

# **Newbold Astbury and Moreton-cum-Alcumlow Annual Parishes meeting**

**Held at Astbury Village Hall at 7.00pm.**

**April 13, 2022**

**Present** (in their capacity as members of the public as this was the Annual Parishes Meeting)

- Councillor N Barton
- Councillor R Sutton
- Councillor N Sharman
- Councillor J Ward
- Councillor I Parry
- Councillor B Jelf
- Councillor A Banks
- Councillor M Bailey
- Councillor P Redstone (Cheshire East)

Mr C Evans (Clerk)

Cllr N Plant chaired the meeting in the absence of Chair J Critchlow.

## **Apologies:**

- Councillor J Critchlow (ill health)
- Councillor P Critchlow (ill health)
- Councillor P Cliff (work commitments)

Around 30 members of the public were present.

**Cllr Plant** summarised the year gone by. The Parish Council had held eleven meetings in the previous twelve months, and despite Covid restrictions it was good to see a number of parishioners joining these meetings to raise issues and express their views. The majority of our meetings were attended by one of our two Ward Councillors, Councillors Liz Wardlaw and Patrick Redstone who continue to support the Parish Council in matters such as Highways and Planning Issues. Cllr Plant thanked them warmly. In May 2021 the Parish Council said farewell to our long-standing colleague and Chair John Carter, and Julie Mason our clerk. Our thanks go to them for their invaluable service. We welcomed Carlton Evans as our new clerk and Megan Bailey was subsequently co-opted on to the Council. The Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted by Cheshire East in 2017, is currently being reviewed by the original advisory team comprising a number of Councillors and parishioners. A number of policies contained in the Plan have now been superseded and we need to ensure that it reflects the requirements of the parishes for the future.

Since the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan there have been some 120 planning applications and Cheshire East continue to refer to it in its determinations.

There had been an open morning at the Village Hall on Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup> to meet the team and express local views. A number of matters have been reported by parishioners and as in previous years include issues with traffic volumes, accidents and potholes, together with increased fly tipping which appears to have been exacerbated by the closure of Congleton Recycling Centre. The Parish Council are working on a number of long-term projects, specifically the Common Land at Brownlow Heath where work is continuing to secure the future of the land for conservation and wildlife and to enable it to be an educational and recreational asset for the parishes. Scrub and weeds have been cleared and saplings and wildflowers planted. Work continues in researching all the soldiers who are believed to have been omitted from the War Memorial in St. Mary's churchyard. The Parish Council Newsletter and website continue to provide up to date information and links for parishioners and provides opportunities for parish groups to publicise their activities. We are always happy to receive parish news items for inclusion.

Ian Doughty from **Congleton Museum** gave a presentation on the history of the local area. There is a long thread of history and ongoing heritage in the area from Roman times to the present day.

Astbury and Newbold in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> centuries were fortified settlements and good defensive areas. He postulated that Astbury could have been a Saxon stronghold against the Vikings, especially when surrounded by marshes and with only one feasible attack point. He also explained the likely provenance of numerous artefacts and remains that had been found in the area, some dating back to 1500 BC. Taken together they all pointed to a long-lasting settlement and occupation. Peel Lane seemed to provide the entrance to the settlement which meant the site of Peel Farm could have played a strategic (defensive) role. Later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was also evidence that it was home to leisure activities which meant it wasn't simply a farm and had maintained a more important role in the community.

Maps from the 1800s which showed a moat, and a dig in the 1970s suggested two or three ranges of buildings around a central courtyard, all pointing to its importance. The specific evidence of Roman occupation and Roman influence further back in history was not surprising given the existence of the large Roman settlement at Manchester. The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Astbury was quite large and quite wealthy, compared to Congleton, as referenced in the Domesday Book. The 16<sup>th</sup> century plague had hit Congleton quite hard. Later maps from the 1940s showed plans for large industrial and housing estates in Congleton that were not in the end taken forward by the Government. All of this pointed to the significance of Astbury in the locality over many centuries.

**Cllr Sutton** mentioned a Manchester university dig in the late 70s at Bent Farm which had uncovered evidence of previous settlements etc. and offered to discuss this further with Mr Doughty.

Mr Doughty finished by noting how interesting it was that larger planning applications now have to undertake archaeological surveys and they are uncovering new evidence of the

history of the area. This might also mean that some developments will not be able to proceed as planned and might provide some 'planning gain'.

**Cllr Sharman** talked briefly about the Neighbourhood Plan and its revision. Andrew Thomson who had intended to give a talk on this was unfortunately unwell. He stressed the importance of a 'living' Neighbourhood Plan to help shape future developments as it is a statutory framework for planning decisions. The current Plan was 'made' in 2017 and so ripe for revision now. Drafts will be discussed with local residents as the review progresses and there will also be questionnaires in the parish newsletter to canvass local views. The importance of climate change, sustainability and biodiversity are an important new emphasis for the future Plan and the working group are discussing how prescriptive planning approvals should be in terms of obliging applicants to factor in renewable energies, replacing trees or other habitats etc.

The Chair wished all the participants well and thanked them for their continued engagement over the past year.

**The Meeting ended at 2010 hrs.**