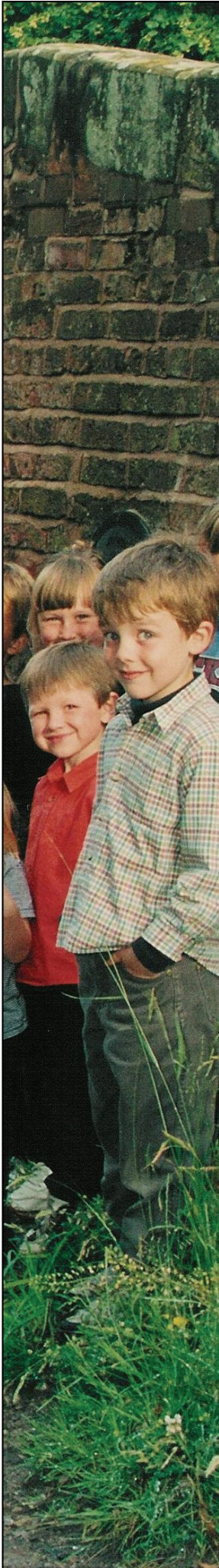


PROJECT COLTON

A vision for the
future of the parish



A community in the 21st Century



A Vision for the Future

Colton will continue to develop as a vibrant rural community, preserving and enhancing its heritage while supporting developments which are in proportion to, and consistent with, the size and character of the Parish.

The Parish will retain and improve its prized historical and cultural assets. It will promote its local organisations and encourage the creation of new ones; it will protect, and through an appropriate design statement, seek to improve the overall quality of its built environment, especially but not solely within the conservation area.

Planning for development will be conditioned by the key goals of maintaining the essentially rural nature of the Parish and strengthening its valued sense of community. The Parish will plan to maintain a balanced population and in particular to attract and retain young families through improvements to its infrastructure and the provision of affordable homes to meet identified need. It will pursue improvements to electronic means of communication, in support of both individuals and the rural economy.

Colton will conserve and improve its diverse natural environment and support biodiversity, focusing on those habitats which are in national decline. It will strive thereby to ensure that future generations can enjoy varied, healthy and thriving natural surroundings.

Colton will review and revise as necessary its vision and Parish Plan through an ongoing dialogue amongst parishioners and a continual monitoring of legislation and other external factors.



CHIMNEYS OF FORMER MANOR HOUSE OF LITTLE HAY.

Project Colton

A Vision for the Future of the Parish

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INTRODUCTION

What is a parish plan?

A parish plan is a community led planning exercise. National government and local authorities are keen for local communities to decide for themselves what needs doing in their own neighbourhoods and engage with other organisations in getting things done.

A parish plan sets out a shared vision for the community and aims/objectives for progressing towards the vision. This vision comes from the community and demonstrates to local authorities and agencies what the community wishes and how that can be achieved.

The process of completing a parish plan involves giving the whole community the opportunity to voice their opinion and have their input. This community engagement gives credibility to the plan and clear evidence to all agencies responsible for supplying services to the community of what the community wants and needs.



Colton Village Hall 2011

How has this plan been created?

The Parish Council decided to support the production of a parish plan and obtained a grant from the Community Council of Staffordshire. After publicity and a presentation in the Village Hall a steering group was formed (consisting of approximately 10 parishioners, including 4 parish councillors) which drove the process.

The steering group liaised with all village organisations in order to gain their engagement by providing opportunities for input into the planning process. Areas of focus were identified and various members of the steering group led the development of the plan for those areas.

A questionnaire was constructed and circulated around all 282 households in the parish. 350 replies were received from 172 households (61%). The responses were analysed and written plans drafted. These drafts were then presented to the parish through meetings, a drop in session and the Parish Council web site. Feedback on the drafts was then incorporated into the plan.

At all stages the Parish Council was kept informed of progress, had opportunities to comment on the content at the drafting stage and has adopted the plan as being the community's proposals.



Moreton Brook Bridge

Structure of this document

This document details the output from the planning process. During the planning process the steering group identified key areas of focus, each of which will be treated in this document:

- Heritage and culture
- Infrastructure, transport and communications
- The elderly and social care
- Young people and families
- Education and training
- Building and development
- The natural environment
- Business and employment

The output from the questionnaire was generally cut and dried, with few grey areas. Certain key themes emerged from the comprehensive survey of residents:

1. There is a strong sense of community (77% of responses to the questionnaire mentioned this unsolicited as one of the best things about living in Colton)
2. The rural nature of the parish is highly prized (65% of responses to the questionnaire mentioned this unsolicited as one of the best things about living in Colton.
3. Conservation of the community and environment (both natural and built) is a priority (74% think this is very important and 26% important).

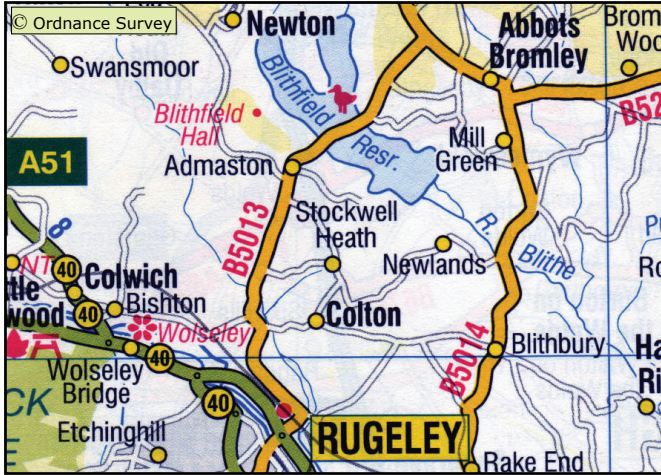
Given the value that residents have placed on them, these key themes have informed the approach to the body of the plan.

Supporting details to the plan are available on the Parish Council web site. Further information may be available upon application to the Parish Council.

This plan is a working document and subject to change due to circumstances e.g. legislation and other external factors.

COLTON

Geography



Colton to the North of Rugeley

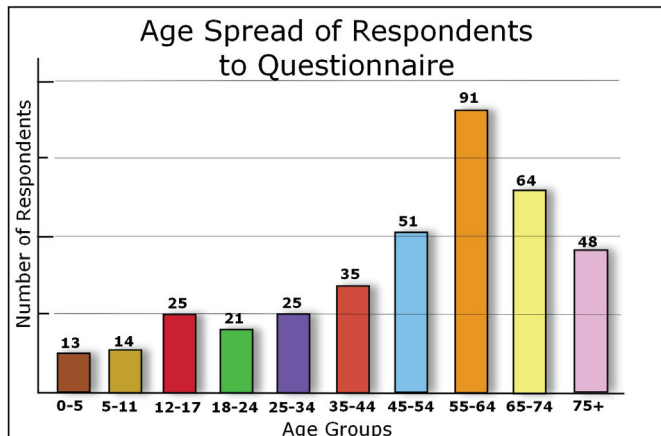
Colton is a rural parish located to the north of the River Trent from Rugeley. There is one main settlement (the "Village"), two hamlets (Stockwell Heath and around Trent Valley station) and several outlying dwellings, including a number of farms.

Colton falls within the boundaries of Lichfield District Council, but borders three other districts (Cannock Chase, Stafford and East Staffordshire) all of which are within the County of Stafford.

Population

In the 2001 census the records show that there were 702 people living in the parish in 279 households.

The responses to the questionnaire show the following age profile:



Age profile and numbers of respondents to questionnaire

This would suggest that there are a small number of families with children across all age ranges, but that the vast majority of the parishioners are late middle aged or elderly adults.

The questionnaire responses showed a noticeably older age profile than at the 2001 census. This would imply that the population of the parish is static and therefore ageing.

Parish organisations

There are a number of thriving groups and societies based in the parish whose members are not all parishioners.

The public buildings in the parish are:

- St. Mary's Church, the Parish Church now part of a joint benefice with Colwich, Blithfield and Abbots Bromley
- St. Mary's School, a church primary school, now in federation with Richard Crosse School, Kings Bromley
- Colton Village Hall, maintained by a charitable trust
- Three public houses (The Yorkshireman, The Greyhound and The Old Dun Cow)

The Parish Council maintains two burial grounds, located near the Church.

The Parochial Church Council maintains the grounds around the Church including Pedley's Croft which is regarded informally as a resource akin to a village green.

Colton Parish Lands Trust owns and rents out several parcels of land in the Parish for the benefit of Parishioners.

Other organisations operating in Colton include:

- The Produce Guild
- The History Society
- Women's Institute
- Friendship Club
- Ramblers
- Old Peoples Welfare Committee
- Neighbourhood Watch

A monthly magazine "Colton Parish News" is produced and distributed by volunteers, which is a much valued resource (95% of questionnaire responders use it to find out about parish activities) and contains contact details for most of the above organisations.

There are several parish websites:

- Parish Council: www.coltonpc.org.uk
- Church: www.colton-church.bizhat.com
- Village Hall: www.coltonvillagehall.org.uk
- History Society: www.coltonhistorysociety.org.uk

In addition to farms and public houses, there are other businesses operating within the parish, many located on the Trent Valley Industrial Estate or in converted farm buildings.

HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Background

Colton is fortunate in possessing a significant heritage of historic buildings, an attractive streetscape set in a conservation area and thriving social and cultural activities all of which contribute to the valued sense of community.

Although Colton's layout is based on that of the linear medieval village, it has changed and developed over time, most noticeably in the late twentieth century, with the decline of agricultural employment – there were 13 owner-occupied farms in the parish in 1901 – and the disappearance of associated craftsmen such as wheelwrights and carpenters. The 1960's saw the demolition of old cottages, the erection of new houses and the introduction of street-lighting. The History Society has documented this rich heritage, initiated an archaeological survey of the medieval parish and continues to reveal aspects of Colton's past. The results of the questionnaire make it clear that parishioners wish to see further development constrained by the desire to conserve the best from the past and to maintain a vibrant rural community.



Bellamour Way at the heart of the Conservation Area

Colton is an attractive village, with a conservation area established in 1967 which protects some 15.5 hectares of land running from the Moreton Brook Bridge along Bellamour Way and into the bottom part of Hollow Lane. The Parish has a number of listed buildings and other buildings of historical significance. The parish church was built in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century; it was substantially rebuilt in 1851, but retains parts of the Early English church. There is a fine residential dwelling built in the early eighteenth century in the Queen Anne style (Colton House). Manor Farm, built circa 1848, replaced a timber-framed Elizabethan manor house that stood on the site of one of the manors recorded in the Domesday Book: the listed chimneys of the old house still stand in the grounds today. Other listed properties within the Parish include Malthouse Farm in the centre of the village and Boughey Hall Farm. In the vicinity of the church is the village school, built in 1862. The Parish also retains a number of eighteenth and nineteenth century cottages in vernacular style.

This heterogeneous character provides an attractive built environment that reflects continuity over a long period and development by slow replacement and improvement, rather than large-scale revolutionary change.



Malthouse Farm Grade II Listed property

Respondents to the questionnaire expressed an overwhelming desire to protect and improve the Parish (189 responses judged this to be very important, 66 important and only one not important). Similar numbers (194 very important, 51 important) believed that protection of the parish environment, including the existing conservation area, should be reviewed. These two findings strongly indicate that a review should aim to maintain and enhance the character of the built environment, without relaxing protection.

This plan will be informed by and implemented in conjunction with the management plan developed by the Local Planning Authority from the Conservation Area Appraisal conducted in 2010/11. This appraisal identifies unique characteristics of the Colton conservation area and opportunities for their protection, as well as providing an overview of conservation of Colton's built heritage and proposals for its preservation and enhancement.

Besides the conservation area itself, consideration will be given to buildings and other heritage features lying outside the area, so that their unique character is preserved.

Following a desk-top survey by Dr John Hunt of Birmingham University, an archaeological excavation was conducted in September 2011 in the grounds of Bellamour Lodge. This dig revealed high-status medieval pottery and metal artefacts datable to the 14th century. The County Archaeologist concluded that the grounds are probably the site of a medieval manor house. The area is therefore a site of considerable historical significance and should be protected in any future planning considerations and from any other form of disturbance.

This plan also aims to promote and enhance the social and cultural life of the Parish. The village hall is the main meeting place for clubs, organisations and public social events, the voluntary aided village school, St Mary's, provides a focus for children and young families. The Church is the focal point for Anglican

worship in the Parish, and has a meeting room for hosting church groups, a Friday evening youth club meets in the main church building.



St Mary's Church

Additionally 152 respondents go outside the parish to pursue a hobby or interest, 157 to the theatre or cinema. Following further investigation of need, it may be possible to cater for some of this requirement within the parish. This could bring the added benefit of reducing car mileage.

Colton has a history of organising festivals, which have brought together people from across the Parish and the wider community. These have been participative events, with a wide range of activities. A festival is planned for 2013 and it is intended, as in the past, to engage wide support and participation.

**CORONATION DAY
PROGRAMME,**
Thursday, June 26th, 1902.

SERVICE IN CHURCH
AT 11 A.M.
(With Shortened Form of Authorised Service).

Children's Tea 3-15 p.m.

Knife & Fork Tea for Women
In the School, at 4 p.m.

Knife and Fork Tea for Men
In the School at 5 p.m.

N.B.— All are requested to bring their own Knives and Forks.

SPORTS

At Bellamour (by kind permission of Mrs. Horsfall), 5-45 p.m.
Entrance Only by the Garden Door in the Wall of Bellamour Hall.
No Competitor shall receive more than one First and Second Prize.
No Race shall be run unless Four persons at the least compete. The Committee reserve to themselves the right to make any alterations they may consider necessary.

Bonfire & Rockets on the Martlin Hill
With Singing of the NATIONAL ANTHEM, at 10 p.m.

N.B. Admission is strictly confined to Persons residing in the Parish to whom Tickets are issued.

A long tradition of festivals and celebrations

The village school is a key part of the fabric of the Parish. Its children take part in events and activities beyond the confines of the school itself. For example they contributed to exhibitions mounted by the History Society and to the burial of a time capsule in 2009, to be recovered after 100 years. An increase in such involvement will be actively sought and encouraged. The 2013 festival will be one focal point for this.

The role of new technology in the social and cultural life of parishioners will become increasingly important (see Infrastructure section). 180 adult respondents in the survey declared that they use the internet for recreation and hobbies. Given the age profile of the parish and its lack of facilities and transport, the use of the internet to promote and plan parish events and activities will be developed and supported.

The survey revealed no major demand for particular new organisations. Experience, such as that of the History Society, suggests that a small number of keen and committed people can engage the enthusiasm of like-minded others and by this means create new societies. The formation of new groups and activities should be fostered and interaction and shared learning between groups and societies facilitated, to the benefit of the social and cultural life of the Parish. Such a policy could contribute significantly to social cohesion.

Aims

1. Conserve and enhance Colton's heritage assets, including landscape features outside the conservation area, prized for their historical, architectural, social, aesthetic, recreational and spiritual value.
2. Protect the conservation area.
3. Conserve buildings of heritage value outside the designated conservation area.
4. Monitor Colton's heritage assets on a regular basis, in collaboration with the Local Planning Authority, and make recommendations as necessary.
5. Further develop activities and interests taking place within the Parish, support new and existing groups and organisations, encouraging shared learning between them.
6. Support the 2013 Colton Festival, and any that may be planned subsequently, as a catalyst for strengthening community cohesion.
7. Promote increased involvement of the School in the life of the community and the community in the life and work of the School.
8. Further develop the use of the internet in support of activities and communication within the Parish.

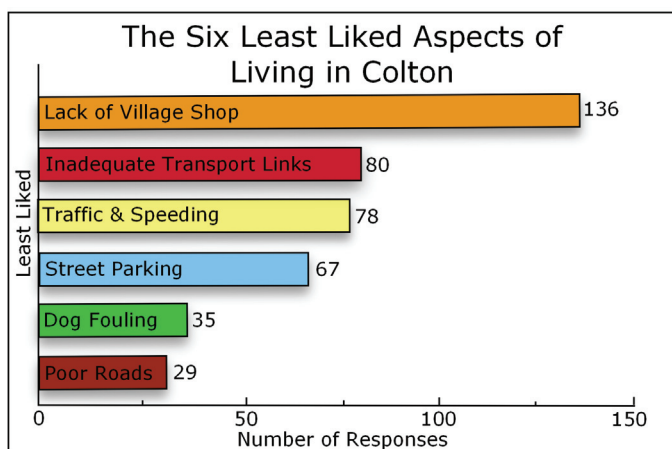
INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Background

Lichfield District Council, in its Rural Settlement Sustainability Study (October 2007, revised 2011) judged Colton to be an unsustainable settlement. This means that it lacks key services and facilities. Indeed Colton looks to larger neighbouring towns such as Rugeley, Lichfield and Stafford for shopping, post-primary education, transport connectivity and a whole range of public and private services provision. While the Parish has three pubs and has retained a doorstep milk delivery service, it has no shop or post office, no surgery or clinic and little public transport other than a shoppers' minibus making one return journey a day to Rugeley and train services at Rugeley Trent Valley railway station.

Consequently, Coltonians frequently travel outside the Parish by car to avail themselves of most facilities. 134 respondents to the survey (40% of adult respondents) use their car to go to work, 262 to pursue leisure, sport or social interests. 227 respondents shop regularly in Rugeley, while they and others also travel to Lichfield and Stafford for the same purpose. Car journeys to destinations outside the Parish are therefore frequent relative to more sustainable areas.

Given the residents' desire to retain the advantages of a small rural community and the economic implications of investing for a small population, it is unrealistic to propose a major development of the infrastructure. It is possible nevertheless to envisage improvements which would benefit the Parish, based on responses to the questionnaire and on learning from the experience of other small communities.



When asked what they least liked, the six most important issues were.

1. No Village Shop. 2. Poor Transport Links. 3. Traffic & Speeding. 4. Street Parking. 5. Dog Fouling 6. Poor Roads

One of the issues that respondents to the survey highlighted as problematic was the lack of a shop. The absence of this facility was highlighted not only by adults, but notably also by children and young people (see section Young People and Families). The former village shop closed for economic reasons over fifteen years ago and an options appraisal and feasibility study would be required to determine whether the opening of a shop would be successful in economic terms, leaving aside the undoubted social benefits. The establishment of a "shop" in conventional terms may not be the only option possible. Creative solutions adopted in other communities, such as a part-time facility in a location such as a village hall, or promoting a communal form of internet shopping, could be considered. Research to this end will be encouraged.



The Greyhound Public House

In respect of Colton's roads and pavements, 109 respondents complained about the maintenance of roads, 66 about pavement problems. A small number complained about rubbish being deposited in the proximity of roadways. These issues are the responsibility of the County Council and Lichfield District Council. There is a County Council system raising issues related to roads and footpaths. Similarly issues relating to the depositing of rubbish can be notified to Lichfield District Council. The Parish Council can lend its weight in the case of persistent problems.



A majority of respondents (128) were dissatisfied with provision transport facilities, though 104 were satisfied. As the age profile of the Parish is weighted towards older age-bands, solutions can be sought to issues of mobility by seeking the sharing of resources such as a minibus, a voluntary service based on private cars delivering medicines or the

securing of a route through Colton of free bus services that new supermarket provision may bring. Inventive answers to transport problems need not rely on costly, and probably uneconomic, conventional public transport.

The layout of the village, not designed for modern vehicles, is reflected in a number of concerns about traffic and parking. 116 respondents identified a problem with parking outside the school (early mornings and mid-afternoons) while 150 respondents were dissatisfied with the parking of cars on High Street. The former arises when children are being dropped off and picked up. This certainly causes an obstruction, but it could be argued that it causes traffic to slow down appropriately and there is no record of accidents in recent decades. A recent risk assessment has concluded that there is no immediate need for action, but the situation should be monitored. The problem on High Street is particularly intractable given the lack of garage space and driveways for houses on the lower western side and the narrowness of the street. A ban on parking is impractical, so unless an agreement could be reached between residents and the local authority to create driveways to certain properties, the problem may not be solvable in the foreseeable future.



Traffic and parking concerns

One hundred and fifty one respondents perceived a regular problem with traffic speeds. There is a 30 mph speed restriction within parts of the village. Perceptions of speed are subjective especially on narrow and/or windy roads and in relation to large vehicles such as tractors and other farm machinery. Objective evidence is required to determine the basis for concerns over speed (whether it is drivers breaking speed limits or the limits themselves not reflecting road conditions), before any action can be taken by the appropriate authorities. The Parish Council monitors concerns and pursues any evidence on this matter, bringing it to the attention of the authorities.

One hundred and eighty two respondents, though broadly satisfied with the service provided by their local doctors' surgery, expressed a desire for provision within the Parish of surgery or clinic facilities. The feasibility of such an arrangement, possibly on a part-time basis and for minor health issues, should be explored with the local surgeries. Apart from health benefits and convenience, in-Parish provision would reduce the number of car journeys.

One hundred and thirty three respondents declared themselves satisfied with the speed of their internet service. There were 89 dissatisfied respondents, however. 192 respondents use the internet for social purposes, 180 for recreation and hobbies, 165 for shopping and 121 for work. This wide and varied use of the internet underlines its value. Colton is distant from the local telephone exchange and is stuck with old copper and aluminium cabling and a consequently very slow speed. Colton's rural community needs to benefit from the best communication resources available. The government's undertaking to spread fast internet to rural areas offers hope for improvement. Colton's voice should be made heard in the pursuit of resources in this field.

Colton's streets and pavements are a cause for dissatisfaction in respect of litter and untidiness. 66 respondents complained about this problem, which is in part one of education, in part related to cleaning operations.

Colton's small size, rural location and lack of facilities do not preclude planning for improvement. On the contrary, these very factors call for creative solutions to its infrastructure constraints. Wherever possible, grants from external sources, public or voluntary, should be sought to this end, as a form of inward investment into the Parish.

Aims

1. Examine the feasibility of providing basic shopping facilities within the Parish, including mobile facilities.
2. Seek inventive solutions to the lack of conventional public transport, reducing where possible the number of car journeys.
3. Monitor the speed of traffic in the Parish and the frequency and severity of accidents and lobby relevant authorities as necessary.
4. Explore establishing local health surgery/clinic provision.
5. Improve communication via new technologies, lobbying for early inclusion in national or regional initiatives.
6. Seek external grants that would allow improvements to Colton's infrastructure.
7. Encourage new and innovative ideas in response to Colton's infrastructure constraints, including solutions in conjunction with areas outside the Parish.



The Horn Dancers visit Colton Festival

THE ELDERLY AND SOCIAL CARE

Background

The 2001 national census showed that 17% of the population of the Parish were aged 65+. Of the adult respondents to the questionnaire 30% were over 65 years of age and 24% aged 55-65 years. Colton's demographic is thus weighted towards older age categories and is getting older. The needs of elderly people are therefore important, yet at the same time the plan must seek to maintain a balanced population, attracting younger adults, particularly young adults with children. Elderly people have particular needs, such as those related to access to services, healthcare and mobility.

The lack of a village shop was commented upon by 41% of the older age groups, with suggestions that there could be a volunteer-run shop in a location such as the village hall. This issue is addressed in the Infrastructure Transport and Communications section.

The availability of the local doctors surgeries was deemed satisfactory by 58% of older respondents, but 32% indicated a need for a Colton-based weekly surgery or clinic. As health issues for elderly people constitute a keener preoccupation than for the general population, and that preoccupation can be exacerbated for some by problems of mobility, the fact that almost a third of elderly respondents declared an interest in seeing a surgery/clinic facility within the Parish is significant. This matter has been referred to in respect of the wider population under Infrastructure Transport and Communications.

Likewise for use of the internet, almost a third of respondents were over 65. Anecdotal evidence in the Parish suggests that increasingly the elderly are using computer-based means of communication. Internet shopping will become increasingly important to the over 65's. For the current cohort of elderly people the need for help in getting to grips with the possibilities of new technology should be investigated. (Help, if required, may not necessarily be in the form of formal classes, but could comprise small self-help groups or one-to-one support.) The needs of elderly people should be borne in mind as attempts are made to upgrade Colton's broadband provision.

The questionnaire revealed no needs for housing specific to elderly people in the Parish. The Elizabeth Harland Almshouse Charity, which maintains four dwellings within the village, has had, each time there has been a vacancy in the last twenty years or so, only one applicant from the area of benefit (Colton and three adjacent rural parishes). The questionnaire provided no evidence in respect of demand for sheltered accommodation or other specialised forms of provision, and this requires testing in a housing needs survey.

The issue of burial facilities is of significance to age groups other than elderly people, but given that the availability of a burial ground is generally a more proximate concern of elderly persons, it is treated here. The questionnaire reminded parishioners that the existing burial ground is almost full and canvassed opinion on the desirability of establishing a new one. 104 respondents said they wished to be buried in a traditional grave, 92 wished their ashes to be interred in the Parish, with almost equal numbers declaring no wish for in-parish facilities. 208 parishioners favoured the designation of a new burial ground, 43 did not. A more recent assessment of the space available in the current burial ground has extended its expected life into the medium term, but the issue will need to be addressed within that time horizon, notwithstanding the significant financial and planning difficulties involved.

No salient issues emerge for elderly people which do not arise to a greater or lesser degree for other age groups. However, as Colton has a proportionately significant number of elderly and "rising elderly" people and their needs and interests will continue to be important in the foreseeable future, there are nevertheless questions that this plan will address.



Corn Plaiting - Old Traditions live on

Aims

1. Examine options and the feasibility of in-parish shopping facilities as referred to in the Infrastructure Transport and Communications section.
2. Explore the practicability of establishing surgery/clinic facilities within the Parish, as indicated in the Infrastructure Transport and Communications section.
3. Provide flexible means of support for elderly people (and others) in the use of new technologies.
4. Continue to investigate options and the feasibility of establishing a new burial ground in the medium term.



Oldham Cottages Almshouses

YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Background

The national census of 2001 showed 115 children under the age of 16 years in Colton: 16.5% of the total population. In the age categories 25-29 and 30-44 there were 23 and 153 people respectively, in combination 176: 25% of the population. These are significant proportions of Colton's demographic and the young adult groups, by definition, are the ones that experience the most difficulty in feeling involved in the community. 95 respondents to the survey stated that they do not participate in community activities owing to work. While children and young families necessarily overlap, attitudes, interests and life experiences within these categories differ markedly, so they will be considered separately.

Responses to the questionnaire from 5-11 year olds indicate that the village school acts as a catalyst for their involvement in activities within the Parish. The school, as noted in the Heritage and Culture section, contributes to wider community events. This is an aspect that could be further developed, as the school is one of the main focal points for meetings and informal exchanges within the parish; the former particularly for parents and guardians.

The majority of respondents between 5 and 15 years were disappointed with the lack of a shop in Colton, with a high proportion complaining of "nothing to do", no transport and a small peer group. The majority of respondents wished to see a shop, transport – but with no indication of what kind or at what times of day – and an extended play area.

The playground at the rear of the village hall is used regularly. The majority of the 11-15 year olds do not use the Friday youth club held in the church, though it is still well attended, albeit by a minority of the young people. Asked what facilities they would like to see in and around the village hall, this group identified sports areas and a skate park as the most popular. Activities in the village hall cater predominantly for the older population. Events such as a Halloween party would attract children and their parents, giving them a greater sense of investment in the hall and its facilities.

The majority of 11-16 year olds do not see themselves staying in Colton as adults, with 10 citing a lack of employment opportunities. These opinions reflect very strongly the issues of unsustainable facilities discussed in the Infrastructure Transport and Communications section.

Adults up to the age of 44 also highlighted the desire for a shop. Parents too appreciate the playground, which acts as a place not only of leisure for the young, but also as a meeting point for parents. The future of the playground is therefore important and plans for its maintenance and development should be drawn up.

The majority of respondents leave Colton to follow a hobby or interest. The provision of some of these activities within the Parish should be investigated. A key issue may well be timing, the choice of hour or days of the week, e.g. weekends. Further research should include dialogue with potential users and an exploration of the resources required.

The majority of respondents in the age categories 25-44 wish to see childcare services within the Parish and childcare facilities in school holiday time. Currently people travel outside Colton for these services. Interested groups will be encouraged to undertake the requisite research into the potential for establishing such facilities within Colton. Benefits from in-parish provision would comprise greater convenience, reduction of car miles and the potential for income generation for the Parish from neighbouring communities.

The limited involvement of the adult groups in community life is compounded by their poor knowledge of local government, the Parish Council included. This must limit their understanding of possibilities for communal action and its resourcing. This issue will become even more important if the present government's proposals to devolve more responsibility to local communities are implemented. The Parish Council could consider how it might facilitate appropriate learning in this area and foster greater participation in the life of the local community.

Both the children and the young adult groups express a strong sense of unmet need. While some no doubt see the village as a dormitory location, or cannot easily participate for work-related reasons, responses to the survey do not indicate apathy, but a need for better provision.

Aims

1. Develop greater liaison and co-operation between the school and the wider community, to promote shared community-based activities.
2. Respond to the desire of both children and young adults for a shopping facility within the parish (see Infrastructure Transport and Communications section).
3. Maintain and develop the playground as a community resource.
4. Improve provision at the village hall in relation to 11-15 year olds, with particular reference to the playground and the playing field.
5. Plan events, particularly in the village hall, to attract young children and parents.
6. Increase provision in the Parish for the leisure interests of young adults.
7. Investigate the feasibility of establishing childcare facilities in Colton.
8. Plan the education of parishioners on the workings of local government.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Background

The importance of the village school, St Mary's, was highlighted in the Heritage and Culture section. School availability was an important factor to 30 respondents to the survey who had moved into Colton. Of those completing the survey who had moved to Colton, 34 stated that the available primary education was an important factor in their decision to move into the Parish. The overall figure for all residents was 57, though the wording of the relevant question leaves some room for interpretation. The corresponding figure for secondary education was 20, with the same caveat about interpretation.



St Mary's School circa 1885

Thirty nine adult respondents mentioned the school as something they liked about living within the Parish, likewise 9 young people. Education/schools had no mention in the things that anyone disliked or wanted to change.

From these results it might appear that there is greater satisfaction with primary school provision than with secondary. However, the overall number of secondary age children within the Parish is small, and there is evidence that a number of children of secondary age (over 30%) have either found places out of catchment or are privately educated.



St Mary's School appears to be well liked and its recent OFSTED report (November 2009) was very favourable; its children are engaged in community activities. Notwithstanding these positive indicators its future cannot be taken for granted. This future will be all the more secure if the School continues to retain and increase support from parishioners; if it develops and strengthens its involvement with the wider Parish (see Heritage and Culture section); if any development of its physical assets (buildings, grounds etc.) is designed

in sympathy with the conservation area and are supported by the community; if housing provided in the Parish encourages families with young children to stay in or come to Colton, and above all if the school continues to provide a very good standard of primary education, attracting not only children from the Parish but also those from neighbouring communities.

All the above matters are largely in the hands of the School and the Parish. There are, though, external factors that could pose threats. Education is a function mainly residing with local education authorities, set within county councils. Changes of policy or attitudes towards rural schools, or policy on the securing of secondary places out of catchment, can change. While parish councils cannot override decisions at that level, they can influence them, especially if backed by strong community support. Colton's Parish Council and indeed all parishioners need to remain vigilant in this area to protect the interests of the local community.

There was almost no reference to adult education and training by respondents to the survey. Two people expressed an interest in computer training, and this issue has been mentioned in the context of developing communications within the Infrastructure Transport and Communications section. The Village Hall, as part of its mission, has a role in providing informal education. The History Society, the Friendship Club, the WI and other organisations which meet there, do this already. This role could expand following sufficient expression of need and, given the demographic of the Parish, the concept of the University of the Third Age could be relevant too.

Educational provision is important to the Parish. It only becomes highly contentious when access to good quality provision is perceived to be under threat. The Parish should not only remain watchful but positively support its local school, maintain access to good nearby secondary education and facilitate adult learning as requested by parishioners.

Aims

1. Support St Mary's School in its aim to provide an excellent primary education.
2. Promote the wider involvement of the school in community activities and vice versa, as indicated in the Heritage and Culture section.
3. Support any necessary developments of the physical assets of the School, ensuring that they are in sympathy with the conservation area.
4. Continue to attract children to the School from outside the Parish.
5. Ensure that access to good quality secondary education is maintained, and where possible improved.
6. Encourage the provision of informal adult education according to expressed need, including modern methods of communication.
7. Promote the needs and interests of parishioners in the area of education to the LEA and other significant external agencies.

BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

Background

Identified housing needs will feed into and be guided by Lichfield District Council's Local Plan.

Notwithstanding the remarkably stable population since medieval times, Colton's built environment and the surrounding countryside have not remained static. Each century has brought significant changes to the stock of housing, Colton's streetscapes and the Parish's landscapes. The most recent of these changes occurred in the 1960's with the demolition of old cottages and the building of new houses. The survey of the parish conducted in 2010 reveals the need to satisfy new demands, within the constraints of the physical and social characteristics of the parish and the key values of the parishioners.



Bellamour Way circa 1965

The questionnaire results identify a number of housing needs within the parish. In particular, there was a clear expression of need for market housing starter homes (111 responses), and for affordable housing, intermediate rent or buy, (108 responses). Significant, though less strong support was evidenced for affordable housing, social rented (76 responses), for market housing for elderly people (73 responses) and for market housing family homes (72 responses).



Martlin Cottages

Priorities for development within the time horizon of the current plan will therefore be market housing starter homes and affordable housing, intermediate rent or buy. These priorities reflect the need for the Parish to retain and attract young couples and young families in an area relatively more expensive than nearby areas, in order to maintain

a healthy demography and social structure. Permission to build a limited number of market homes for elderly people and for families can, by negotiation with developers, support the construction of social rented affordable housing.

Respondents expressed a clear preference for new development to take place within existing settlement limits rather than outside but adjacent to them, with more than twice the number of responses in favour of the former than the latter. Whenever possible, identified needs should be met within the current settlement limits before solutions are sought outside them, but given the very limited space available within the current boundary, potential adjacent sites need to be identified, in conjunction with landowners and potential developers and taking account of, but not being constrained by, Lichfield District Council's Strategic Land Availability Assessment.

Given the overwhelming appreciation by parishioners of their rural location and the strong community relationships within the Parish, and given also its current size and lack of transport, facilities and amenities, new development should be in proportion to the size and character of the village and the wider parish. Such a careful approach will ensure that the overriding value placed by residents on the rural environment and relationships are upheld.

The objectives identified above will be pursued following a housing needs survey conducted in conjunction with the Local Authority.



Bellamour Way circa 1965

Aims

1. Promote the maintenance of a strong, dynamic rural community by providing new, affordable homes for young couples and young families,
2. Provide a small number of market homes that will be attractive to families and elderly people.
3. Maintain the rural character and relationships valued by the residents.
4. Promote the full engagement by the community, including the Parish Council, in planning processes and policies that might affect the community.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Background

Colton has a varied and valuable natural environment, containing a number of different ecologies. It offers a landscape typical of the mid-Staffordshire lowlands, with small to medium-sized fields, mostly devoted to pasture but with some arable, bordered by old hedges dating from the time of enclosure - in some cases beyond to the medieval period - relieved by impressive specimens of native trees, especially oak, and by copses and small woods.

The presence of the River Trent, which forms the Parish boundary on the southern side, has given rise to wet meadowland rich in wildflower species native of old wet meadows, a habitat which, nationally, declined severely during the twentieth century and is now quite rare. These wet meadows also support a variety of birds and butterflies and other insects such as grasshoppers, so that the habitat overall offers a diverse ecosystem. The wetlands, together with the relatively unimproved verges and hedge banks along narrow rural lanes, create a varied flora making the parish significant in the flora of the county as a whole. Bird life too is varied and interesting, with barn owls, hobbies and kingfishers, amongst others, breeding in recent years. Most excitingly, grasshopper warblers have been heard singing in the rough grassland just to the south of the village.

Apart from the Trent, Colton is crossed by several watercourses, most notably the attractive, tree-lined Moreton Brook, and number of old drainage ditches. These add to the diversity of wildlife, from plants such as water crowfoot, watercress and water parsley, to fish (including brown trout), birds such as kingfisher and various waterfowl and amphibians such as the great crested newt. There is evidence of otters and throughout the Parish badgers are present in significant numbers.

The parish survey indicates massive support for protecting and enhancing the natural environment of the parish (282 respondents against two who disagreed), identifying it as important for the future of Colton. Similar numbers (253 to nine) agreed that Colton needed a plan for its natural environment, thus justifying the attention given to it within Project Colton.

Accordingly, the plan seeks to maintain and improve the richness and variety of Colton's flora and fauna, by protection and enhancement of habitats, promoting ecological diversity, recognising not only the parish's importance in terms of its natural history but also the potential of certain of its habitats for education and recreation. High levels of support (well over 200 responses in each case) were given for inclusion within the plan of woodlands and mature trees, shrubs and thickets, wetland meadows, pasture land and arable field edges, the river and watercourses, hedges and hedge banks and roadside verges. It may be inferred from this that respondents

recognise these individual habitats as important and understand the significance of them when considered as a whole in the maintenance of biological diversity.

Two hundred and one respondents, against 18, support the designation or creation of a local nature reserve within the parish.

Considering the landscape as a whole, consideration should be given to preserving features such as lines of sight and attractive areas such as the Martlin Hill and the Newlands.

Finally, in the context of the national and international debate about energy conservation, parishioners wishing to reduce their carbon impact and to use greener forms of energy should be directed towards sources of information and advice.

Aims

1. Maintain and improve the richness and variety of Colton's flora and fauna.
2. Promote collaboration between landowners and other interested persons and agencies in order to preserve and enhance habitats.
3. Raise political and financial support for activities and projects related to the natural environment.
4. Realise the educational and recreational potential of Colton's natural environment, especially for children and young people.
5. Protect the rare wetland habitat, together with other habitats and landscape features valued by the community.
6. Pursue the creation of a local nature reserve as a special contribution to the environmental heritage of the Parish.
7. Support the provision of information and advice to individuals and groups on energy conservation.



*Colton - History of a Staffordshire Village
book launch and exhibition
Colton Village Hall 2008*

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Background

Colton is perceived overwhelmingly, in terms of both its character and location, to be a rural village. Such a perception, however, belies the significant amount of business and industrial activity taking place within the Parish. This activity takes two forms: residents running or owning a business in the Parish and people owning or running a business based in commercial/industrial premises located in the Parish. The latter category includes units on the Rydal and Trent Valley Estates and at Parchfields Farm.

Nineteen residents responded under the business heading, identifying a total of 23 employees, the employers ranging from sole traders to a person employing 12 people.

Five businesses occupying commercial/industrial premises in Colton responded to a specific survey directed at commercial premises. They indicated the employment of 85 full-time and 6 part-time workers. The small number of responses in this category may be attributable to the possibility that, though located in the Parish for business purposes, those surveyed feel they have no direct engagement with the wider life of the community. Nevertheless, the responses under the two headings reveal the significance of this type of employment within the Parish.

No strong opinions emerged from the responses made by residents, since by and large positive and negative answers cancelled each other out. There was some evidence that planning regulations (7 responses) and planning decisions (6 responses) impact negatively on business activity, as do the difficulty in finding workers (4) and travel for workers (4), but the level of response does not permit any firm conclusions. In any event the present government's policy of promoting rural development and relaxing restrictive planning rules may have an effect on this issue.

No major issue came out of the responses made by those operating from business units. Three respondents, however, commented that 3G coverage is not good in Colton. This may be seen as reinforcing the need to improve communication via new technologies identified in the Infrastructure, Transport and Communications section.

Given the potential impact of businesses upon the rural parish, it would be helpful to improve communication with those running such enterprises to increase their sense of engagement with the community.

Aims

1. Support initiatives to secure faster broadband, improve mobile communications coverage and subsequent generations of new technology;
2. Improve communication between the Parish and businesses operating within it.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The aims articulated in the plan have been developed alongside the Parish Council who support them fully and have adopted the plan as an expression of the community's wishes. The Parish Council now plans to support facilitate and encourage the furtherance of these aims, given its resources.

The aims generally divide into two groups:

1. Expressions of wish about how government (of all levels) policy affects Colton
2. Identified community needs, the fulfilment of which require resources of time, money and enthusiasm

The Parish Council will support the plan by lobbying the appropriate level of government, supporting the initiatives of volunteers and expending its own resources.

Project Colton has a notional ten-year time horizon. During this period progress in achieving the aims of the plan will be monitored and regularly reviewed.

The plan will support new or existing groups interested in progressing the aims set out in the plan. These groups could be formal organisations, such as the History Society, Colton Ramblers, the WI or the Produce Guild, or informal ones such as the recently formed group (January 2011) promoting the establishment of a local nature reserve.

The Parish Council will establish a Project Colton Monitoring and Co-ordination Group ("MGC") to monitor progress and problems in implementing the plan and to facilitate communication between the interest groups and between these groups and the Parish Council. The MGC will submit a formal report annually to the Parish Council and advise it on progress and further actions as necessary.

The Parish Council will maintain general oversight of progress within the plan, receive the advice and recommendations of the interest groups and the MGC and review formally, following receipt of the annual report of the MGC, the achievement of aims and the completion of actions needed to give the plan effect. The Parish Council, on the basis of this review process, may commission addenda or amendments to the plan, to ensure that its provisions remain current. Any such changes will be communicated to the District Council, the County Council and any other relevant outside bodies.



Colton - a strong community

Acknowledgements

This plan has been made possible through the labours of a large number of volunteers from throughout the Parish and the support and advice of Colton Parish Council, Lichfield District Council and the Community Council of Staffordshire.

The Parishioners of Colton have been positively engaged throughout the process either directly (including the magnificent response to the questionnaire) or indirectly through parish organisations.

Particular thanks go to the members of the Steering Group:
Charles Hawley, Allan Lloyd, Paul Kilbourne, Ken Rider, Paul Waring, David and Dorothy Bradbury, Shirley Carter, Tony Winter, Shirley Barnett and Donna Maskery.

At various stages the Steering Group were supported by:
Sue Pope, Carole Richards, Paul Redmond, Ian Carter, George Crozier, Heather Kilbourne, Judy Winter, Lucy Hawley, Anna Kilbourne, Peter Jones and the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association.

Bill Brown has been most generous with his time and input into the design and format of this document and together with the Colton History Society for the pictorial content. An extremely big thanks is due to Bill for his help.

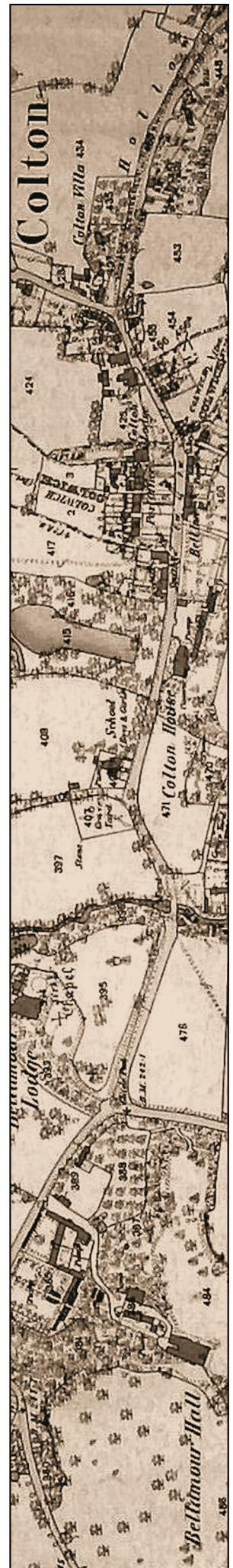
Lichfield District Council provided invaluable assistance particularly from Neil Cox, Clare Eggington and Debbie Boffin.

The Community Council of Staffordshire and Colton Parish Council have financed the exercise.

This plan is dedicated to the late Tony Hill, long time District and Parish Councillor, who played a major part in its inception and the early stages before he sadly passed away. If all parishioners contributed as much to their community as Tony did then the aims and objectives of this plan would have been achieved long ago.



*Tony Hill 2004
Chairman
Lichfield District Council
Councillor
Colton Parish Council*





Colton's future generation

