Astley Parish Council – Parish Plan Update 2023

Survey Results

Background

In 2023, Astley Parish Council (APC) undertook a follow-up survey to that which, almost 10 years earlier, had formed the basis of the 2014 Astley Parish Community-Led Plan. It was anticipated that this fresh feedback from the Parish would identify (or reconfirm) the community's key concerns and help guide the Parish Council in selecting suitable priorities to include in Shropshire Council's updated Place Plan for Astley.

Survey Method

During June 2023, an information leaflet (see Appendix A) and a reply-paid questionnaire postcard (Appendix B) were delivered to each Household in the Parish. The deliveries were made largely by hand, thanks to Cllrs Kate Lloyd, Helen Mardell, Edward Bedell, Kate Sumner & David Williams, with a small number delivered by Royal Mail (to hard-to-reach properties).

Following on from the various topics reviewed in the leaflet, each Household was invited to select their four top Priorities for future Parish Council action, from the pre-printed list on the postcard, which also allowed for their own suggestion if they wished. The closing date for returning the postcard was 31 July 2023. Each postcard was furnished with a second-class stamp to enable its return by post to the Parish Clerk, c/o Shire Hall, Shrewsbury.

Analysis of Responses

A total of 86 completed questionnaires were returned, out of the 219 originally distributed, being a very creditable response rate of 39%. Many thanks to all who took the trouble to respond.

One recipient commented, regarding the leaflet: "Review of Astley Parish Plan - excellent! Thank you."

APC received many written-in comments and suggestions on the returned questionnaires, but the majority of those were, in fact, specific concerns relating to one of the generic categories on the pre-printed list. Those comments have therefore been counted against the relevant category in the table below.

Parish Priorities in rank order:

Ranking	Priorities Selected from the pre-printed list:	Number of respondents who chose:	Percentage of respondents who chose:
1=	**Major Roads - Safety and Maintenance**	**59**	**68.6%**
1=	**Minor Roads - Safety and Maintenance**	**59**	**68.6%**
3	**Open Countryside designation**	**58**	**67.4%**
4	Police / tackling crime & speeding	42	48.8%
5	Verges Footpaths & Stiles	34	39.5%
6	Tackling Litter	25	29.1%
7=	Conversions for local Housing needs	22	25.6%
7=	Drains / Flood Prevention	22	25.6%
9	Tackling Dog Mess	13	15.1%

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Road Safety and Maintenance matters have topped the ranking, with support for maintaining the Open Countryside designation of the Parish coming in close behind.

Despite a specific call for feedback, there were no health-related issues raised.

The written-in comments encompassed a significant number of road-related aspects as well as other disparate topics. APC's Parish Plan Update Working Group reviewed all the suggestions for relevance and actionability. This resulted in a number of immediate reports to Shropshire Council Highways, and other issues being raised with relevant organisations.

APC would like to remind readers that they can report local road maintenance issues directly to Shropshire Council through the "FixMyStreet" reporting tool at https://improvingyourroads.shropshire.gov.uk/ or contact the Parish Clerk for assistance.

The results and feedback from this survey will help shape Astley Parish Council's strategy over the coming years, initially guiding APC in updating Astley's entry in Shropshire Council's Place Plan. This Plan includes priorities for each and every Shropshire parish and is a key mechanism through which the Parish can seek support targetted at local issues. Road safety improvements and transport-related issues are likely to be key in APC's submission.

Appendix A

Astley Parish Plan – 2023 Review of Progress and Priorities

Leaflet, as distributed to Households in the Parish

Astley Parish Plan – 2023 Review of Progress and Priorities

Dear Resident(s),

It is almost 10 years since the residents of Astley Parish were consulted on their priorities for improving the local area, culminating in the publication of the 2014 Astley Parish Community-Led Plan, which you can find on our website at

http://www.astleyparish.org/community/astley-parish-12547/parish-plan/

The Plan identified numerous Actions, across 8 broad categories, which have guided your Parish Council in the intervening decade. A number of the Actions have been completed, whilst others are ongoing issues which remain for the foreseeable future. We thought now was a good time to remind you of what ***YOU SAID***, to let you know ***WHAT WE DID (or DO)*** and to ask you which ***CURRENT PRIORITES*** we should focus on, in collaboration with Shropshire Council and other local partner organisations.

Please take the time to look through this Review and let us know <u>your</u> household's priorities, by completing and returning the enclosed, reply-paid card.

We look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your support.

Astley Parish Council (APC)

Councillors: Kate Lloyd (Chairman), Helen Mardell (Vice-chair), Edward Bedell, Nik Sherwood, Stewart Robinson, David Williams.

1. LOCAL CONNECTIONS

YOU SAID: **An Astley Parish Newsletter should be produced regularly and information on fibre-optic broadband roll-out should be included.**

WHAT WE DID: We have regularly contributed to Astley Parish Matters, the bi-monthly newsletter produced since 2016 by a former APC member and delivered free-of-charge to households across the parish, publicising APC meetings, Church services, local events, broadband issues and other relevant information. We were sad to hear that the May/June'23 issue may be the last, unless a new volunteer steps in, and extend our thanks to Mr Nick Hall for his dedication over the past 7 years.

Broadband arrived in 2015 and is significantly improved and generally reliable.

2. TRAFFIC & ROAD SAFETY

YOU SAID: **Traffic speed, road safety and roads maintenance are key issues which APC should raise with Shropshire Council (SC), the Highways Agency and the Police. APC should also raise drainage/road flooding problems with the Highways Agency.**

WHAT WE DID: The A53 and A49 are regular agenda items. We involved our MP Daniel Kawczynski on "hot spots" resulting in our submission of a "site of community concern" which was submitted to SC Highways. We have taken, and continue to take, action on maintenance of road signs, visibility, verges, road safety and speeding, particularly listening to public concerns raised at meetings or by email. We work positively with our Shropshire Councillor, Lezley Picton on these matters.

Of late we have campaigned for further road safety measures along the A53. Our concerns have been acknowledged, a survey was undertaken and we are soon to be consulted on a draft scheme of works which SC will include in its Capital programme.

3. LOCAL TRANSPORT

YOU SAID: **APC should consider retaining the "Open Countryside" designation for the Parish, recognising the heavy reliance on private means of transport.**

WHAT WE DID: Astley retains its "Open Countryside" designation and Shropshire Council's Planning Policy CS5 sets out how new development in open countryside will be strictly controlled in accordance with national planning policies protecting the countryside and Green Belt. Details can be found in Shropshire Council's Core Strategy:

https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-planning/core-strategy-2006-2026/

YOU SAID: **APC should approach the Village Hall Committee, the landlord of the Dog in the Lane and the Parochial Church Council for their views on cycle parking at the respective venues.**

WHAT WE DID: The Village Hall has installed a cycle parking facility, but it was found to be impractical to include one in the limited space around the Church. The Dog in the Lane no longer operates as a public house.

4. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE & ACTIVITIES

YOU SAID: **APC should consider supporting the Church, Village Hall, and the Dog in the Lane Pub as community assets.**

WHAT WE DID: APC recognises that the Parochial Church Council and the Village Hall Committee (each constituted as an independent charity) manage important community hubs within the Parish, which APC seeks to support where appropriate. The Dog in the Lane Pub has recently ceased trading and APC carefully considered whether to seek its official listing as a "registered community asset". Advice was sought from the Shropshire Association of Local Councils and Shropshire Council, but we concluded that there would be no benefit in doing so, to either the owner/landlord or the wider community.

YOU SAID: **APC should seek to resolve a lack of communication about activities and amenities within the Parish and also encourage the organisation of local events.**

WHAT WE DID: Alongside the aforementioned newsletter, APC set up and manages the parish website www.astleyparish.org which carries details of APC meetings, Church services, Village Hall events and much more, with each organisation managing their own pages. APC also maintains four public Noticeboards around the Parish. APC makes no charge for publicising local amenities and encourages and supports events where possible. We also submit articles to the Hadnall & Astley News magazine.

YOU SAID: **APC should consider the viability of either a play area or a village green.**

WHAT WE DID: APC considered this but no land was or is available. Should this change, then set-up costs and ongoing maintenance would need to be explored.

5. CRIME, SAFETY & HEALTH

YOU SAID: **APC should publicise Neighbourhood Watch and Police contact information.**

WHAT WE DID: APC receives regular reports from the local police Community Support Officers at its meetings, has signed up to the Local Policing Charter and confirmed local policing priorities as tackling burglaries, rural crime and speeding. We have promoted the Neighbourhood Matters email alerts from West Mercia Police and also feed into local Neighbourhood Watch communications. In March 2023 we arranged for our local policing team to visit the Village Hall to provide information on Smart Water property-marking kits, which they successfully delivered to over 20 households.

Our local policing contacts currently include:

Safer Neighbourhood Team for Shrewsbury Rural East: shrewsburyRE.snt@westmercia.police.uk

Rural and Business Crime Officer for Shropshire graham.donaldson@westmercia.police.uk

YOU SAID: **You rated Emergency Services response times and local GP surgeries (in Clive, Severn Fields & Shawbury) very highly.**

IS THIS STILL THE CASE? APC receives very little feedback on local health services, but if you think we should know about an issue, then tell us via the "OTHER PRIORITY" box on the reply-paid card.

WHAT WE DO: APC has installed, and continues to manage, two defibrillators in the parish: one located on the outside wall of the Village Hall, the other on railings outside Interior Design Ceilings, adjacent to Sundorne House, in Bings Heath.

6. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

YOU SAID: **APC should note there is no great pressure amongst local people for additional, new housing, but some support for converting existing buildings, whilst retaining the "Open Countryside" designation.**

WHAT WE DID: APC has supported a local family in a "Build your own affordable home" project and noted a number of conversions providing additional residential accommodation in the Parish.

YOU ALSO SAID: **There should be a 4-5 year review of the Astley Parish Community-Led Plan.**

WHAT WE DID: The Community-Led Plan was compiled in 2013 and reviewed in 2017, when further concerns relating to the A53 were noted and incorporated into the Astley section of Shropshire Council's Place Plan. A major review of Place Plans will take place this year and your priorities for Astley can be put forward by completing and returning the reply-paid card.

7. ENVIRONMENT

YOU SAID: **APC should seek to maintain the rural integrity of the Parish ie. the peace, quiet and unspoilt nature of our countryside.**

WHAT WE DO: This ethos underpins our response to planning applications, our focus in the Local Policing Plan on reducing speeding and the urgent action which we take to minimise inappropriate traffic diversion through the village when the main highways are blocked.

YOU SAID: **Litter is a blot on our landscape and APC should facilitate a litter-picking initiative.**

WHAT WE DO: Shropshire Council and Highways England engage contractors to litterpick along the trunk roads, with SC's Street Scene team clearing litter along the minor roads. APC reports fly-tipping issues to SC and encourages local litter-picking initiatives where it is safe to do so.

YOU SAID: **People should be made aware of owners' responsibilities to clear up their dog's mess.**

WHAT WE DID: APC has posted Notices widely around the area and renewed these as necessary. Please let us know if this is still a significant problem.

YOU SAID: **APC should initiate a balanced dialogue between the largely non-agrarian rural community and those involved in local agricultural activities.**

WHAT WE DO: APC continues to liaise with local farmers when particular issues arise, recognising that large agricultural vehicles negotiating narrow lanes can cause concern for residents and other road users.

YOU SAID: **You want to see stiles, footpaths and grass verges maintained. APC should publicise its role in these matters.**

WHAT WE DO: APC reports repair and maintenance issues for stiles and footpaths to the Countryside Maintenance Team, Shropshire Council. Verges along major roads are maintained by the Highways Maintenance Team, those around the village are maintained by SC's Street Scene. APC has requested minimising use of weedkillers to promote wild flower growth.

YOU SAID: **APC should publicise its role in offering support to those affected by flooding.**

WHAT WE DO: Drains and gulley issues are an ongoing seasonal issue and are reported to Drainage and Flood Risk Services, Shropshire Council.

YOU SAID: **APC should note there is general support for suitably-located solar panels in the Parish, but no such support for wind turbines or mobile phone masts.**

WHAT WE DID: APC has noted a number of successful planning applications to install solar panels on or adjacent to local properties.

8. FOOTPATHS & BRIDLEWAYS

YOU SAID: **APC should publicise its role regarding footpaths and bridleways, perhaps publishing a leaflet showing rights of way, their classification and related information. APC could also encourage establishment of a local working group on footpath improvement and continue to support a footpath between Bings Heath and Astley.**

WHAT WE DID: Shropshire Council publish a comprehensive booklet on Rights of Way, a copy of which is available on our website www.astleyparish.org . When we are aware of stiles, gates and marker posts needing attention, these are reported to the Countryside Maintenance Team, SC who have acted promptly. We looked seriously into the footpath suggestion across the A53 but were told it would not be practical on safety grounds.

The Shropshire Way passes through our parish and there is also a network of other Rights of Way, which can be seen on the Definitive Map at:

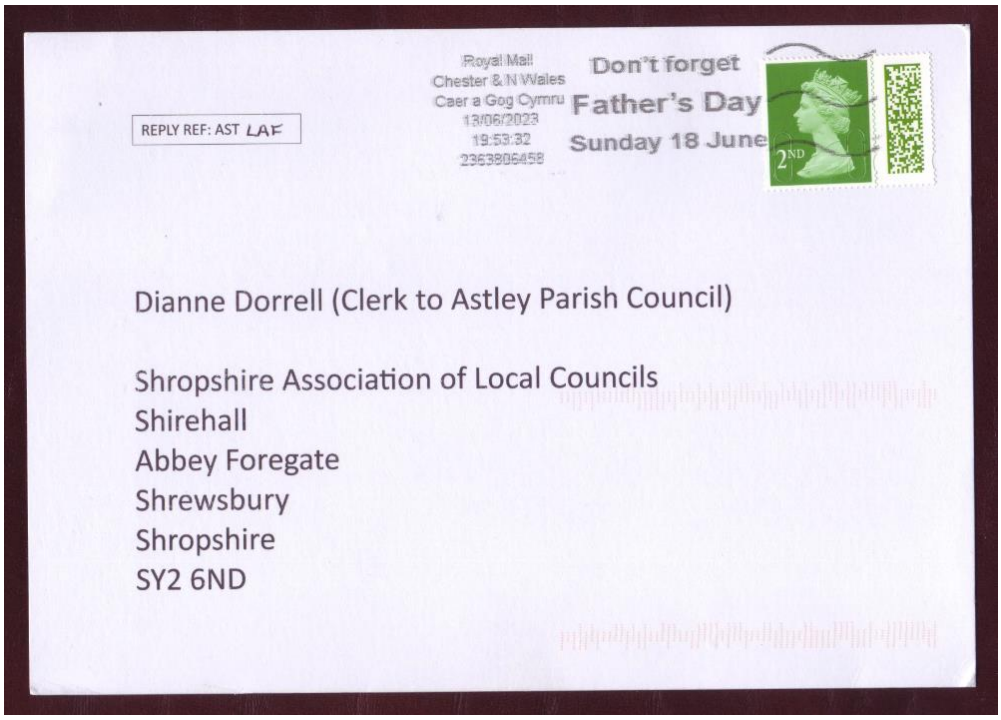
https://shropshire.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d6ab15037ca741589b262f27170843c1

Appendix B

Astley Parish Priorities for 2023 and beyond…

Questionnaire card, as distributed to households in the Parish

Questionnaire Card – address side (example of a returned card)



Questionnaire Card – survey questions

Have Your Say on Astley Parish Priorities for 2023 and beyond...

by completing this reply-paid questionnaire (one per household) and posting it back to us by **31 July 2023**. Your responses are anonymous.
Thank you very much for your participation. ***Astley Parish Council***

Please tick your household's FOUR MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES for Astley Parish, adding your own "Other Priority" to the list if you wish (this counts as one of your four choices).

- ☐ Road safety, including speeding and road maintenance, on the major highways (A49 & A53)
- ☐ Road safety, including speeding and road maintenance, on the minor roads and country lanes
- ☐ Maintaining the Open Countryside designation and upholding the peace, quiet and unspoilt nature of the rural parish
- ☐ Working with West Mercia Police to combat burglaries, rural crime and speeding
- ☐ Supporting sympathetic conversion of existing buildings to meet local housing needs
- ☐ Tackling litter around the parish
- ☐ Reducing dog mess around the parish
- ☐ Maintaining and improving the network of verges, footpaths and stiles around the parish
- ☐ Combatting flooding caused by inadequate or blocked drains

Other priority: