

Chairman's Report 2009, of the AEPC Planning Committee.

This has been an extremely difficult year for the Planning Committee. Indeed if the forthcoming 12 months see the continuation of the trends and developments which have occurred since my last report, then I have to question the value in maintaining the Planning Committee in its present form.

Changes introduced by the Government in October 2008 were the culmination of a seven year assault on the traditional planning process. These new rules and procedures, along with the many changes which have gone before have created a situation where public consultation, local opinion and even the Local Development Plan has been rendered irrelevant in the drive to achieve 'targets' for planning approval by the Local Authority. It is no longer the case that an application is considered on its merits. The officer's sole attention is focussed on the minimum necessary required to get a planning application to a point where it can be approved. In an ideal world such a system would require the highest standards from the developer, using the LDP as a guide, and consultation with the officers to ensure that the plan will meet the requirements of the community and the environment. Sadly, like all true bureaucrats, the council officers have taken the easy path and we have a conspiracy of mediocrity, driven by profit, which has done so much damage to our village.

The arrival of Cheshire East presents us with a opportunity to start again, to reset the boundaries of taste and acceptability, and to try and restore the role and influence that the PC used to have in the planning process. It is disappointing therefore to see so many of the MBC staff arriving like ghosts of Christmas past, to haunt us for another year ? I hope not.

Ironically, attendance by my fellow Parish Councillors has never been better, and I thank you for your support, and urge you continue to speak out on Planning Matters. We have moved the Planning meeting back to Monday, reflecting the dramatic fall in the number of plans we have to consider. I have made a resolution that I will try and arrange site visits more regularly and I shall do this on an ad-hoc basis, as work allows.

Finally thank you to Paul for his support over the year, and I look forward to the arrival of the Parish Plan, and the impact that may have on our relationship with the Cheshire East Council.