

DAVENHAM & KINGSMEAD NEWS

May 2007

The Parish of Davenham consists of two wards,
Davenham Village (including Whatcroft) and Kingsmead

Community – What Community?

It's about time that property developers learnt that you can't just plant 1500 houses in a field and create an instant 'community' – or at least that if you do that it is unethical to market such a development as having a 'village community atmosphere' when it hasn't; especially when there is no church, no community centre, no youth facilities and, as was the case initially, no school.

Yes, there is a pub but there are no facilities there for holding a function or a meeting and despite the 'olde worlde' effect there is no 'village pub' atmosphere, just a clinical 'mass market' approach. Kingsmead has no heart and it has no soul. It is badly designed for people who don't want to go everywhere in a car and although on those rare occasions when the litter has been picked up it looks quite attractive as an area in which to live its really just a high priced housing estate.



There *are* a few people who make an effort to try and get something going and the activities of the litter pickers, the residents association and the school governors along with many individuals who do contribute are to be applauded but the fact that only 27% of the residents bothered to vote in the recent elections is an indicator that the majority of people who live in Kingsmead just don't seem to care about the larger community.

Davenham is not a lot better. Being older there is a historical 'community' but many of the residents are not involved, keeping themselves to themselves like the majority of people who live in Kingsmead. Community facilities are very limited and very 'tired'. Again there is no youth club although the various youth organisations Scouts, Guides, Cadets etc. have a limited presence doing a great job catering for as many young people as they can accommodate. There is a church hall but no village hall or

A Tragic Loss



We were much saddened by the tragic death of parish councillor and Mayor of Vale Royal Joan Kerruish-Jones after a long illness over the past year. Joan had been a member of the Parish Council for 12 years and was at the forefront of many discussions especially on planning matters. Fellow Vale Royal and Parish Councillor Arthur Wood said "Joan has been a valued member of the Parish Council for many years and made a forceful contribution to the work of the Council. Joan will be sadly missed by us all and she and her family are in our thoughts at this difficult time". Parish Council Chairman Ben Coker said "Joan was very helpful to me when I first joined the Council and always made a point of talking with me when I attended Vale Royal meetings on the Council's behalf. She made it easy for me to find my feet as a new councillor and we shall miss her experience at Parish Council meetings"

community centre and no function rooms in either of the pubs. Not enough provision for groups and organisations to meet limiting the opportunities for the organisations that already exist or could be formed for both areas of the parish – even the Council has difficulty finding a place to meet on occasions! It's clear that Davenham was once a much more vibrant place (if you can imagine that) but now it's getting to feel very run down and the 'dormitory estate' atmosphere is beginning to spread over from Kingsmead.

So what can be done to make it a better place and to generate some community spirit in the area?

All the organisations we know about were asked for contributions to this news sheet – to tell everyone what they do, but as you can see very few have responded. Is it that they want to keep themselves to themselves? Is it because they couldn't cope with any new members or interest? Is it because they don't think anyone else would be interested? There does seem to be a reticence in the parish about letting

other people know what is going on and this is one of the things that we are trying to address through this news sheet and through the parish website. Please tell us about your organisation and what you are doing and what you have to offer. **Free publicity** is on offer for all voluntary organisations!

We desperately need more facilities for all age groups (that's 0 to 90+) in Kingsmead and in Davenham, places for people to meet and do stuff. There are some initiatives 'in progress' at the moment albeit very slowly for development of one of the playfields in Davenham and for a new community centre in Kingsmead but at the current rate of progress these are unlikely to come to fruition for a number of years due to the extremely long timescales that it takes to raise the funds required and due to bureaucratic ineptitude ('red tape') within various public and private sector organisations. If anyone knows of anyone who has any premises within the parish that could be used 'out of hours' for community activities of any sort do please let us know.

Above all, if there is going to be a viable and vibrant 'community' in Davenham and Kingsmead people, lots of people, not just a minority, need to take part and engage fully with each other to decide what sort of community we want. To facilitate this the Council will start off the 'parish planning' process in the near future but this is not the 'council's' community and it's not the 'council's' plan – it's yours, and if the majority of people in Davenham and Kingsmead don't get involved in some way, however small, there will never be an establishment or revival of the community at all.

Ben Coker

Note: The views expressed in this news sheet are those of individuals and not necessarily representative of the parish council as a whole.

Richard is on the Case

Our new Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Richard Forster started work at the end of March. He said: "From starting on my patch as a PCSO, I have been in constant contact with my colleagues, the parish, the council and other agencies. They have helped me to become aware of problems residents are facing in the areas of Moulton, Davenham and Kingsmead. I have been shown around areas by local people and by my colleagues, some areas of which anti social behaviour is happening, and others where there are disputes or even crimes. I will continue to interact with other agencies, and share information to make me efficient at my job, and to make a difference for the lives of the residents."

As a PCSO Richard has extensive policing powers which will be added to next September when changes in the law occur. Right now he can impose fines for littering, confiscate alcohol from under age drinkers, enforce parking and traffic regulations and much more – full details are available on the parish website (see page 5)

Please feel free to talk to Richard when you see him out on patrol leave a message at 0845 458 6391 or e-mail him at pcso@davenhampc.org.uk. You can also leave a written note in one of the PCSO Suggestion Boxes which will be located in Kingsmead, Davenham and Moulton.

If you witness any type of incident that you feel should be brought to his attention please try and give dates, times and descriptions of the people involved, it's vital that as much information as possible is passed on.

To contact the Police when an incident is actually happening you should call 01606 48000 – there may be a queue for your call to be answered but it is worth waiting as the information will be patched through to Richard or whoever is on duty in the area.

Kingsmead Square Sign's Off

On 30th April the Planning Inspectorate dismissed the appeal by Legat Owen against Vale Royal Borough Council's unanimous decision, strongly supported by the Parish Council, not to allow the installation of a 'Directory Sign' at Kingsmead Square. This brings to an end the long saga of protest against this unnecessary sign which would not have been visible from the main road and would have added to an already cluttered environment. The inspector said in his report that "The proposal would introduce a large and prominent sign which would stand out in a harmful manner" and that the "need for the sign may not be as pressing as the appellants suggest" We congratulate the inspector on a good decision for Kingsmead.

Time for a Speed Test

There is much concern about the number of cars driving at excessive speeds along Monarch Drive, part of which is in Northwich and part in Davenham. Northwich Town Council has obtained use of the speed monitoring equipment from Cheshire Highways and will shortly be carrying out a survey in the road. We are indebted to a local resident who has made it a personal crusade to bring this to our attention and for the survey carried out by Kingsmead Residents Association on possible remedies to the speeding problem. Here are some of the options:

- Impose a 20mph speed limit
- Construct a 'pinch point' somewhere along the road
- Make the road one way (towards the Kingfisher)
- Close off the road at some point making a no through road
- Install speed bumps
- Make the road narrower in places

or any combination of these and others that may be suggested.

The Parish Council will be discussing these options with Northwich Town Council once the speed survey has been carried out and there is likely to be further consultation with local residents to decide the best option to put forward to Cheshire Highways. Our big issue with this however is that it is unlikely that the County officers will accept that there is actually a need to do anything or spend any money addressing this issue – and they take a very long time to do anything. When the time comes the local councillors will need your support in lobbying our County Councillor and MP to make sure that something does get done to stop this dangerous practice.

Care for Our Environment

The term ‘environment’ covers a wide spectrum from worldwide issues of Global Warming down to the state of our pavements. Apart from raising our voices on issues of world dimensions our power to act at parish level is limited. But throughout the Borough there has been tremendous community support for the for recycling scheme - something we can all participate in and which saves valuable landscape areas from becoming rubbish dumps and saves finite resources by reclaiming readily recyclable material such as glass, metal, paper, some plastics and even garden waste! The over 40% recycling figure – the highest in the North West – shows what community effort can achieve.

However what concerns many is the daily confrontation with litter, discarded carelessly and costing us thousands of pounds in extra street cleaning. Older members of the community may well remember the slogan ‘take your litter home with you’. Now with so much more extra packaging on everything, there is more to drop and fewer it seems who put it in a litter bin. Most of us will at some time have witnessed litter being dropped in the street and even thrown from car windows – as though a tidy car was more important than keeping the village on route litter free.

The really sad thing is that most people don’t drop litter, it’s the few who don’t seem to care who have a

disproportionate effect on our streets and play areas. Most of us don’t like paying more than we have to, even for good local council services, still less the extra costs to clear up after the thoughtless few.

There are some residents who have organised voluntary litter picking groups and we should all be very grateful to them. But it doesn’t seem to matter how often the street sweeper comes around or the volunteers go out, the army of litter dumpers seemingly oblivious to most people’s desire for a clean and tidy village are soon back carpeting our streets and grass areas with their rubbish. Some of it of course is dangerous like the broken glass we find regularly on the play areas.

Now that we have funded our own special Community Police Officer [shared with Moulton] we may have a new weapon to use. They have already been proactive on the anti-social behaviour front and we do have fines for dropping litter and of course dog fouling.

In the meantime the majority of you who do ‘take their litter home’ or use the litter bins and the volunteers who valiantly go out picking other peoples litter up, keep up the good work. And to the minority – please be more responsible and help the rest of us to keep Davenham tidy!

Cllr Arthur Wood

“I’ll only be a minute”

Inconsiderate parking is a big annoyance to many people in Davenham and Kingsmead. Richard, our PCSO has approached a number of people who have parked on the kerb, outside a shop, right on a road junction, and on crossing areas and the usual response has been that the driver will ‘only be a minute’ while they go into the Post Office or the Chemist etc. In reality the ‘minute’ often turns out to be half an hour or more. Here are a few helpful tips if you need to park in the busy areas:

- DO: park on the road**, not on the pavement or the verge.
- DO: park in the nearest available parking area**, some of these are owned by local businesses who are quite happy for people to park there, especially when they are closed.
- DON’T: park at or opposite road junctions** making it difficult for other drivers to manoeuvre



DON’T: park on the kerb. You may think this makes it easier for other road users but there have been lots of examples of cars parked on the pavement such that people in wheelchairs, or using shopping trolleys or buggies can’t get past without having to step into the road to get around the car!



DON’T: park blocking someone’s drive, it’s just totally unacceptable and they may need to get out in an emergency.



DON'T: park on the grass verges. It damages them and council tax funds have to be spent repairing them wasting everyone's money.

DON'T: park on the raised crossing areas (such as the one outside Davenham Post Office) these are intended for disabled access and as a crossing point for push chairs etc.



Oh yes, and if you can – WALK – walking to the shops is much cheaper and more productive than paying a large subscription to the local gym to spend half an hour on the treadmill every week! Besides that, it's good for your heart.

If you see examples of inconsiderate parking please send details or a 'photo with date, time and registration number to images@davenhampc.org.uk. They will be published on the website and noted by the PCSO.

Heavy Going at Laburnum Road Field

Several years ago Davenham Parish Council resolved to develop the facilities in Laburnum Road Field for the benefit of young people in the Parish. After much investigation and consideration as to how this project would be funded and carried out Groundwork Trust were appointed late in 2005 to manage the fundraising and implementation of the project on behalf of the Council.

Consultation was carried out with several organisations including the schools and youth groups and it was decided early in 2006 that there would be a number of elements to the development of the field. The most popular items from the consultations carried out with local residents were a toddlers' play area, a landscaped path around the field with seating, retention of the junior football pitch, a 'teen shelter' and a MUGA (multi use games area).

Over the last 12 months Groundwork have been working hard to raise funding for various elements of the project but as Davenham is not considered to be a 'deprived' area and funds have to be obtained in competition with other applicants, progress has been very slow.

Meanwhile a major obstacle has been uncovered which is the poor state of the field particularly as regards drainage. Any amount of wet weather rapidly turns parts of the field into a quagmire making football and other games impossible until the field dries out again. A detailed survey has been carried out and in order to put this right and make the field usable in any real way extensive works will need to be undertaken to drain the field properly before any development can take place. These works are likely to take

2 or 3 months and must be followed by several months for the field to 'settle' such that it may have to be closed for up to 9 months.

Before any of this can commence however we have to find the funds – around £70,000 – needed to carry out the necessary work, and even more unfortunately the application and 'assessment' period for this type of funding is also around 9 months. Effectively we are looking at 18 months or more before any real development work can take place at Laburnum Road field and this has been a source of great disappointment to the Council as we had expected to see the first elements of the improvements in place by this summer.

It is by no means certain that we will be able to obtain funding for the drainage work and if this turns out to be the case we will have to reassess what is to be done with the field as we would be unable to progress with its development without carrying out this fundamental preparatory work.

New Council – Going for Quality?

A brand new Council has just been elected for the Parish, and yes – there was actually an election, but only in Davenham Ward, and there is still one vacancy for the Kingsmead Ward which will be filled by co-option in the next month or so – **and we really do need a volunteer from Kingsmead to come forward for this!** The council has now reached one of the qualifications (80% elected members) to apply for 'Quality Council' status which will give it the capability of resolving a number of local issues without recourse to the principal authority and provide for increased accountability and visibility to the community. It will be able to deliver more local services and work in closer partnership with other organisations rather than just being able to express an opinion which may or may not be taken into consideration. In short gaining quality council status will allow us to do more things directly for the people of Davenham and Kingsmead rather than having to ask other organisations to do them.

Your Parish Councillors are:

Ben Coker (Chairman) Kingsmead Ward
John Curran (Vice Chairman) Davenham Ward
Susan Batten (K), Adrian Bridge (K), Chris Colclough (K), Steve Grzonkowski (D), John Hurst (D), David Ravenscroft (D), Brian Robinson (D), Arthur Wood (D).
There is a vacancy remaining for Kingsmead Ward. Contact details are shown on the back page.

Send us Your Views

You may think that some of the opinions expressed in this news sheet are controversial, you might agree or you might disagree strongly with what has been said. Please do write to us with your views because we want to hear them, even if it's only a few words. Your letters or articles will be published on the website and may be included in the next news sheet in the Autumn.

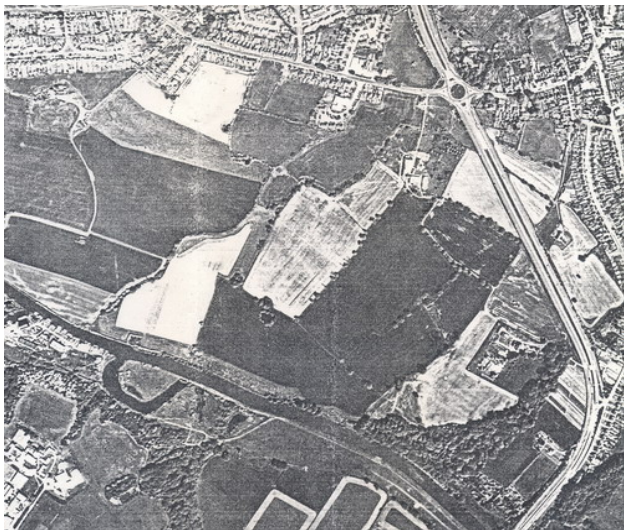
All correspondence should be sent to the Parish Clerk and should include the writer's name and address. Anonymous letters will be ignored!

Davenham on the Web – and on the Map

The Davenham Parish Council website at www.davenhampc.org.uk is now kept up to date on a regular basis with local news and information and includes pictures of litter, vandalism and bad parking sent in by residents. There are also lots of links and details about how to contact people and organisations. The website has details of all parish council meetings, the minutes of each meeting and reports that are made from time to time by council members. You can also read the PCSO's monthly report and see how the council spends the income from council tax.

We want to develop the website to include something about the history of the parish and would love to find a local history enthusiast to contribute to this as there seems to be very little information available about Davenham's past. Kingsmead's past is well described by the 1986 picture below! But joking aside we really are keen to expand our knowledge of the area.

Spot the difference!

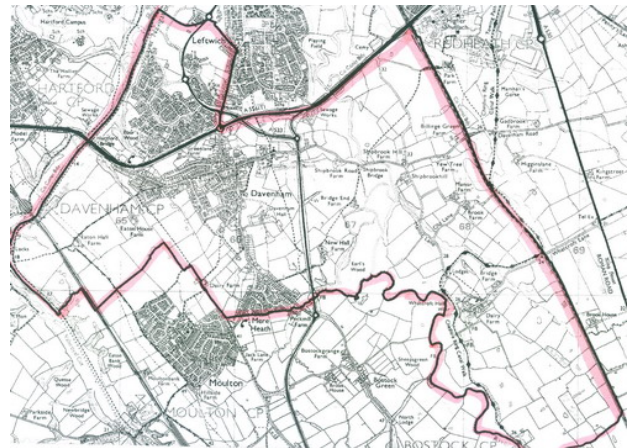


Kingsmead 1986



Kingsmead 2006 (Google)

If you can, look at Google maps (<http://local.google.co.uk>) and enter your postcode. You can now see up to date high definition satellite pictures of most of the parish taken last year. You can also look at these and other maps on the parish council website. There is a map of the parish boundary showing that the majority of the parish is rural agricultural land with a 'ribbon' of housing along London Road, Mere Bank at the Southern end and Kingsmead at the Northern, in all there are just over 5000 residences.



Davenham Parish Boundary

Remembering Village Businesses (Part 2)

Continuing in the historical vein we have had two interesting letters from former residents in response to David Ravenscroft's article in the last issue.

Harry Riding writes -

May I, as a native of Davenham, give you my memories.

Ramsbottom Butchers originally built and tenanted by Jack Hardman.

Village Co-Op originally built when the local Co-Operative Society were building many stores in the area. Opposite was **Booths** confectioners and bakers.

Mulliners. I recall the shop run as a haberdashers by Miss Buckey, later to become Mrs Robinson (mother of the late Harold Robinson). It was then taken over by Harry Griffiths, shoe shop proprietor. Harold Mulliner was employed by Harry Griffiths and when he retired Harold Mulliner took over.

Miss Maddocks. In the 1920s this block was taken over as a pram shop by Douglas Whitehead who later built the garage at the foot of Davenham Hill. Later Harry Griffiths was a tenant and then Geoff Darlington, painter.

Tuccoccini Restaurant. In the '20s this was a general grocery store owned by Bancrofts, later Gerrards.

Miss Eliff. Before her time it was owned by Whiteheads still selling sweets etc. Next door was Sam Gregory's Watch Repairers and later **Gershom Warburton**, greengrocer. There was also another sweet shop owned by Mrs Barlow in one of the terraced houses directly opposite the entrance to the boys' playground at the school.

Percival's Hartford Road. Originally, there was a very ancient shop owned by the Misses Dutton which was situated just after the main gateway of Supt. Richardson's house. Very little patronised, but kept going for some reason. Before Clifford Dean owned the shop it was run by Baileys. Gertie Davies took over from her mother, Mrs. Gibson.

Village Smithy operated by Pickerings. Next door was **Mottershaws**, plumbers and glaziers.

Janet Titchell writes from France –

My parents arrived in Davenham in 1937 and lived in Firths Fields until my mother died in 1985. It was most enjoyable to read through the list of businesses that existed over the years, all of them I remembered well. There are a few more that I would like to mention:

There was a cake shop by the Northwich bus stop in London Road (the owners came from Middlewich every day with their goods), next to this shop was a ladies' hairdresser, '**Kath**'.

Bowdens sweet shop in Church Street, next to Bert Price, took over the village Post Office when Miss Towers retired. The Post Office today is at Moore's the newsagents.

Mr & Mrs Gerrard owned the grocery store before Lunts. They were very well stocked with 'specialist goods' and they sold their own honey from their hives.

Stevensons garage was opposite the school in London Road doing car repairs and selling petrol.

Dales Dairy was in Hartford Road. They delivered milk and cream and also sold home made ice cream.

Mr Griffiths was the cobbler and village smithy. There was a shoe shop attached which I believe Mr & Mrs Mulliner took over and then they moved the shoe shop across the road to Mrs. Robinson's drapery shop, now the Davenham Bed & Breakfast.

The Post Office, run by Miss Towers, was sold to Bernard Poole as a TV and electrical shop, then it was sold on to Fay (nee Bairstow) as a gift shop.

Mrs Barlow in Hartford road ran a grocery and general store.

Platts had a bakery business as well as the shop, making their own bread, buns and cakes.

Whilst it isn't a business, a lady who was very dear to everyone, was Nurse Peggy Buckley, the village District Nurse.

It was fun to rethink back over the years! I believe the only businesses not to change are the Bull's Head and the Oddfellows Arms! Maybe the 'chip shop' too!

Parent & Toddler Group

Davenham Parent & Toddler Group runs 3 sessions per week – Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – 10.00 til 11.30am. Sara Wheater is now in overall charge but each day runs itself so to speak. All parents with children between 0 and 5 years are welcome to attend. There is currently no waiting list so please come and join us. There are plenty of toys to keep the children amused and we do craft activities too.

Tea, coffee, juice & biscuits are provided. We can have 30 members each day, and currently have 82 members over the 3 sessions. We have recently received a grant from Davenham Parish Council towards our new playground which is now in progress. The Probation Service is providing us with teams of labourers to clear the site before the soft rubber surface is applied. We are then going to purchase toys, climbing frame and a playhouse to finish it off. Barclays have also very kindly donated a large sum of money to the playground project.

You can find us at :

Davenham Methodist Church, Firths Fields (off Hartford Road).

For further information please call Sara on 334465.

Davenham Cricket Club

With the approach of the 2007 season, the club are looking for the 1st Team to improve on last year's 4th place finish in the Meller Braggins Cricket League, Division 1. Promotion to the Cheshire County League is the priority and to assist in this challenge the club will have an overseas player for the first time in their history. Aidan Baker has already brought a touch of class and commitment to the indoor nets and it is great to have him as a club member. Aidan will be passing on some coaching tips to the juniors once the season gets underway.

For senior players the club will field an Over 40's team in addition to the existing 1st XI, 2nd XI and Sunday teams.

The club's Junior section continues to grow in both numbers of players and success. The club have 11 qualified ECB coaches who between themselves look after the Under 21's, U18's and U17's youth teams and the U15's, U13's and U9's junior teams. All these teams have structured training sessions and play in competitive league and cup competitions. This year we will also run a team for Under 9's, if there is sufficient support and demand.

Training sessions for the Senior players start on Thursday 19 April and for the Junior members on Monday 16 April.

During the winter month's part of the clubhouse has been re-roofed and the outfield at the bottom end of the ground has been drained, levelled and extended. By early summer the club will also have completed the installation of a high spec. two-bay net facility which will be a great asset to improving overall training. The Committee also begun work on a long list of housekeeping improvements to the changing rooms, showers, kitchen, bar and lounge, including the installation of SKY TV with large screen projection and a pool table.

The during the cricket season the club is open every week end and most evenings during the week, and always welcomes new members of any age, whether it be to play cricket and just to enjoy the social facilities.

If you would like to join the club or like further information please contact any of the following:

Senior Cricket	Phil Sharples	01606 44936
Junior Cricket	Graham Cookson	01606 47716
Social Member	Stephen Greaves	01606 559647

Davenham Junior Football Club



We are looking for a manager/coach for our new under 7's team for next season, we currently have plenty of players for this team who will be moving up from our 'Davenham Dribblers' group but need someone to manager and coach the team who will play in next seasons Mid Cheshire Youth League. Training will be a one hour session, one evening a week and games will be played on Saturday mornings.

We are also looking to start up a new Davenham Dynamos under 10's team for next season and are looking for players and manager/coach. Again, training will be a one hour session, one evening a week and games will be played on Saturday mornings.

Finally we also are looking for a coach to help with next years Davenham Dynamos under 15s team. This is an established team who just need additional help with training and on match days. This team will play their matches on Sunday afternoons.

Experience or qualifications are not necessary and the club will provide lots of support and guidance for anyone who would like to take on any of these roles. The club can also provide training through FA coaching courses and also first aid and child protection courses.

If anyone in Davenham or the surrounding area is interested in coming involved in the club please contact club chairman, Chris Bailey on 01606 351985. More information of the club can be found on the club website at www.djfc.co.uk.

Kingsmead Picks up its Litter

A small group of volunteers have formed to pick litter on Kingsmead. We have had four group picks so far and collected over 60 bags of rubbish. We mainly work on the main roads through the estate and the play areas. We are also targeting "Grot-spots" such as around the substations and the bridges near the streams. Picking sticks, gloves, bags and high visibility tabards are provided so we are safe and we don't get too messy. We meet near the Kingfisher pub at 10.30 am, new volunteers are always welcome. **The next group picks are planned for Sunday 3 June and Saturday 30 June.**

Trevor Johnson

Do You Have a Plan?

The Parish Council is in the 'front line' of the review process when residents submit applications for planning permission for changes to their properties. We receive copies of all submissions and these are considered by a sub group of the council one of whom happens to be a professional architect.

Unfortunately for the applicants we have had to reject or object strongly to a number of applications over the past year or so because they have been inappropriate in some way – 'extensions' that are larger than the original building, really badly designed 'carbuncles' (as the Prince of Wales would have put it) which would have had a detrimental effect on the character of the neighbourhood, designs that actually break the planning rules by overlooking, overshadowing or being too close to neighbouring properties, extensions to accommodation that don't allow sufficient additional parking space or emergency access, and other things such as the Kingsmead Square sign and some submissions for 'change of use' and business developments that would have been inappropriate.

We do try however to look sympathetically at every application and we can't object unless the planning rules are actually broken. However, quite often we have a big problem with the poor quality of the designs submitted and the lack of key details that need to be provided. Here are some pointers for a good planning application:

Make sure you show the whole property, not just the part that is being changed. Always provide clear 'before' and 'after' drawings so that we can clearly see the changes. Where there are adjoining properties they should be included on your plan drawings. Make sure you have made adequate provision for parking and access if you are extending the accommodation.

It always pays to engage the services of a professional designer or architect when you are making improvements to your property, don't rely on the builder or an untrained person to draw up the plans as this can cause significant delays in the process or lead to misunderstandings when your application is considered.

If your planning application is 'controversial' or you know that it has been objected to you can ask a Borough Councillor for it to be considered by the Borough Planning Committee rather than dealt with 'behind the scenes' by the planning officers. This will then give you an opportunity to speak for 3 minutes in support of your plan – remember of course that it also allows objectors to have their 3 minutes as well!

Members of the public are free to attend meetings of the VR Planning Committee as published on the Vale Royal website at www.valeroyal.gov.uk along with all current and past planning applications. If you are considering making complex or large changes to your property it would be well worth a visit to see what goes on.

Anti Social or just 'Behaviour'?

What is a 'yob'? The OED defines 'yob' as 'a rude and loutish young man' derived from the word 'boy' spelt backwards; but in truth a yob is just someone else's child (boy or girl) behaving in a way that causes disapproval or distress to another person. Young people (with a very small minority of exceptions) don't set out to behave in an anti-social way, in the vast majority of cases they don't intend to be intimidating or to cause offence. Older people may be disturbed by the way some younger people dress but the way they dress now is often less disturbing than previous generations - Teddy Boys, Mods & Rockers, Hippies, Punks, Goths, to name but a few who may now themselves be parents and grandparents frightened by the appearance of Chavs and Hoodies. Youths don't dress the way they do to antagonise people, they do it to feel comfortable with their peer group and to be different from their forbears.

As far as many of the 13 to 20 age group are concerned, Kingsmead and Davenham are a complete social wasteland, there is absolutely nothing for them to do. Yes, we do have Scouts and Guides and cadet forces and we do have a couple of sports clubs but these only cater for a few and don't in general have the facilities to take on more members. Also these are 'orthodox' activities – approved of by the older generation and as such don't appeal to many youths who want to be 'different'; so they gather in groups and socialise amongst themselves in places where they feel safe, outside in the playfields and around the shops. This is not 'riotous assembly' or 'illegal picketing' and there is no other law in this country against groups of people of any age gathering together in public. The fact that the activities in these gatherings get out of hand is not part of some malicious plan directed against local residents, it's just what happens when groups of youths get together and fool about. Yes they do cause damage and disturbance but not 'on purpose'.

Young people experiment with drugs, including alcohol, they always have, for centuries, and it is unlikely that any law to prevent it will be completely enforceable. Look what happened when prohibition was introduced in the United States. What can be enforced however is to eliminate the people who deal in narcotic substances and sell them to young people, this includes those misguided adults, including some parents, who persist in buying alcohol on behalf of those who are under-age – any evidence relating to this would be very useful to the PCSO who already has the power to confiscate alcohol from under 18s. Problems obviously arise when youngsters become affected by alcohol and other drugs but they don't set out to cause trouble when they get drunk, it just, unfortunately, happens.

We all have a responsibility to behave towards each other in a civilised way. One of the difficulties is that different groups, usually separated by age, have different understandings of what is meant by 'civilised'. Youngsters do believe that their behaviour towards each other is civilised but often don't understand that this is perceived

as 'savage' or more likely 'threatening' by other groups. What upsets one group of people is often met by the response "We weren't doing anything", showing a lack of appreciation of how different groups of people see their social environment. Trying to stop groups of youths 'behaving' as they do by remonstrating with them or attempting other preventative measures can be seen by them as actually participating in their 'game' – supporting their behavioural patterns and causing them to escalate the level of nuisance being caused as they engage in what they actually see as encouragement of their behaviour. The professionals at dealing with these issues, the Police and the Community Safety Wardens interact in a different, more low key, way (which is often seen by some residents as ineffectual) that attempts to defuse any high temperature situations and over a period of time teaches the young people to understand and integrate better with the community in which they are living.

If you do have a problem concerning groups of youths or individuals, call the Community Safety Wardens, inform the Police but resist the temptation to get involved other than by noting the time and recording descriptions of the people involved, where they were going, what they were doing etc. The authorities will deal with any actual offences being committed but as residents we need to do something about making provision for this age group to entertain themselves and be occupied in a more acceptable way.

Ben Coker

Contacts -

Emergencies: Danger to Life, Crime in progress – 999
Police Control Room – Disturbance in progress or threat of crime - **01606 48000** – there may be a queue but please wait – it will be worth it.

Police Information Line: Kingsmead 0845 458 6392, Davenham 0845 458 6391 – leave a message. It's important to pass on as much information as you can

Community Safety Wardens: nuisance youths, neighbours, vehicles, litter, graffiti – 01606 47642

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