991 and two custodian Trustees were appointed.

These custodian Trustees were to run the administration of the centre until the first AGM, when a Management committee could be formed to take on the running of the centre.

The Village centre has therefore been run by a handful of volunteers who now feel that they have done their part and that there is a need for new younger people to come forward and take on the responsibility of an important asset of the village.

New procedures will need to be put in place in order to enable a smooth running of the centre. Maintenance and day to day repairs need to be assessed and funds allocated for the work that is desperately needed to be done. The job of taking bookings for the halls and rooms will have to be organised, and the role of maybe employing a caretaker will have to be considered.

If anybody is interested in the wellbeing of this important building, both in historical terms and in its function as a useful amenity, please do not be shy come and speak to the clerk and we will be only too happy to point you in the right direction.

Time is of the essence as the retiring committee will be leaving at the beginning of 2005.

Bogus Caller Initiative

The Nominated Good Neighbour Scheme has been launched by the Crime and Disorder Partnership which allows the elderly and vulnerable to have a nominated neighbour to whom callers can be directed when a person is uncertain of their identity. There are information packs available from the Parish Office containing useful advice and contact numbers.

The image shows two posters for the Bogus Caller Initiative. The left poster is a checklist of instructions for residents, titled 'DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR!'. The right poster features a police officer and a sign that says 'I DO NOT RECOGNISE YOU!'.

DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR!

- 1 Use your door chain
- 2 Show this card to the caller
- 3 Do not enter into conversation with them
- 4 Genuine callers will wait or call back if your neighbour is not available
- 5 DO NOT let them in.

I DO NOT RECOGNISE YOU!
Please go to No.
...who is my nominated neighbour
...they will check your identity and return with you

BOGUS CALLER INITIATIVE

Rail Users' Forum

Over 50 regular rail users heard Rail Passengers' Council (South-east) chairman, Tim Nicholson, say that present Strategic Rail Authority proposals for Kent services were "tearing up a timetable developed in response to customer demand over many years" in favour of a strategic approach which took into account factors, "many of which lay outside Kent".

The 65 per cent of Staplehurst commuters who, according to a survey recently undertaken by the Forum, travel to City destinations, London Bridge and Cannon Street, will see the number of trains slashed. They will be left with a choice of changing at an already congested Tonbridge or taking the tube from Waterloo and Charing Cross.

The Forum attendees agreed that their campaign to change the SRA's proposals should continue in advance of any final decision. A meeting with commuters in other affected villages, Marden, Headcorn and Pluckley, along with Weald MPs Ann Widdecombe and Archie Norman and Kent County Council cabinet member Alex King was suggested. The Forum might even invite London mayor, Ken Livingstone and City business leaders, who have also expressed concern over the economic impact of the proposed changes.

Contact: *Cllr John Swannick, Convenor, Staplehurst Rail Users' Forum*
Tel: 020 7356 2402 (office) 01580 890750 (home)
Email: john@swannick1.fsnet.co.uk

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 website address is: www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

The Parish councillors are Margaret Arger (Chairman), Wendy Brooker, 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 Stewart, John Swannick and Donald Wood. A vacancy currently exists for another councillor. Please contact the Clerk if you are interested.

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.

Staplehurst Skaters

A group of parents and skateboarders are trying to get some skateboarding equipment sited in Staplehurst. They are in close liaison with the Parish Council and attend regular meetings to discuss their plans. They have invited several equipment suppliers to draw up plans for suitable equipment. A consultation and petition has shown that there are a number of youngsters who will make good use of some skateboarding equipment in the village and, indeed, the consultation also showed that many adults in the village feel that the young people would benefit by have some equipment installed.

The plans so far have reached the stage of looking for a suitable site and then to fund raise in order to achieve their goal. They are determined to succeed so they can have a safe and enjoyable area to skateboard, meet with their friends, make new friends, share their skills and encourage one another. It will also give them the chance to increase their outside exercise in a fun and social way.

Summer Playscheme

It is hoped that all those primary school aged children who attended Playscheme this year had a wonderful time. Unfortunately the take-up of places, particularly from Headcorn, was disappointing but shouldn't thwart endeavours to provide a new Staplehurst Playscheme next year. Thanks to the joint input of Headcorn and Staplehurst Parish Councils, the Headcorn Play Leaders were able to train up many new Playscheme Staff, who may be willing to run a Staplehurst scheme of their own next year. Please contact the Parish Clerk now if you wish to work at the Playscheme in 2005.

Summer Activities

In addition to Playscheme, a variety of activities for young people were arranged including Tennis and Fishing, which were subsidised by MBC. The Staplehurst Youth Forum held two Basketball Coaching sessions, Circus skills workshops for under 11s and over 11s, a Graffiti art workshop (the artwork produced was exhibited at the Staplehurst Art Exhibition in October) and ran a coach outing to Thorpe Park. The young people enjoyed all the activities that were on offer but again the take-up of places was a little disappointing for some activities.