

# REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

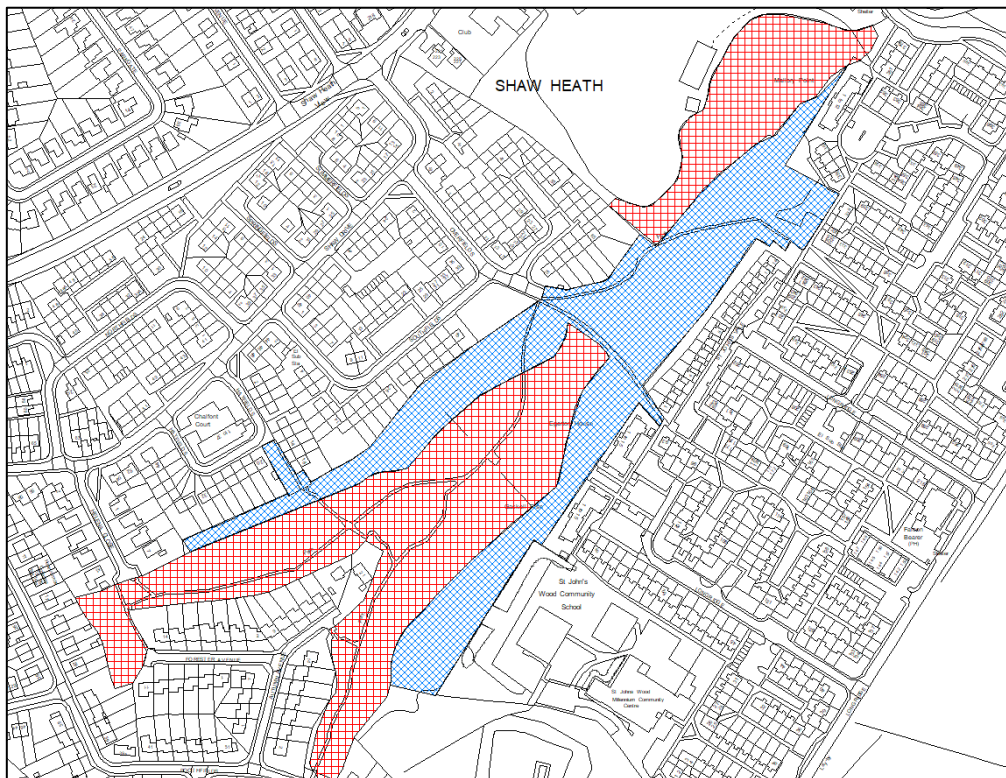
## FRIENDS OF ST JOHNS WOOD

Report Reference EN-20-07  
Meeting Date 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021  
Agenda Item 6  
Prepared by Town Clerk



### 1.0 BACKGROUND

St John's Wood is an area of natural woodland located between Longridge, Southfields and Boothfields; ownership of the woodland is split between Cheshire East Council and Great Places Housing Association.



*St John's Wood Ownership Plan – Cheshire East Council (red) and Great Places (blue)*

Historically there have been previous attempts to establish a Friends of St John's Wood community group but these have all fizzled out. The Town Council has appointed a representative to the group since 2014 but there has been no real group or activity in that time; the current representative is Cllr McCulloch.

In February, Cllr McCulloch hosted an open community meeting to discuss improving St John's Wood and forming a new friends group. Approximately 35 residents attended the meeting via Zoom or

Facebook. Attendees shared information on the history of the site and expressed varied desires of how to improve the space for the community. Subsequent to the meeting approximately 14 of the residents have expressed a keenness to serve on a Friends of St John's Wood committee.

## **2.0 TOWN COUNCIL SUPPORT**

The first year of a new organisation can be challenging and success is vital to ensuring its ongoing sustainability. To this end, it is suggested that the Town Council provides specific support to a new Friends of St John's Wood for the first year.

The specific support would be to help the organisation determine the most appropriate governance model (e.g. charity/unincorporated association etc), support the group in establishing itself, build effective partnership arrangements with Great Places and Cheshire East Council, help the group develop and consult on a site master plan and provide assistance in securing grant funding. It is suggested the council provides a free year of website hosting via its server.

The main aim of the support is to deliver a masterplan for the site to capture the community's ambitions for the space and develop an action plan to get there. It is possible that with strong governance, effective partnership arrangements and a supported masterplan that the group would be able to secure regular grant funding to help deliver the actions.

The support provided would principally be officer time through the Town Clerk assisting in organising the group. The intention is that it would taper off over the twelve months as the strength of the group builds and the aim will be to support the group in undertaking the majority of its work itself.

The committee will receive a report at each meeting on the progress the group is making.

## **3.0 DECISION REQUIRED**

The committee should consider supporting the establishment of a new Friends of St Johns Wood as outlined.