



The Yew Tree

January 2025

Keele Parish Council Newsletter

From the Chair

It has been a long while since we published a printed newsletter, as our monthly electronic bulletin has been our preferred means of keeping you updated on the activities of the Parish Council. However, we appreciate that not everyone receives the bulletin and there is still a need for printed communication.

If you do wish to sign up to receive regular monthly email bulletins, please send your email address to keeleneighbourhood@gmail.com, and we will add you to the over 200 current recipients.

Your email address will only be used to send you parish updates and will not be shared with anyone else. All mails are sent BCC so other recipients do not see your email address.

Welcome to New Residents of the Parish

This also gives us the opportunity to welcome new residents of the parish who have moved into the new homes at The Oaks on Pepper Street, or indeed other homes. If you are interested in finding out more about the parish and the parish council please visit the website www.keeleparish.org.

Parish Council

A reminder that the Parish Council meet on the 2nd Monday of the month in the Village Hall on the corner of Highway Lane and The Village. There is an open forum at the start of each meeting where you can have your say.

We have 3 sub-committees in the Parish Council that cover the following areas:

- Communication
- Environment and Assets
- Planning

An update on activities in these areas forms the bulk of the newsletter.

Communication

The communication team send out the bulletin that has already been mentioned and are responsible for the newsletter, website and keeping the 4 parish council noticeboards up to date. They are currently investigating the use of social media



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to provide a more dynamic interface and will bring a proposal to the Parish Council.

Environment and Assets

Keele Parish remains semi-rural in character and residents enjoy a pastoral farming landscape, with extensive hedges and wide verges. These desirable features can however cause issues, and the Parish Council often receive complaints about overgrown hedges and weeds.

The Parish Council has no statutory responsibility for hedge cutting, grass cutting or weed control, and maintenance of hedges (especially along footpaths) is the landowner's responsibility. Hedges should not normally be cut during the bird nesting season (1st March to 1st August), but where a hedge is adjacent to a public footway it must be cut back to keep the footway clear, irrespective of the time of year, to allow proper access to the public. A manual trim may well be sufficient and care should be taken to limit disturbance of bird life.

There is a certain amount of work that the Parish Council can help with and a local contractor is often used to help with siding footpaths, weed spraying and occasionally grass cutting in particular areas where the Borough Council policy does not meet our requirements.

Litter can be a problem in the parish and for many years we have employed a litter picker. We are trying to find a new contractor to start in the very near future.

Fly tipping is also a problem in the parish at times. Any rubbish tipped on Borough Council owned land can be reported on Newcastle Borough Council's own web site. Fly tipped material not on Borough Council owned land becomes the landowner's responsibility to clear away. The Borough Council web site is clear on what is deemed to be the land it owns. However, if you spot fly tipping we welcome the information and will assist you in reporting it if you do not have the appropriate resources.

The iconic yew tree in the village centre is showing signs of stress despite the irrigation it receives in the spring and summer months. The Parish Council has commissioned a professional tree surgery company to investigate possible causes for its malaise.



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The Parish Council doesn't own any land as such, but we are responsible for our noticeboards, the war memorial and a couple of the bus shelters & benches.

We also have a community orchard in the Keele Cemetery on the A525. This is a joint project between the Borough Council and the Parish Council and anyone is able to gather fruit at the times of the year when the fruit reaches maturity.

Some years are good for soft fruit: blackcurrants and raspberries. Top fruits are plums and apples.

We welcome comments and queries about our local environment, and the Parish Clerk will pass on any correspondence to the most appropriate Parish Councillor.

Village Hall

The village hall is an important community asset and the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) runs and maintains it for the community.

Over the last 12 months there have been some fantastic updates to the hall, all achieved with the support of local tradesmen, the People Team from AO.com in Crewe and the dedication of the VHMC team who have put in hundreds of hours of volunteer time.

Lots of the work is on things that you may not necessarily notice, such as bringing the health and safety of the hall up to spec with new fire doors, fire exits and emergency lighting. There has also been investment in some more obvious things such as a set of new lightweight folding tables and a storage trolley that will make using the furniture far easier in the future for all users.

The team successfully applied for a grant of £6000 from The Morrisons Foundation which is being used in the next few weeks to completely renovate the kitchen which had started to look very tired of late.

The whole management team are passionate about making the hall the centre of the community and would encourage anyone linked to the village to consider hiring the hall for family events, parties, gatherings etc.

All booking details can be found on www.keeevillagehall.org.uk.



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Defibrillators in Keele Parish

There are 2 defibrillators in Keele Parish, both registered with the national circuit. These are located at:

The Sneyd Arms, 1 The Village, Keele, ST5 5AD (only accessible during opening hours)

and

Keele Village Hall, Highway Lane, Keele ST5 5AN (on the outside wall)

Speed Sign on Pepper Street

The Parish Council are also responsible for the speed indicator on Pepper Street, by the new housing development. Unfortunately, the bracket fixing the sign to the pole was damaged at the end of last year, and the sign was left on the ground. Luckily, it has been possible to repair the damage, as these are costly items, and the speed indicator is now back in position.

Planning

Borough Plan

The final version of the Borough Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State, and an Independent Planning Inspector will now be appointed by HM Government to undertake the examination, which begins from the date of submission. The role of the Inspector is to consider whether the Local Plan is legally compliant, and sound - whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

All submission documents can be viewed on the council's examination web pages, at <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-examination> alongside links to guidance which explains the process of examination.

Copies of the Final Draft Local Plan and Policies Map and other relevant documents will be made available to view in libraries and customer service centres across the Borough in the upcoming weeks. The opening hours for libraries can be viewed here: -

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Libraries/branchlibraries/Homepage.aspx>



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Keele Parish Council's position on the submitted Borough Plan

The Parish Council concluded that because of the new housing growth policy and changes to NPPF passed into law on the 12th December, the submitted Local Plan should not be opposed in principle. We believe that, were it to be rejected at Inspection, any review and update might fall outside the transition arrangements for Local Plans and thus be subject to the new mandatory housing targets set by HM Government. Were this to be the case, current information suggests a mandatory annual target of 545 per annum homes rather than the 400 in the current plan.

Whilst we still judge the target of 400 homes per annum to be excessive and regret the loss of green belt in the current proposal, we also recognise that the submitted plan goes some way towards answering our concerns about loss of green space by providing a Country Park within the old golf course. The Country Park will surround the development of 5 'islands', each with independent access roads. Whether this will solve issues with traffic load is a moot point, and it certainly creates issues for small, residential roads in Silverdale.

The Parish Council will also welcome the provision of a local centre, health centre and primary school as there is a need for these public services given the number of houses identified, but how these will be distributed across the 'islands' is unknown.

The Parish Council will continue to object to the removal of Green Belt agricultural land for housing.

Whilst we hope the plan passes Inspection to avoid any increase in housing targets, we remain critical of many aspects of the proposed development in and around Keele. We will continue to work with other local Parish Councils and the Borough to critique planning proposals as they come forward to ensure the best possible outcomes for our communities.

Neighbourhood Plan

We are pleased to report that the Neighbourhood Plan for Keele is moving towards completion. We would like to thank Debra, the Parish Clerk, and Hannah Barter of Urban Vision for all their hard work.



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The plan has now passed through the Strategic Environment and Habitats Regulations screening and was not judged to need a full SEA/ HRA. We are finalising our policies which need to be amended in the light of the new planning guidance passed into law in December. Once this is complete we will submit the plan for pre-submission consultation. The consultation will run for 6 weeks. There will a flyer explaining the process in more detail which will be posted to you. Following the consultation, the plan will then be modified having given due consideration of any comments made and submitted to the local authority. The plan will then be subject to independent examination. Once any recommendations from the independent examiner have been accommodated, the plan will then go to local referendum. We hope to be able to complete this process before August 2025.

The Oaks, Pepper Street

We would like to welcome new residents to the Oaks to Keele. We hope to get a 'Welcome' guide out to you in the coming weeks.

The development is now rolling out at pace and we have been informed that sales are strong. The Parish Council meet monthly with the site manager for Seddon Homes to discuss the progress of the development and raise issues of local concern. We were pleased to meet Darren Hands, the new site manager, at our most recent meeting in November. We continue to work to ensure that the pumping station, opposite to the houses on Pepper Street is adequately screened with appropriate native vegetation. We have an ongoing concern regarding the removal of the existing layby on Pepper Street. Staffordshire County Council insist that this is necessary to provide sufficient visibility for the entrance to the pumping station. The Parish Council are continuing to pursue this with the County Council, especially now the new K bus service is running and using the bus stop.

Departure of Re. Peter Jones from the Church

We would like to thank Fr. Peter Jones, the incumbent for the Parishes of Keele and Silverdale who took on a new post in the benefice of Whitmore, Maer and Chapel Chorlton in June last year. As yet there is no news of who may replace him in his role in Keele and Silverdale. Peter has been with us for nearly 13 years and the Parish Council would like to thank him for all his hard work in the parish and for St John's School. We wish him all the best in his new parish.



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Walley's Quarry Landfill

We are aware that residents of the Parish are still suffering at times from the odours emanating from Walley's Quarry.

A Closure Notice which starts the process of permanently closing the site was issued by the Environment Agency on 28th November 2024. This required the company to stop accepting new waste from Friday 29th November, and permanently cap the remainder of the site and install further landfill gas management infrastructure.

The company appealed against the closure and the appeal was heard by an Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate on 13th January 2025. We are waiting for the result of the appeal.

Parish Council Clerk Contact Details – email: clerk.keelepc@gmail.com or tel: 07973 330882

Keele Parish Councillors

Tony Arnold, Clive Ashton, Graham Bibby (Vice Chair), Clare Cox, Moyra Downing, James Hall, Sue Hughes, Wenslie Naylor, Val Newman (Chair), Andy Rowe, Tish Wright

Phone Numbers to remember:

StreetScene: 01782 742500 or 615599 for out-of-hours emergencies

Non-Emergency Police: 101 - Non-Emergency Health Service: 111

Village Hall Lettings: www.keelevillagehall.org.uk

Local Police team: colin.hodgkinson@staffordshire.police.uk