

Chair's Report and Planning: September 2025

Chair's remarks

Our August edition of the Yew tree has now been circulated. A digital copy is attached to this bulletin.

The Parish Council are concerned to engage in a productive discussion with the County Council regarding the lay-by on Pepper Street, and the preservation of part of it as a bus pull-in. County's current position is that the entire layby must be removed to protect the visibility splay at the entrance to the new pumping station on Pepper Street. Our County Councillor, Simon Tagg, is working on our behalf with County Highways.

The Borough Plan Inspection ended in June and the Inspector wrote to the Borough with her interim findings. I have shared this letter and the Borough's response with you together with my summary. The Inspector judges that the plan requires work in some areas before it can be adopted. These areas are pertinent to the development on the Old Golf Course, University, land off on the A53, and the development of a link road between the A53 and A525. The Borough has undertaken to address the points raised. It should be noted that if the emerging plan is adopted, HMGov will require the Borough to immediately commence a new plan, using the elevated housing targets, mandated by the national planning framework. It is unclear where the Borough might find the necessary land for the list uplift in the annual housing land supply.

The situation is further complicated by HMGov mandating local government reorganisation. The intention is that all areas should be covered by unitary authorities. The Borough is currently consulting with residents on the form this authority should take. The survey can be found here:

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/Interview/3e11fbc7-1e46-409c-804d-e1ae97bd60de>

In further news, the defibrillators and blood packs at the Sneyd and Village Hall have now been registered with Keele First Responders and are back in commission.

Planning matters:

Footpath from Quarry Bank to Silverdale.

I am pleased to note that, following a direction from the Secretary of State to the County Council, the case officer is recommending that the application for a footpath from Quarry Bank to Silverdale be approved by the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel. Watch this space!

Hawthorns

Trinity have responded to our query regarding the appointment of residents to the management company. They noted that they are awaiting instructions from Seddon. We will be writing to Seddon homes on this matter.

August

Application for permission in principle for the erection of 6 to 9 dwellings, Land South of Pepper Street, Keele, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire.

Ref. No: 25/00620/PIP | Validated: Wed 20 Aug 2025 | Status: Pending Consideration

We have responded at length to this application, recommending refusal. Briefly, the claim that this land be considered as grey belt is dubious, the application ignores the existence of a railway tunnel across the site and the argument misrepresents the housing land supply and position of the emerging Borough Plan.

Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 23/00055/FUL to substitute approved plans to reflect amendments to design to exclude the second storey element. 5

Cressing Place Keele Newcastle Under Lyme Staffordshire ST5 5FJ

Ref. No: 25/00567/FUL | Validated: Tue 29 Jul 2025 | Status: Pending Consideration

This is a re-presentation of a previous application withdrawn for technical reasons. It asks to reduce the scale of an extension. We have no objections.

July

Outline planning application for one dwelling (including the reserved matter of means of access). Land Fronting Highway Lane Keele Newcastle Staffordshire. Ref. No:

25/00439/OUT | Validated: Mon 30 Jun 2025 | Status: Permit

Application for certificate of lawfulness of proposed works to a listed building - conservation fabric repairs. Keele Hall Keele University Keele Newcastle Under Lyme Staffordshire ST5 5BE. Ref. No: 25/00442/PLDLB | Validated: Fri 06 Jun 2025 | Status: Permit

Proposed two storey side extension. 18 Highway Lane Keele Newcastle Staffordshire ST5 5AN. Ref. No: 25/00392/FUL | Validated: Thu 05 Jun 2025 | Status: Permit

Environment and Assets September 2025

The Parish Council continues to walk the parish regularly to check on our footways, footpaths, highways, and community assets such as the War Memorial. We work closely with our contractor and with Borough and County Councils to address any issues as quickly as possible. Below is an update on what has been completed since our last bulletin, what is currently in progress, and the matters we continue to monitor.

Pepper Street and the A525

The hedges along the footway leading down Pepper Street to the A525 have now been cut back by the owners. However, there remains a great deal of undergrowth which still restricts the path. The Parish Council has asked our contractor to provide a quote for clearing this, so that the footway can be fully accessible.

At the exit onto the A525, the visibility had been obstructed by vegetation, but this has now been cut back by the County. The hedge opposite the exit from Quarry Bank has also been cut by Seddon's. A complaint was received about the hedge at the Quarry Bank/Pepper Street junction; upon inspection we found it had been cut to a reasonable standard, and no further action is proposed.

The road signs on the A525 near the Pepper Street exit were previously obscured by outgrowth, but these have now been cleared by our contractor. There is still the ongoing matter of the layby next to the Oaks. County Highways have requested its full removal to protect visibility at the new pumping station, while Keele Parish Council have asked that part of the layby be retained as a bus pull-in. The matter has been escalated, and our County Councillor, Simon Tagg, is pursuing a prompt resolution with Highways.

Finally, at the end of Pepper Street by the A525, the bollard on the small traffic island is down. This will be reported to County Highways.

Station Road and Chapel Close

Work has been undertaken to keep these areas in order. The weeds along the church wall on Keele Road have been sprayed, and the Chapel Close path has now been cleared. A quote is being obtained for clearance of the path from Station Road to Quarry Bank, where growth has been making the route difficult for pedestrians.

Quarry Bank Road

On Quarry Bank Road, a neighbour has kindly trimmed back tree growth that had been obstructing the footway. However, there remains a much larger tree overhanging both the road and footway near Holly Mews. The branches are causing concern to residents and may obstruct high-sided vehicles travelling down the road. This will be reported to Staffordshire Highways.

A further issue has been noted with the tree in the circular stone wall near St John's Primary School. Its lower branches need lifting to prevent obstruction, and broken branches have been left beneath it which should be cleared away. We believe this tree

belongs to Newcastle Borough Council and the matter will be reported to them. Both trees are within the Conservation Area and are protected by Tree Protection Orders, which means any work requires formal approval.

In addition, the tree at “The Villa” also requires attention. As this too is subject to a Tree Protection Order, the resident has been advised that they must seek permission from Newcastle Borough Council before carrying out any work.

Other Areas of the Village

The lime trees along the frontage of the Hawthorns have now been trimmed back by Trinity, and the vegetation obstructing the exit from Pepper Street onto the A525 has been cut by the County.

The hedge along the old cricket pitch on Keele Road, approaching the junction with the A525, continues to be an issue. Unfortunately, the landowner cannot be identified, which means the Parish Council cannot pursue the matter directly. We are working with our County Councillor to try to find a solution.

At the main entrance to the University, the roundabout vegetation has become overgrown, which is restricting visibility. We will be approaching the Borough Council to request a hard prune to restore a clear line of sight.

Parish Noticeboards

The parish noticeboards are scheduled to be cleaned and the surrounding hedges trimmed in October.

Litter

Our Parish litter picker continues to walk the village on a regular basis and clears a considerable amount of rubbish. Regrettably, litter remains an ongoing problem. If you see an area that you believe needs attention, please do contact the Clerk so that it can be noted and action taken. Please note, however, that for safety reasons the Parish Council cannot clear the A525 itself. The County Council carries out periodic clearance of this area.

In Closing

During our most recent walk we did not identify any further urgent matters requiring immediate attention. Parish Council members will continue to walk the village each month to check on conditions. If you notice anything that causes concern, please let the Parish Clerk know. Together we can keep the parish safe and welcoming for all.