

The Edge Association

Annual General Meeting Friday 27 November 2009

Festival Hall, Talbot Road, Alderley Edge

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

1. This is my third annual report and it follows largely what I had to say in the annual newsletter distributed in September although at that time the Dobbies garden centre application for Nether Alderley was waiting in the wings.
2. As usual, I should like to begin by paying tribute to the tireless enthusiasm and hard work of the officers of the Association; Ian Standen, administrative secretary; Martin Sinker, plans secretary and Philip Forshaw, treasurer and vice chairman. All of their efforts are for the benefit of the community (without pay or expenses!) and the Association would be lost without them. In addition, the five meetings of the general committee since the last AGM have been well attended and there have been lively discussions on a number of topics at the cricket club. I should also like to thank Jo Walsh, one of our members, for arranging the printing of the annual newsletter this year and in 2008.
3. Since the last AGM the pace of development has slowed considerably and a number of high-cost projects have been apparently abandoned or delayed significantly. This has led to a marked deterioration in the appearance of some areas of the village. I have commented before on the extensive loss of gardens in many schemes which degrade the sylvan appearance of the Conservation Area and lead to increased drainage run-off and lower bird populations amongst other undesirable effects. The Association has not objected to sensible or modest schemes and we have had some success in securing refusals for inappropriate ones.
4. Until 2007 the officers of the Association held an annual meeting with the council's planning officers about matters of general concern rather than specific applications. Although these meetings were of some long standing it had become clear by the time of our public meeting last April that there was considerable dissatisfaction about the enforcement of rules and policies in many cases; so much so that we began to compile a dossier for future action if need be. Against this background we held a meeting with councillors MacRae and Keegan in March of this year and discussed at some length the draft planning policies which we had put together in the aftermath of the public meeting. On the whole the meeting was productive although we recognised the organisational and personnel disruption in the transition from Macclesfield BC to Cheshire East BC: we propose to repeat the exercise in the next six months and will lose no opportunity to stress that the wages and pensions of the officers are funded by the council-tax payers, ie ourselves! The council's response to the Dobbies application (see below) will be a litmus test of just how well the new arrangements are working.

5. We held our second annual spring clean in the village on Saturday 18 April 2009 and we were well represented at the public meeting held on 9 June to express concern about the proposed parking in Clifton Street and delivery arrangements once the adjacent Tesco is completed. As a result of the protests made, a revised arrangement is now in place whereby Tesco will be serviced from London Road at specified times rather than driving 35 foot lorries down Clifton Street and into Trafford Road. We were impressed by the enthusiasm and vigour of the local residents' group and hope to see many of them become members of the Association.
6. We had a successful formal dinner at the Edge Hotel on 16 October which was attended by over a hundred who enjoyed a splendid 1930s style dancing spectacular. Next year the dinner will be an informal occasion, hopefully at the cricket club and we are considering a Wednesday night – your views on this would be welcome. We will aim to have the newsletter out next year by July which suits the delivering scouts better and gives more notice of the dinner date.
7. Finally and most significantly, Dobbies. You will all have seen the excellent posters, leaflets and petitions which the residents in Nether Alderley have put together; they even have their own web-site “stopdobbies.com”. Members of the committee have attended several meetings with the Nether Alderley action group and we have encouraged everyone to write to object, outlining planning points which might be quoted. Martin Sinker has written a detailed letter to the East Cheshire planners which sets out the extensive objections with excellent clarity. Although the closing date for responses was originally 11 November it has been extended and so it is still not too late to write quoting the application number 09/3109M.
8. As a committee, we felt strongly that although in Nether Alderley, defeating the Dobbies scheme was crucial for the future well-being of the village, its shops and the wider environment. With this in mind we resolved to contribute £1,000 to the Nether Alderley fighting fund to help with the costs of a planning consultant. We may make further help available in cash or via the services of members if the application is refused and there is an appeal. To this end Ian Standen would be very grateful to hear from anyone with professional experience who is able to help.
9. Finally (and despite Advent Sunday's being over a week away) I should like to send early Christmas greetings to all of our many members and to those who read this report: may I also add the temporal message that to preserve our cherished village it is better to take action than to do nothing, better to write letters or join the committee than merely complain and better to set the younger generation the example of vigorous campaigning in a worthwhile cause than allow them to think that we do not care about their future.

Martin Steiger  
Chairman  
27 November 2009