# Milwich Ward Member Report to Parish Councils.

# For Members, Meetings and wider distribution.

# July 2022

Apologies everyone for the gap since my last news sheet. I have been to several PCs and local issues meetings in the meantime. I’ve also enjoyed the Jubilee Celebrations, the World Cheese Fair at the Showground, and last week I thoroughly enjoyed an afternoon at the Castle, watching the superb production of Romeo and Juliet in the sunshine. I’ve recovered from covid and helped the recovery of grandchildren from chicken pox! In no order I highlight a few things:

**The Planning Application for immigrant accommodation Beacon Building** is causing a great deal of community consternation. This government/Serco application for accommodation for 481 single male and female immigrants, is expected to go to Planning Committee on **Wednesday, 27th July, 6.30** at the Civic Offices (check that this date doesn’t change). I am allowed to speak for 5 minutes as ward member. Only ‘material planning considerations’ are allowed and mine have been published on the web as follows:

* Scale - the concentration of refugees in one place.
* Location – community concerns of risk of social tension.
* Pressure on public services - the capacity of local health, education, police and other support services.
* Permanent loss of the training support facilities at a time when learning and training provision is growing exponentially in Stafford - with the Learning Town ambitions, presence of three universities; international research of the new Health & Innovation Centre; invaluable expanding tertiary educational role of the town – we must not undermine its potential.
* The permission is applied for until 2029; having changed the use of the site what are the plans thereafter? This aspect would need strict conditions applied.

I thank all those people who have made representations to me and expanded on their arguments. I have remained in close contact with Theo Clarke, our MP. In my role this is uniquely a planning matter, Theo has expressed her concerns to the Secretary of State and had the Immigration Minister, Steve Foster, to Stafford to visit and discuss the suitability of the site.

**Local Plan next stage - Preferred options:** this important next stage in the new Local Plan process will go through the council and committees, then fromOctober to December will go out for public consultation. A few points in the meantime:

* We have objected to the South Staffs DC LP proposals to build 1192 dwellings north of Penkridge, on the Stafford fringe, around Bednall, near Wildwood.
* Here is a link to the latest Housing Monitor [Land for New Homes 2021](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Housing-Monitor-Land-for-New-Homes-2021) which includes Appendix 1 setting out housing sites on greenfield and brownfield land, together with information about the percentage of delivery on such lands in recent years (pages 11-12 and 16). Information on employment land sites is also available through the latest 2020/21 [Authority Monitoring Report](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Authority-Monitoring-Report-2021) (pages 16-18). The council also keeps a Register of Brownfield Land: [Brownfield Land Register | Stafford Borough Council (staffordbc.gov.uk)](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/brownfield-land-register).
* We have no plans to build in the Green Belt.
* In terms of affordable housing there is a target in the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 of 210 affordable homes per year. See the link to the latest 2020/21 [Authority Monitoring Report](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Authority-Monitoring-Report-2021) (pages 14-15) which sets out the delivery rates up to 31 March 2021.

I will keep in touch with PCs when the preferred options are published. There will be implications for the villages, either those wanting development or trying to curtail it.

**A message from the Community Foundation: Grants of up to “20k are available for organisations across Staffordshire supporting Mental Health.** Over **£900,000** has been made available to support organisations across the county of Staffordshire who are working to support adults suffering from issues related to mental health. The scheme is open, with a deadline for applications set for 12th August 2022. You could be eligible to apply for a grant between **£1,000** and **£20,000** via their website.

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| **For more information and to apply, please click** [**here**](https://ddlnk.net/1T5F-7X8N5-GODQJH-4UDJU6-1/c.aspx) |

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**Borough Rural Strategy** is due out next year. Some time ago we invited PCs to pull together a list of all known businesses, large and small, in their parishes. We didn’t get much response, but there may be more information available now as a result of parish surveys and Neighborhood plans. If you do have that information or would be prepared to put it together, do contact me. You may be surprised at how many businesses there are. Our overall rural enterprise buoyancy in the borough appears quite sound: rural industrial estates and business parks are 95% full, Stone and Eccleshall town centres are almost at capacity. Linked to this is our:

**Lifestyle Brochure for Businesses:** We have been working to create a Lifestyle Brochure for our existing and new businesses to have in their ‘tool kit’ to retain and recruit employees. A link you can use can be found here <https://indd.adobe.com/view/42eafe27-c6fc-4dfd-9997-ef252b81da90> The lifestyle brochure is an online digital booklet with links embedded to videos of the 3 town centres and the wider Borough. The brochure also appears at <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/working-in-the-borough>

Do pass this information through to businesses in your parishes.

**19th July - The Commonwealth Games Queen’s Baton Relay.**  I’m sure you are all aware that the Commonwealth Games Queen’s Baton Relay is coming to Stafford and Stone on the afternoon of **Tuesday 19 July**. We have a total of 19 baton bearers taking part in the relay, nominated by members of the public because of the great things they do, or have done, making our communities better places to live, work and visit.

To ensure the safety of the baton bearers, volunteer helpers, and supporters we have some essential road closures and diversions in place for a short period, and I hope you can help make residents aware of these. You can find more information from [Road Closures for Queen’s Baton Relay | Stafford Borough Council (staffordbc.gov.uk)](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/road-closures-queens-baton-relay) Do encourage as many people as possible to cheer those baton bearers along the route. In Stafford the relay will make its way from Stafford Castle just before 2pm and travel along Newport Road to Victoria Park. In Stone the baton will arrive at the Leisure Centre in Westbridge Park around 3.15pm, then be carried through the town and back up the High Street before returning to the Canoe Club. Updated timings from [www.staffordbc.gov.uk/queens-baton-relay](http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/queens-baton-relay)

**Shirehall Business Centre:** Small and start-up businesses looking for town centre office space on flexible tenancies, are urged to find out more about the new Enterprise Centre, housed in the Shire Hall in Stafford’s Market Square. A total of £1.6million was allocated to the project from the national Getting Building Fund. The County Council and Stafford Borough Council have also invested in the Centre. It is at the rear of the building which used to accommodate the town’s main library. Work on the £2million project is complete, ready for 21 businesses to occupy the units, offering office space, reception facilities, meeting areas, networking opportunities, and business support. The management will be based in the building and there will be out-of-hours security patrols. Shire Hall’s management team is particularly keen to attract digital companies and those who work in the sector of professional services. Any businesses wanting to find out more contact Susan Semple, [susan.semple@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:susan.semple@staffordshire.gov.uk) or 01785 226415.

**Cannock Chase AONB: We’ve had a useful visit from a contingent of senior national Defra staff from the Access, Landscapes, Peatland and Soil team.** This visit is part of a national and local endeavour to raise the wider public understanding and appreciation of the Chase and all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as internationally important landscapes and ecological environments; and to increase their funding. We took the team through the following:

* **Setting the scene –** getting to know the AONB and AONB team / key stakeholders and governance, National Landscape branding.
* **Managing land use change in the AONB, its setting and the wider landscape -** Housing development and pressure. Integrating land use targets for carbon sequestration and nature recovery.
* **Access and recreation -** Recreational pressures and consequences eg mountain biking and the Commonwealth Games. Changing perceptions and behaviours / inclusion and diversity. More open access.
* **AONB team and partner projects**

For your diary: the Cannock Chase Partnership AGM is on Tuesday 14th July at Rising Brook Community Church, Wolverhampton Road, Stafford from 10.00 – 12.00, if anyone is interested to attend, I can forward the agenda. We will be looking at grant opportunities for local communities, the new Farming in Protected Landscapes funding for landowners of all sizes within the curtilage of the Chase; the Annual Review of our work through last year; and planning issues.

**Defra Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund:** There is a significant amount of money available for the next three years, for valid farm and land-based projects, large and small, within the radius of the Chase.The link below details some projects that have taken place so far. More will be added as they are completed, so please do visit from time to time to see the projects as they progress and share it with anyone who you think may be interested in applying. Please visit the website here: [Farming in Protected Landscapes - Cannock Chase AONB (cannock-chase.co.uk)](https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/farming-in-protected-landscapes/)

**The Stafford Brooks Project:** this just launched £4.1m scheme, to enhance Stafford’s riverways and wildlife habitats, will create havens for wildlife to flourish, alleviate flooding and give residents in Stafford better access to their rivers and green spaces.It will target 24 locations alongside the rivers and streams of the town, improving habitats to enable wildlife numbers to grow and providing homes to a wider variety of species.National Highways is funding the scheme working in partnership with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT), Stafford Borough Council and the Environment Agency.

I attended the partnership launch this month and planting of a rare black poplar tree at land off Fairway, near the river Sow. This is one of the sites which will benefit. Other sites include the nature reserves Radford Meadows and Doxey Marshes, a Site of Special Scientific Interest that borders the M6. The project will also encompass Marston Brook, Pearl Brook, Kingston Brook, Rising Brook and many of the habitats close to the Rivers Sow and Penk.

One of the key objectives of the scheme is to extend, restore and create new habitats which could become home to a variety of wildlife including otter, wading birds such as lapwing and snipe and a range of amphibians.  The project will help create, restore and connect places for wildflowers, trees and wildlife, where the environment has been impacted by activities from previous road building. Natural solutions such as new wetlands and reed beds will help filter polluted run-off from roads. Improving access to the town’s rivers and green spaces will offer opportunities for people to connect to nature for their own health and wellbeing. Floodplains will be restored to increase their ability to store water when river and waterway levels rise, reducing the risk of flooding of nearby homes and businesses alleviating seasonal pressures felt across the town.

National Highways explained “We appreciate there has been some disruption while we upgraded the M6 but we are able to give something back to the community.” Not only will this project improve biodiversity and water quality, it will also help tackle the nature and climate crises as the improvements will increase carbon storage and reduce the risk of flooding. Restoring nature along our water corridors is going to help tackle the climate crisis, contribute greatly to nature recovery and will surely improve our physical and mental health. These plans are a great example of how we are working with knowledgeable partners across a range of environmental projects for the benefit of our communities.”

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| **Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment report (GTAA):** a new GTAA for Stafford Borough 2022 has been published on our website. This latest report will support the New Local Plan process and decision-making. Please see the links below:  [New Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040: Evidence Base Documents | Stafford Borough Council (staffordbc.gov.uk)](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/new-lp-2020-2040-evidence-base)  [Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment 2022 (staffordbc.gov.uk)](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cme/DocMan1/Planning%20Policy/New%20Stafford%20Borough%20Local%20Plan%202020-2040/Evidence%20Base%20Documents/Gypsy-and-Traveller-and-Travelling-Showperson-Accommodation-Assessment-2022.pdf) |

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