

A+M

ASTBURY+MORETON

P A R I S H P L A N



APRIL 2005

April 2005

It is with great pleasure that we are able to present the Astbury + Moreton Parish Plan. The Plan is the outcome of much hard work by the Parish Plan Steering Group, comprising volunteers from the Parishes and members of the Parish Council. It represents the views and wishes of the Parishes, as expressed by you in response to the questionnaire in 2004. It is your plan.

But it does not stop here. The Parish Plan and its Action Points form the basis for future working and will become a living document, by which we monitor and progress the implementation of our Plan.

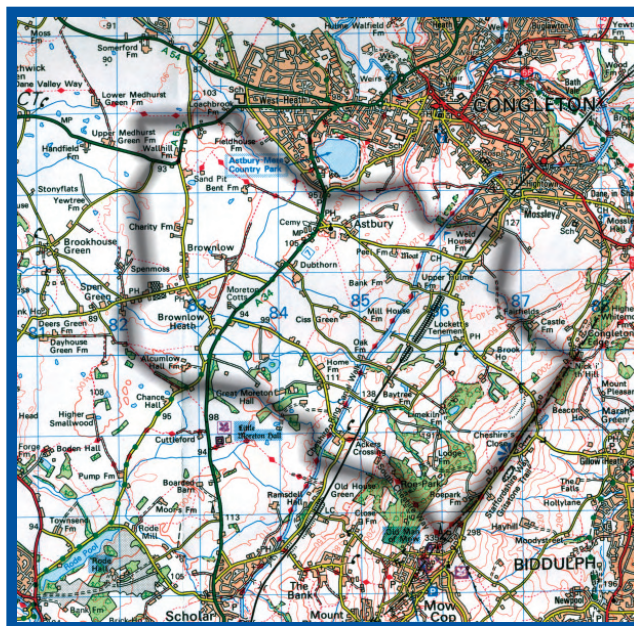
None of this will happen, of course, without the necessary pool of volunteers to actually do the work. We now need more volunteers to join the Action Groups that will work with the Parish Council in implementing the Action Points.

If you are proud of your Parish, and want to see it become an even better place to live, come and join us. We need your help.

John Yates

Chairman

Newbold Astbury cum Moreton Parish Council



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ASTBURY+MORETON

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1. INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

The Astbury+Moreton Parish Plan is the result of three years' effort by many people to encourage the residents of the parishes to have their input into the future sustainable development of the parishes by being party to the development of the Plan.

Section 2: Background: History, topography and present day "state of the union" between the two Parishes.

Section 3: Parish Plans - what are they and how has this one been developed?

Section 4: Summary of the analysed results of the Plan Questionnaire with a quick reference guide to the proposed actions resulting from the responses.

Section 5: *The way forward:* An outline of the proposals for the implementation of the Plan.



2. ASTBURY + MORETON – YESTERDAY AND TODAY



The neighbouring civil parishes of Newbold Astbury and Moreton cum Alcumlow are situated in the Borough of Congleton in the county of Cheshire. Their boundaries form a part of the Cheshire border with Staffordshire to the East and adjoin the town of Congleton to the North.

Several archaeological finds have been made in the parishes. The earliest historically is a perforated Neolithic axe hammer, found near to Moreton Hall. A beaker cremation burial, found during the excavation of a grave in the new Astbury churchyard in 1941, dates from the Bronze Age.

Most important of other finds is the remains of a Roman marching camp at Bent Farm (now designated a National Monument), and a late Saxon dug-out canoe discovered at Ciss Green Farm, Watery Lane in 1923.

Both parishes have mention in the Domesday Survey of 1086 under the township name of Newbold - "having cultivated land and a priest". Moreton, as an entity, is first noted in 1190 when Alexander de Moreton appears as first lord of Great Moreton (Moreton Magna). It is interesting to note that Moreton Magna and the adjoining manor of Little or Old Moreton, although separated by no more than two miles, were unrelated estates with a common surname.

The settlement of Moreton Green, based around the manor house, disappeared by 1850 following the build of the New Moreton Hall and the deviation of the turnpike road, now the A34.

The original Newbold (Astbury) moated manor house, probably of Saxon origin, was at the site of the present day Peel Farm. This was rebuilt in the 16th century with a "peel" or tower and finally ceased to exist 100 years ago.

The Church of St Mary, built on a former Saxon site, remains the focal point of settlement in the parishes; Astbury Village being the largest population centre. Most of the population is widely scattered with groupings at Brownlow and Ackers Crossing.

The greater part of the parishes is on the Cheshire Plain with a nominal height of 300 feet above sea level. However, toward the Staffordshire border, from Congleton Edge to Mow Cop, the land rises to a height of over 1000 feet above sea level.

The vast majority of land is in the Green Belt with the remainder classified as Open Countryside. Within the Green Belt, toward the Mow Cop ridge, are specifically classified areas designated by the Planning Authority as respectively, Special County Value, Significant Local Environment Value, Special Scientific Interest and Biological Importance. Both Astbury Village and the Macclesfield Canal corridor are Conservation Areas.

Most land in the parishes is high grade farm land which supports many dairy herds. Although the number of farms has declined over the past few years, this has not led to a noticeable increase in field size and old hedge patterns are usually maintained.

The parishes are criss-crossed by many lanes. The A34 Manchester to Newcastle under Lyme runs North-South across the parishes while the A534 Congleton to Wrexham road skirts the Western edge. The Macclesfield Canal runs North-South across the parishes and is paralleled by the West Coast Main Rail line.

Newbold Astbury and Moreton cum Alcumlow are two separate civil parishes with a combined Parish Council of 13 members; 9 represent the Astbury ward and 4 represent the Moreton ward. Following local government reorganisation, the parishes were combined under a single parish council in 1977. With a total electorate in November 2004 of 545 (Astbury 406, Moreton 139) thinly spread over 4000 acres, the parishes must be very high on the list of best represented in the land with a nominal figure of 42 electors per councillor. Total present day population is in the order of 700.

The parishes are in the Astbury ward of Congleton Borough Council, the Congleton East ward of Cheshire County Council and the Congleton parliamentary constituency. The Member of Parliament, Lady Ann Winterton, is resident in the parish.

For Council Tax purposes there are 284 dwellings in the parishes: 99 are Band D and below, 182 are Band E and above, 3 are exempt at present.

Trends in recent years have seen an increased influx of residents from outside the parishes, an increasing proportion of elderly residents and a steady decline in the number of younger residents.

Historically, dairy farming has been the main industry with mining and mineral extraction taking place on the Mow Cop ridge. Currently, farming is in relative decline and quarrying of silica sand at Bent Farm has taken the place of the Mow Cop minerals.

One interesting, though now disused, industrial heritage site, is the ganister quarry on Mow Lane, still known locally as Ganney Bank. The quarry commenced working in 1881 extracting ganister rock which was mixed with naturally occurring fireclay to form "wet ground ganister" used in the lining of furnaces and suchlike. The ganister was taken by an overhead cableway to Astbury Sidings situated by the railway line adjacent to Oak Lane. Parts of this overhead system were still in place until the mid 20th century.





One other locally well known product from this same area is "Newport Lime". This product, used in the local building industry instead of cement, was extracted at Limekiln, also off Oak Lane, and also shipped to Astbury Sidings where a limekiln still exists.

Shortly after the Second World War in 1947, Congleton Borough Council made application for designation as a New Town. This led to plans being drawn which would have seen Astbury developed to a population of 8,250 and Moreton to a population of 6,600. A new railway station was planned for The Flash with a new Civic Centre on what is now Astbury Golf Course. The development was finally abandoned in 1952. We could have been a Milton Keynes with concrete cows instead of the real thing!

The parishes are poorly served by public transport. The nearest rail station at Congleton has a very intermittent service: Intercity connections are usually made at Stoke-on-Trent or Crewe. Excluding the Crewe-Macclesfield bus service, on the A534, there are only two bus services that pass through the parish, but not on Sundays. In the mid fifties there were at least five different companies providing services throughout the week.

There are now three public houses, all in Newbold Astbury. Records show that two hundred years ago there were 8 licensed premises. Of course in those days there was no television!



3. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Parish Plans were first conceived in the Rural White Paper issued in 2000. The Countryside Agency, acting on behalf of the Government Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), was appointed to oversee their introduction as a part of the Vital Villages initiative.

To quote from the guidance issued by DEFRA,

“A PARISH PLAN SHOULD SET OUT A VISION FOR HOW THE COMMUNITY WANTS TO DEVELOP AND IDENTIFY THE ACTION NEEDED TO ACHIEVE IT. IT IS UP TO THE COMMUNITY TO DECIDE WHAT IS IMPORTANT.”

Timeline for Your Plan:

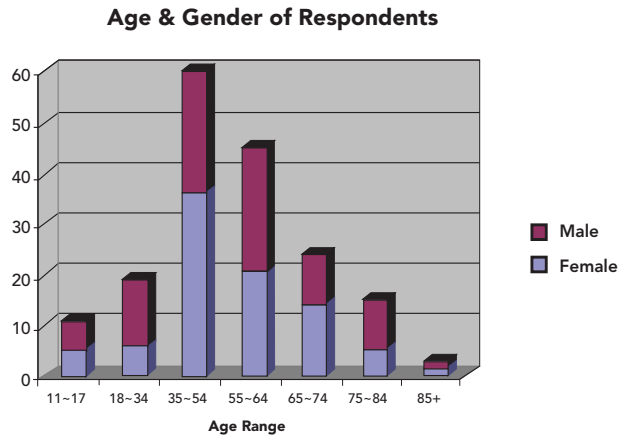
Jan 02:	Contact made by Parish Council with Countryside Agency to develop a Parish Plan for the combined parishes. Detailed programme produced to obtain Grant Funding.
Apr 02:	Parish Council form small Working Group to develop a Plan programme.
Jan 03:	Grant Funding allocated to Parish Council by Countryside Agency.
May 03:	Initial Newsletter produced and delivered by Parish Council, inviting parishioners to public meeting.
Jun 03:	Presentation of the Plan project by Parish Council at meeting in village hall attended by 60 parishioners. Vote taken to proceed with Plan. Steering Group formed of 14 volunteers including 4 Parish Councillors and help offered by others.
Sept 03:	Newsletter 2 issued advising of progress to date.
Jul-Dec 03:	Development of Questionnaire by Steering Group. This would gather the information required to develop the outline of the Plan.
Dec 03 - Feb 04:	Questionnaires sent to all households, hand-delivered and collected by volunteers.
Summer 04:	Questionnaires analysed and summarised.
Oct 04:	Summary presented at public meeting.
Nov 04:	Newsletter 3 issued with summary of questionnaire results and further request for input from parishioners.
Dec 04:	Final draft plan hand delivered to all households together with request for approval of the draft action plan.
Apr 05:	Issue of the Parish Plan and presentation to the community.



4. SUMMARY ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Dec 2003 - Gathering the information.

- Questionnaires distributed to 284 addresses in the parishes.
- Also delivered to all known businesses.
- Responses requested from everybody over the age of 11.
- Electorate at time was 552. 177 questionnaires were returned for analysis. However, some of these covered families rather than individuals.
- Percentages in the text refer to the returned questionnaires, not to the population.



What follows is a summary of the information gathered by the Plan Questionnaire and the proposed actions resulting from the interpretation of that information.

4.1 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Questions posed were to determine use of and the extent of dependency on public transport.

- Only 14 respondents were entirely dependent on public transport.
- The vast majority do not use public transport, which is limited in extent and frequency of service.

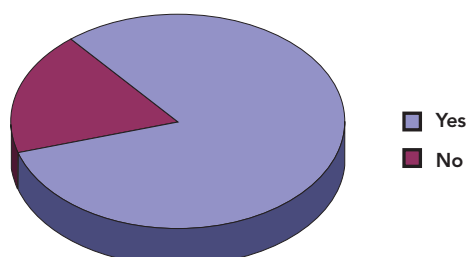
PROPOSED ACTIONS - PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Determine the full extent of public transport in the locality, including dial-a-ride.
- Develop partnerships with organisations providing transport within the area.
- Explore the provision of additional services including those based on social need.

4.2 TRAFFIC

There is no doubt that transport is the main concern of parishioners with over 80% considering that there are major danger spots on parish roads;

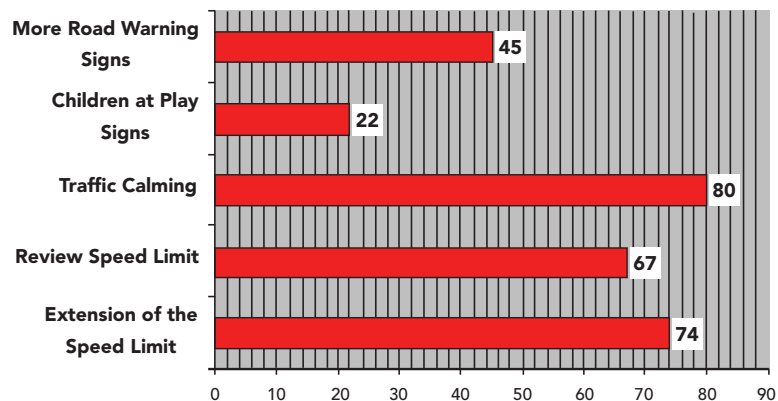
"Do you think there are any major Danger-Spots on the roads in the Parish?"





- Many concerned about speed and volume of traffic in general, including the A34 and A534 which can become congested when the M6 is closed.
- Major concern over the use of 'the lanes' as bypass routes and short cuts: - over 1000 vehicles per hour in certain lanes.
- Concerns also expressed about lack of footpaths, street lighting, hazardous parking and the condition of the verges.
- Traffic was also cited as the main reason for reduced quality of life.

"Would you support any of the following speed control measures in the Parish?"



PROPOSED ACTIONS - TRAFFIC

- Updated information required to determine traffic speeds and volumes in lanes and on the A roads and accident statistics.
- Representations to be made to Cheshire County Council re the introduction of cycle lanes, extension of weight restrictions and the possible introduction of 'conservation area' and 'quiet lanes' policy.
- Community Wardens to be contacted about hazardous parking.
- Public opinion to be sought regarding additional footpaths, street lighting, pedestrian crossings and mini roundabouts.
- Establish working groups to investigate the extent of problems raised and their solutions.

4.3 ENVIRONMENT

Overall people were happy to live in the parishes as only two respondents regarded their stay as short term. Items of most concern were litter, the condition of roadside verges and waste recycling. Woodlands, individual trees and hedgerows should be preserved.

	Very Important	Worth Doing	Not Necessary	No Opinion
Maintain Woodlands	31%	42%	7%	20%
Preserve Single Trees	23%	38%	11%	28%
Maintain Roadside Verges	50%	42%	4%	4%

"What affects the quality of life in your household?"

Litter	20%	A34, The Lanes, (Fly-Tipping)
Traffic	28%	A34, The Lanes:- Peel La. Wallhill La.

PROPOSED ACTIONS - ENVIRONMENT

- It is possible that the reintroduction of a Lengthman** would go a long way to solving the items of most concern.
- Also, the criteria for verge maintenance, anti fly tipping measures & improved rural services generally to be discussed with the Streetscape section at Congleton Borough Council.
- Possibly a site could be found for a local waste recycling area.
- Working group to assess need for action on litter.

**a Lengthman was employed to maintain a specific length of roadside verges in all aspects. Adjoining parishes may combine to fund provision.



4.4 RIGHTS OF WAY

- 85% of Parishioners are familiar with local rights of way.
- 77% are happy with their maintenance.
- However, a significant minority request improved signposting.



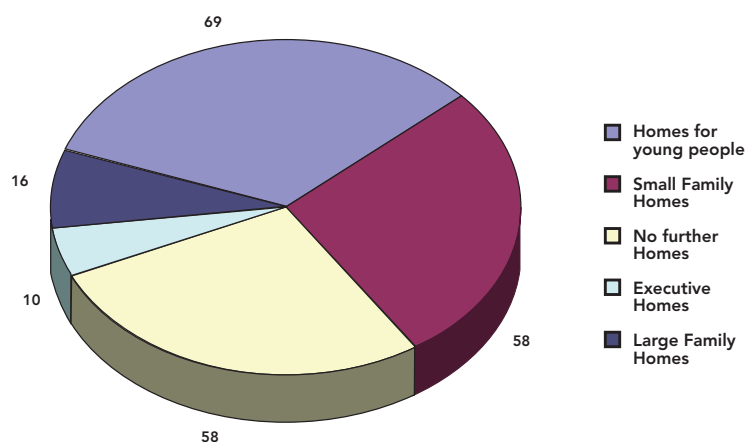
PROPOSED ACTIONS - RIGHTS OF WAY

- Ramblers Association survey approximately every two years so it is suggested that interested parishioners join with them to carry out rights of way survey.
- Any reported problems will be relayed to the local wardens of the Cheshire County Council Public Rights of Way Unit

4.5 HOUSING & LAND USAGE

- 97% believe that development must reflect needs of residents.
- Majority favour preservation of local identity and architectural features.
- Low Cost housing had majority support but little support for Executive housing.
- Little support for commercial and light industrial development.

"Your views on Development:- Housing"



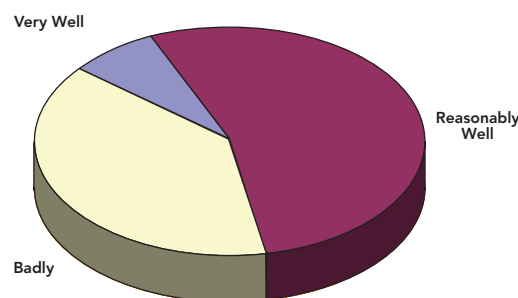
PROPOSED ACTIONS - HOUSING AND LAND USAGE

- Liaise closely with the planning authority, Congleton Borough Council, to ensure that the local plan reflects the Parish Plan.
- Possibly carry out a further detailed survey of parishioners to have the Plan regarded as supplementary planning guidance.

4.6 PARISH INFORMATION

- Despite there being only one notice-board in the parishes, over 50% considered that the publicity given by the Parish Council was sufficient.
- A substantial minority considered communication to be poor and 75% of respondents desired more information.
- Suggestions made for methods of communication: Congleton Chronicle reports, additional notice-boards, a parish newsletter and a website.

"How well do the Parish Council publicise its activities & decisions?"



PROPOSED ACTIONS - PARISH INFORMATION

- The Parish Council to ensure that regular reports of meetings are submitted to the Congleton Chronicle.
- Working group to be formed to consider the need for community notice boards, newsletter and website.

4.7 CRIME

- The parishes are not beset by any major crime problems.
- Approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ consider the police coverage to be 'reasonable or better' leaving a substantial minority unhappy.
- Half of the respondents would like to be part of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

PROPOSED ACTIONS - CRIME

- Exact crime figures should be obtained from Cheshire Police who will provide the criteria for rural Neighbourhood Watch schemes.
- Advice is also needed regarding the possible provision of a parish warden or a parish wide watch scheme.

4.8 PERSONAL SAFETY

- Traffic is the main concern; speed, volume and standard of driving being main reasons for disquiet.
- Linked to poor street lighting, lack of paths and hazardous parking.

"So what are our Concerns?"

Hazardous Parking	17%
Inadequate Lighting	21%
Road Safety	50%
Safety of Pedestrians/Cyclists	45%

PROPOSED ACTIONS - PERSONAL SAFETY

See section 4.2 for relevant actions.

4.9 HEALTH & WELL BEING

While the vast majority does not have concerns, there were 22 respondents who are dependent on others, relying on relatives, friends and neighbours.



PROPOSED ACTIONS - HEALTH & WELL BEING

- A check must be made with local Social Services and National Health Trusts to determine services available.
- Check also to be made with the emergency services to confirm they have detailed knowledge/sources of information regarding parish addresses.
- Actions relating to 4.1 are also relevant.

4.10 RECREATION AND LEISURE

- 60% of respondents are not involved in any organised sport or attend fitness centres - not surprising given that half of the respondents are over 55 years.
- However, over 75% use the local footpaths and 25% cycle.
- The village hall is used by half of parishioners for social activities. There is overall support for more community events.



PROPOSED ACTIONS - RECREATION AND LEISURE

- There is a large number of parishioners who feel that the present level of social events is not sufficient. There is a desire to be able to meet fellow parishioners at community events and to develop a greater community use of the village hall.
- The publication of a Parish Paths leaflet.
- Liaison Group to effect co-ordination of local events.

Finally – What events we would like to be organised for the community?

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| • Summer Barbeque | 64% |
| • Summer Fair | 57% |
| • Barn Dance | 34% |
| • Bonfire, Xmas Event | 10% |

Do we need a Social Committee?

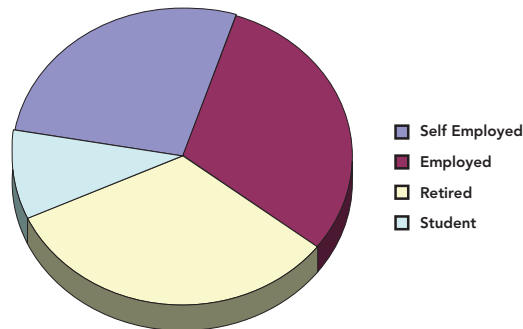


4.11 BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT

Responses received from 25 of 32 businesses listed in a local directory.

- 10 were from farming related businesses forming the largest sector although most farms were not included on the list.
- Bent Farm Quarry is the largest employer with 54 employees, closely followed by the public houses which employ 51 and the two garden centres, which between them employ a total of 45.
- Interestingly, 16 businesses thought that they would benefit from promotion within the parishes and 14 of them would advertise on a parish website. 10 companies actively source employees from within the parishes. Improved bus services and postal services were suggested improvements.
- Respondents employment status: 45 self employed, 51 in full or part time employment, 16 students and 54 retired. Only 3 were actively seeking work. 36% work in the parishes, no doubt due to the high number in self-employment.

"62% of employed people work within 5 miles of the Parish"



PROPOSED ACTIONS - BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT

- Possible website formation is noted in the actions to section 4.6. Sponsorship by local businesses should help in its introduction.
- Close contact needs to be maintained with local businesses and a full database established for the future.



PARISH BUSINESSES

The following listing is based on a list supplied by the Business Enterprise Centre in Congleton plus other known businesses that agreed to the listing. Only farms with additional businesses are included. It is estimated that there are at least 20 working farms in the two parishes.

Bent Farm Quarry, Wallhill Lane - Silica sand extraction

Astbury Meadow Garden Centre, Newcastle Road

J Murray Nurseries, Newcastle Road

Brownlow Nursery, Childs Lane

Congleton Garden Centre, Moss Road

Brownlow Inn, Brownlow Heath Lane

Egerton Arms, Peel Lane

Horseshoe Inn, Fence Lane

Pecks, Newcastle Road - restaurant

Jubilee MOT Centre, Newcastle Road

Astbury Garage, Newcastle Road

Astbury Car Sales, Newcastle Road

AJ Lyons Car Sales, Newcastle Road

George Whittaker, New Road - Groundworks & Flagging

Brian Robinson, New Road - Paving, Fencing etc.

Moreton Stone Ltd, New Road

Cheshire Fencing, Moss Road

Landale Fencing, Chance Hall Lane

Keith Arnold Printers, Brownlow Heath Lane

Grocers Brokers, Childs Lane - Farmhouse Products





Alcumlow Hall Farm, Chance Hall Lane - Fresh Farm Produce
Astbury Pigeon Supplies, Bent Farm, Bent Lane

Concept Data Services, Childs Lane - Advertising
Keen and Company, Newcastle Road - Independent Financial Advisors
Way Ahead Business Centre, Moss Road - Technical transfer consultants
Richard Thorpe Consultancy, Moss Road - Business consultancy
Cognitio, Astbury Village - Marketing consultants
GMC Architects, Astbury Village

Blue Moon Interiors, Peel Lane
Two Tempting Hat Hire, Alcumlow Hall, Chance Hall Lane
Clean Environment Technology, Newcastle Road - Air cleaning equipment

N&S Painter, Whetstone Edge - Bed & Breakfast

Peter Cliff, Brook Lane - Agricultural/Horticultural equipment repair

Cliff Contract Services, Brook Lane - Office/secretarial services

Moreton Fisheries, New Road



5. THE WAY FORWARD

The Astbury + Moreton Plan is a medium term plan for the future sustainable development of the parishes in line with the wishes of parishioners. With so many conflicting opinions and suggestions expressed in the questionnaire, the Plan cannot represent the individual views of all contributors. It is not perfect, but every effort has been made to ensure that all views have been collected and that the Plan contains the necessary actions to ensure a satisfactory completion.

The Parish Plan now exists: the result of the many hours of effort expended by the Steering Group, volunteers, Parish Councillors and parishioners. It is based on the information collected from and provided by parishioners and represents the best way forward for the benefit of the residents of the parishes. It is a living document which will be maintained on a rolling annual update. Its useful life will depend on the future energy and impetus given by those who follow. The preparatory work is finished; the opportunities now exist for those with sufficient interest to take the Plan in hand and make it work for the benefit of the Parishes.

The Parish Plan Steering Group will now give way to a new body, the Plan Implementation Group, which will progress the plan and implement the actions proposed in the Action Plan through newly formed Action Groups. The Plan Implementation Group will be governed by the legislation applicable to local councils under which the Parish Council is required to operate. Membership will be augmented to take in new volunteers. Particularly welcome will be volunteers with knowledge and interest in specific fields. The formation of Action Groups will allow new volunteers to take a full part in the implementation of the plan without discarding those who have already made contributions and wish to continue.

Results will not appear overnight. While some action points may be realised quickly, others may be months and even years away from completion. Much effort and patience will be required to achieve the vision set out in this Plan.

And what will the Plan provide? With the involvement of all parishioners together with the energy and the will to deliver the social and business aspects of the Plan, it will provide parishioners with a safer, cleaner place to live and enjoy living. The future development of Astbury + Moreton as a community is in the hands of the residents.



APPENDIX 1

Thanks

The Astbury+Moreton Parish Plan Steering Group wish to place on record their thanks to the Newbold Astbury cum Moreton Parish Council, the Countryside Agency, Cheshire Community Council, Congleton Borough Council and the many parish volunteers. Without them this plan would not exist.

Members of the Steering Group and Other Volunteers

Howard Thorpe
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Roy Clark
Bob Cliff
Anne Dale
Frank Davenport
Terry Depledge

Melanie Lawton
Cyndy Mellor-Lawrence
Catherine Potts
Marion Roberts
Cathrin Stanway

Rob Lomas
Dave Roberts
Gordon Taylor
John Yates

The enthusiasm of all is acknowledged with gratitude.



ASTBURY+MORETON PARISH PLAN



Developed and Produced by the Astbury + Moreton Parish Steering Group

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