

## Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Report May 2019.

First a recap: at the last Parish Meeting we had just completed our second village consultation. At the time it was expected that The White Lion was due for demolition, and the consultation was organised to determine the attitude of residents to the loss of both The White Lion and Brookfield Golf Club, which had also recently closed.

There was a strong response, which we subsequently used to complete our draft Neighbourhood Plan with the intention of proceeding to the consultation stage (regulation 14) as quickly as possible. Our draft was submitted to Cheshire East for review at the end of May, and was well received. However they advised that we should take advantage of the available grants to engage a consultant to finalise the details of the plan, and to complete the “Call For Sites” report – the call for sites having been made as part of the preparation for the second consultation.

Obtaining a grant took longer than expected, but the grant was finally approved in mid-August. We immediately engaged Cheshire Community Action (CCA) and met with their representative on September 6<sup>th</sup>. She subsequently reviewed our work and submitted a revised version of the plan for our approval in mid-October.

In the meantime the saga of the White Lion had moved on to the point where a successful rescue bid had been made, which removed the need to provide a new community hub building. Also Cheshire East had published their draft “Site Allocations and Development Policies Document” (SADPD) which proposes removing our settlement boundary and rendering the entire village “open countryside” for planning purposes.

In view of these changes we were advised by both CCA and Cheshire East that we should again use the grant system to obtain an independent closing report on the “Call For Sites” exercise. The final section of the Plan cannot be completed until this is available. The consultancy for this is AECOM, who are directly funded by government.

Again it took some time to obtain permission to engage with AECOM, and they finally started work at the end of November and visited the village on January 24<sup>th</sup>. They have yet to complete their report and the latest indication is that it will not be available for another month.

Once that is received, we will ask CCA to complete the plan, and it will be presented to the Parish Council for approval. If approved, it will then be submitted to Cheshire East to determine if the plan needs a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – Cheshire East will prepare a screening proposal and consult for six weeks with Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

If no SEA is required we can then publish the plan and hold a six-week public consultation – this is the Reg. 14 stage which we hope to reach in September.

After reviewing feedback and incorporating any necessary changes, a “basic conditions statement” will be prepared by CCA and submitted to an independent inspector. This checks to ensure the plan is in agreement with the strategic requirements of national and local plans.

The plan is then resubmitted to Cheshire East and if it meets regulations they then publicise it for a further six week consultation. They will then submit it for an independent inspection after which there will be a final referendum.

All this will take about a year, so hopefully in next year’s Parish Meeting we will be able to report that it is complete.

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