

Village Update

SUMMER 2016

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Wimpey Fields

As most people will know by now, Taylor Wimpey intend to gift the land that we all know as the Wimpey Field together with the adjacent wooded area, untouched for over 50 years, to the Parish Council.

Work has already started on clearing some of the overgrown grass areas whilst the more wooded areas are being left to nature for the time being. One area of grassland is to be maintained as a leisure area and we hope to have a few benches and picnic tables there very soon as well as a safe BBQ area in due course.

The scouts, guides and their junior groups are to have a special small clearing to do with what they want and have promised to help keep the whole field clear of litter in return. The school is also looking forward to using the field and woods for nature walks.

The paths will be widened in an effort to prevent muddy pinch points thus making it accessible

STAPLEHURST SUMMER PLAY SCHEME

The Parish Council is again organising a summer play scheme for children aged four to eleven years in conjunction with Play Place. We are returning to the Primary School in Gybbon Rise and welcome children and their carers to an Open Morning from 11am until Noon on Monday 1st August. In response to parental requests we have extended the provision so are offering...

Tuesday 2nd to Friday 5th from 9am until noon (*one session*)

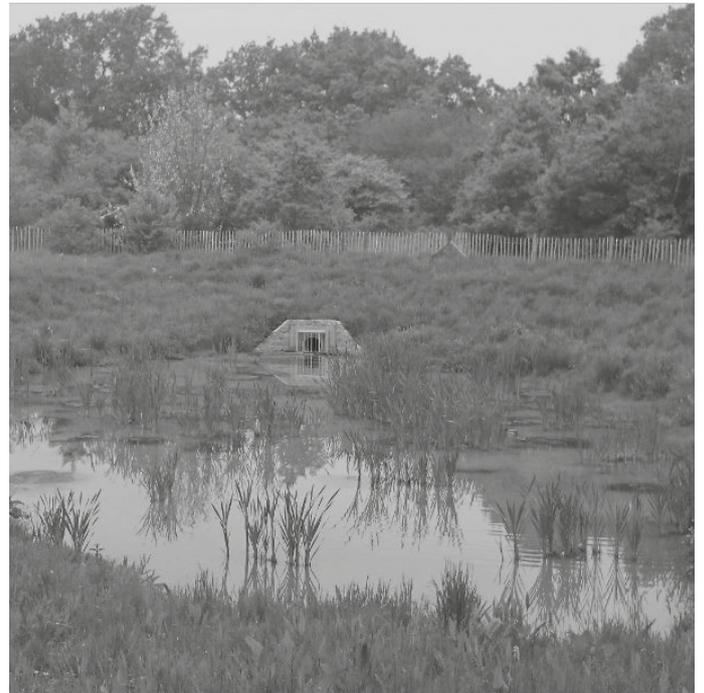
Monday 8th to Friday 12th from 9am until 3pm (*two sessions*)

Tuesday 15th to Friday 19th from 9am until noon (*one session*)

Early booking will save you money so please find the details on the enclosed flier.

The Parish Council subsidises this scheme and is grateful for a small grant from MBC.

throughout the year. We hope to make footpaths wheelchair friendly. The grassed areas will be cut three times per year and the leisure space more often. We have a small group of volunteers who will keep an eye on things and do small maintenance tasks as needed. Anyone can join this group as you do not need any skills and all power tool work will be contracted out to specialists. We hope to have a special opening ceremony in due course.



SURGERIES

Don't forget the Parish Council is holding a surgery each Saturday in the Library from 10am until 11am. Borough Councillor John Perry's surgery is on the last Saturday of each month from 10am until noon.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH

With a generous grant from County Councillor Hotson, the Parish Council now has new equipment to detect speeding vehicles along roads in our village. This kit can detect speeds at considerable distances and owners have received letters of advice from Kent Police about their driving habits. On one evening in half an hour in Station Road the details of 23 speeders included 5 between 40-44mph, 2 at 46mph, 1 at 47 and 1 at 50. The latter 4 received strongly worded letters. Contact the Clerk to join the volunteers using this kit and help remind locals and visitors that Staplehurst welcomes considerate drivers.

BOUNDARY VEGETATION

Staplehurst suffers from many narrow paths and difficult sight lines. Therefore, it is essential that residents keep their boundary shrubs and hedges well-trimmed. Please check that your plants are not encroaching the path or road. Remember that it is difficult for parents with young children to walk in single file and we have many disabled residents. On occasions the Parish Clerk does request parishioners to do some cutting back of their vegetation. As a last resort Kent Highways become involved.

PLANNING NOTES

The planning applications for Fisher's Farm from Bovis Homes (167 dwellings, 14/505432) and Redrow Homes (185 dwellings, 15/510186) were still awaiting a decision from MBC at the time of writing. A scheme for reducing potential congestion at the crossroads at the expense of pedestrians was criticised by Staplehurst Parish Council, among many others, and we understand this particular scheme has been dropped. The outline planning application from Miller Gleeson for the Hen and Duckhurst site in Marden Road (up to 250 dwellings, 14/502010) is also still pending. MBC has refused a revised application for 16 houses in George Street (16/501024) and an outline proposal for several housing on a site off Marden Road, behind The Gables (15/509275). An application for 9 houses at Fisher's Oast, Fisher's Road (15/506021), was approved by MBC, although following representations by the Parish Council and local residents, conditions have been applied regarding surface water drainage, provision of a wildlife corridor between the new houses and the railway, and landscaping. However, there has been no attempt to integrate plans for this and the other two Fisher's Farm developments. The applicants have appealed against MBC's refusal of planning permission for a photovoltaic solar array at Great Pagehurst Farm (13/1456). A proposal for housing on the Woodford Farm site, Cross at Hand (15/506037), which was refused by MBC, was allowed by the planning inspector on appeal. The Parish Council commented on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, and we are looking at a policy on affordable housing, in the light of changes proposed in the Housing and Planning Bill.

STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Recently the previously appointed examiner, Clare Wright, had issued an 'Interim Report' questioning the allocation of housing sites and some of the related policies contained within our Plan. This was an unusual approach by the examiner. The NP Steering Group decided to dispute these initial findings. However, we then learnt the examiner had lost her accreditation so this part of the process had to start again; much to our dismay!

The NP Steering Group subsequently met with MBC to agree a formal response on clarification of matters raised by Clare Wright and the appointment of a new examiner, Mr Derek Stebbing. Unfortunately, these further delays mean it is now likely that the Referendum will not be held before September/October 2016. All Residents will have the opportunity to vote at this Referendum.

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY 2016

The Parish Council has engaged the services of Action with Communities in Rural Kent (a rural housing enabler) to independently conduct a Housing Needs Survey to ascertain the current need and demands within Staplehurst. The last survey was conducted in 2010 and is now in need of updating. The recent Housing and Planning Bill has become law and consultation work is due to take place around the idea of 'starter homes' for first-time buyers under the age of 40. All households in Staplehurst will subsequently receive a questionnaire and we respectfully request that you respond to the questions where appropriate. This information will add to the body of evidence with regard to the needs of Staplehurst residents.

CLEAN UPS

Staplehurst Parish Council organised a very successful clean-up of the built-up area on Saturday 12th March which has encouraged Councillors Buller and Burnham to organise a second one this year on Saturday September 17th. MBC will loan protective equipment and litter pickers, remove the rubbish we collect, provide guidance on safety and give insurance cover. We will be based at the Youth Club, by kind permission of their committee, and we ask you to arrive at 10 am. When you have cleaned your allotted area sacks need to be brought back to the Youth Club so don't overfill them! We have purchased another ten bag openers. We aim to offer you refreshments after the work is completed. For insurance purposes we have to keep a list of helpers' names. Children and young people who take part must be accompanied by, and under the responsibility of, a parent or adult friend. Organised youth groups who wish to join in should contact the Parish Office in the first instance to discuss their plans. Even if you are not able to take part please try to tidy your own boundaries to help make Staplehurst litter free!



VILLAGE CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT GROUP

The working group has had a number of meetings regarding the options for the Village Centre. Following the Condition Survey that took place in February 2016 the group has been constructing a brief for architects, as well as looking at how the Council and the Village Centre Trust can best communicate and gather feedback from residents of Staplehurst. The architects' brief is nearly completed and will be passed to the Parish Council for approval before going out to architects for pro-bono work. It is anticipated that the architects will provide the working group with different concepts, including the refurbishment, extension and the rebuild options on the current site. The working group expects to be able to showcase the various architect submissions to the public through an exhibition in the autumn – watch this space!

NEW COUNCILLOR – PATRICK RIORDAN

I moved to Staplehurst in 1967 and attended Staplehurst Primary School. I remember getting cooked plum tomatoes with my first school dinner (in what is now the South Hall). I can honestly say I never ate another tomato until I was well into my 30's! My father helped start the Staplehurst Monarchs youth football team. I played for them and I think we were one of the most successful teams in the club's history. I went to Angley School until 16 years old, did an apprenticeship as an electrician for HT Barden Ltd of Maidstone and attended City Way College at Rochester. I enjoy sport and am an avid Manchester United supporter.

I have four daughters, the youngest is still at home, two live in the village and one in London. I now have two grandsons and a granddaughter. My eldest grandson goes to Staplehurst School. I have many contacts through business and feel I have quite a lot of drive, which I hope could be beneficial to the Parish Council. I feel I have something to offer and care for the village. I would like to "give a bit back".



SURRENDEN FIELD

The Parish Council, which leases Surrenden Field from MBC, is still planning to provide paths to make it more accessible in all weathers. However, this work will not be done until an issue with the lease has been resolved. The close-circuit television continues to monitor the field and the system has recently been upgraded.

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR LOUISE BRICE

It has been a pleasure to serve the residents of Staplehurst over the past 12 months. Much of my focus has been on planning matters, supporting residents to fight unsustainable countryside development. Cllr Perry and I fought a sustained campaign to prevent additional sites being added, voting against the 18,560 target in the Local Plan. We have several sites already included in our Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan – these will provide much needed housing for some and I plan to hold a workshop for those looking into affordable housing options later in the

COUNCILLOR JOAN BULLER BEM



Having been nominated by the Parish Council and granted the British Empire Medal for services to Staplehurst in the Queen's New Year Honour's List, in May Joan has been to the Royal Buckingham Palace Garden Party which she enjoyed very much despite the rain. Two days later in the sunshine she was presented with her medal by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent at Penshurst Place. Her sons and husband were very proud to be able to attend this ceremony. Joan found it very humbling to be with twelve other recipients who had each contributed greatly to voluntary activities in Kent.

LATEST ON SAINSBURY'S

At a recent meeting between representatives of Maidstone Borough Council and Sainsbury's, MBC were informed that the Sainsbury's board has decided not to proceed with the proposed store in Staplehurst at present. Apparently changing shopping habits mean that Sainsbury's (like many of their competitors) are changing their strategy to focus on developing a larger network of convenience stores rather than the medium to large stores which have been built in recent years. Sainsbury's confirmed that the Staplehurst project has not been abandoned and will be reviewed again next year. Sainsbury's are also considering options for the petrol station site, either as a free-standing project or in conjunction with a new store. MBC has asked Sainsbury's to consider a temporary use for this site, such as car parking and Sainsbury's have agreed to look into this. Staplehurst Parish Council and your Borough Councillors will continue to follow developments.

year. I have also spent much time lobbying to ensure that any plans for crossroad improvements are just that – improvements that serve all users – not just car owners, but our pedestrians too. Working with many parishioners we have secured some improvements to our bus services and we continue to meet with Arriva to keep pressure on them to maintain the service. I also continue to lobby Sainsbury's to invest in our village as well as supporting local businesses with their expansion plans.
LouiseBrice@Maidstone.gov.uk

Chairman's report

Progress since the spring has been regular rather than spectacular. The Parish Council feels as if it is waiting for others to do things, and in particular, the EU referendum debate seem to be consuming more and more airtime. However, we have made some progress. We have been told by the Village Caretaker and others of the sodden state of part of the Jubilee Field, such that it was of more use for swimming than football, so the Council has agreed to provide £1500 towards new drainage. We are delighted to welcome Patrick Riordan, a long standing Staplehurst resident as a new councillor. He has wasted no time in getting his hands dirty with Council business. He had stiff competition for the place vacated by Cllr Neal Kemp in Mrs Gillian Smith, who is also well known in the Village. I hope that she will have a chance to become a councillor in the near future. The annual Village Clean-up went well, with a record number of cleaners (and rubbish-sacks). We are planning an extra session this year. What do you think? And after prolonged badgering by the Council among many others, KCC has agreed to reduce the Knoxbridge speed limit to 50 MPH, from the National limit. I know that some Knoxbridge residents were still unhappy, as they had wanted a 40 MPH limit; but it is a start. Perhaps the new speedwatch camera will help slow the traffic further. Let's hope so.

Rory Silkin

ACCIDENT REPORTS

The Police and other services only record serious accidents involving significant injuries. We are recording a clearer picture of accidents on the roads of our parish and need your help. Please let the Parish Office know the details of any incident you witness as this evidence will strengthen our comments on highways issues.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Local electors and the press have a right to listen to Parish Council Meetings, but not to take part. At the beginning and after the closure of the Parish Council Meeting the Chairman will invite members of the public to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes each relating to issues on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. You are requested to state your name and address prior to speaking. The Parish Council as a planning consultee makes recommendations to MBC which makes the decision. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre. Planning Committee meetings begin at 7pm with Full Council following on at 7.30pm (if planning agenda is short). Contact the Clerk for details or check the website calendar page.

Meetings in 2016 are all Mondays:

July 4th	July 18th
August 1st	August 15th
September 5th	September 19th
October 3rd	October 17th
November 7th	November 21st
December 5th	December 19th

STAPLEHURST YOUTH PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council was asked by a young resident to form a Staplehurst Youth Parish Council. Cllr. Lain-Rose has been nominated by the Council to lead the investigation and formation of the Youth Parish Council for Staplehurst. He is now attempting to form a group of young people aged between 11 and 18 to be involved in its formation. If you or someone you know are interested in this exciting new project please contact parishcllr.sam@lain-rose.me.uk by 31 August 2016. We look forward to seeing younger people's valuable, positive and enthusiastic contributions. They can make a real difference to the village of Staplehurst.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Rory Silkin (Chairman)
Tom Burnham (Joint Vice Chairman & Chairman of Planning)
Paul Kelly (Joint Vice Chairman)
Margaret Ashby
Joan Buller
Paul Butcher
Chris Claridge
Anne Gosling
Sam Lain-Rose
Barrett Manning
John Perry
John Reardon
Patrick Riordan
Adele Sharp
Peter Spearink

CLERK

Mr Mick Westwood

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Mrs Sue Bassett

ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Deborah Jenkins

Address:

The Parish Office,
Village Centre, High Street.
Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Tel: 01580 891761

Opening hours:

9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays,
except on Thursdays when it is by
appointment.

SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

Borough Councillor Perry's surgery will be on the last Saturday of each month, together with a Parish Councillor from 10am until noon. In addition the Parish Council will be holding a surgery every Saturday from 10am until 11am.

PCSO Pete Gardner will hold Police Surgeries on Saturdays July 16th and August 20th from 10am to 11am.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues.