

YOUR VILLAGE NEEDS YOU

I have previously put in two articles requesting help from interested parties and also arranged a meeting with Bill Newman, the man with over-all responsibility for both Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. This is my final call for your help! I feel strongly about the future of, and for, this lovely village of ours BUT I'm just one of Walsham's residents, and an old one at that!! My greatest fear is that if nothing is done about putting together a Neighbourhood Plan, the villagers will have abdicated all rights to have any real say in its future.

In the past, planning has been handed down to communities by the Government and our local councils. Decisions have been made remotely. Parish Councils and communities have been little more than pressure groups. While certain aspects of planning will remain at District Council level, we have the opportunity to strongly influence where development in our parish should go and what it should look like. Moreover that plan will carry legal weight. Producing a plan represents a unique opportunity for the village. If there isn't a plan, there will be a presumption in favour of any development. We will have lost our voice!

Let's face it; by the time this plan is put together and enacted, my only interest may be in the plot I'm placed in in the cemetery, however there will be a lot of you folk younger than me, that it will impact upon!! If it doesn't get put together there may well be important ramifications for the sustainability of village life. Walsham needs to grow or else it will die or become a fossilised village! However, growth needs to be regulated and acceptable. Residents have very recently been voicing concerns about the sustainability of the infrastructure of the village – travel arrangements, cars, buses, highways; school numbers; surgery provision or lack of it; sewage and the limits of the sewage farm on the Badwell Road; protection of wildlife habitats; and last, but most definitely not least, our designation as a Primary Village but no longer with Primary Village facilities.

We need folk with local knowledge, specialist skills, and a wish to help to spread the word. Above all, we need local people to come forward to help to draft this plan. Putting it together is not a Parish Council responsibility, it is a whole community responsibility with over 20 representatives required to carry it forward in consultation with the village as a whole. We need householders, tenants, landowners, business representation, people who have spent their whole lives in the village, newcomers, in other words a real cross section of our local community. Without you, there may not be a plan or there may be one with which you disagree. **Use your voice, contribute or lose local control over local issues.**

YOUR VILLAGE NEEDS YOU to put your names forward to help to formulate this plan. I'm not prevaricating, it will mean a lot of work but if there are enough folk to share the load, it won't all fall on the shoulders of a few!! So far I have **eight** people who have definitely offered, three who would possibly be able to help, and a shortfall of ten or twelve more. If you can fit into the definitions given above, please, please, please get in touch .. give me your name, email, phone number, strengths or interests that can be tapped for the benefit of the village as a whole, now and for its future!!!

Maggie Barber, 259689.