

# REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE REPORT AND 2024 ACTION PLAN



**Report Reference** PL-23-10  
**Meeting Date** 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
**Agenda Item** 12  
**Prepared by** Town Clerk

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

As part of the committee's role in overseeing the implementation of the council's strategic plan, this report provides an update on progress on delivering the current year action plan. A number of actions under this committee have slipped from original target dates due to conflicting priorities across other areas of the council's work.

The committee is also required to agree its action plan for the 2024/25 civic year.

## 2.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should

- a) Review the progress on implementing the agreed action plan to date (section three)
- b) Agree an action plan for 2024/25 (draft, section four)

### 3.0 PLANNING COMMITTEE ACTIONS REPORT 2023/24 MARCH 2024

A Ref	O Ref	Action	Lead Officer	Target Date	Status	Committee Update
PLA06	H3	Investigate the cost and process of conservation area designations for Cranford Avenue, Grove Park and Shaw Heath	Planning and Facilities Officer	25/09/2023	Complete	Cranford Avenue to be included within Town Centre area, committee agreed Grove Park should not be explored and that Shaw Heath be explored in two years' time.
PLA11	C9	Committee to consider the timing and budget requirements of a Neighbourhood Plan Review	Town Clerk	25/09/2023	Complete	Review to commence in 2027, reserve to be created to develop budget incrementally.
PLA01	H3	Conclude the review of the Heathfield Square Conservation Area and submit to CEC	Planning and Facilities Officer	30/09/2023	Started	Final draft received and awaiting final PFO review before submission to Cheshire East Council.
PLA02	H3	Conclude the review of the St John's Conservation Area and submit to CEC	Planning and Facilities Officer	30/09/2023	Started	Final draft received and awaiting final PFO review before submission to Cheshire East Council.
PLA03	H3	Conclude the review of the Cross Town Conservation Area and submit to CEC	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/10/2023	Started	Final draft received and awaiting final PFO review before submission to Cheshire East Council.
PLA11	E4	Agree lobbying for the protection of trees with Cheshire East Council and the government	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/10/2023	Started	Report tabled.
PLA04	H3	Conclude the review of the Town Centre Conservation Area and submit to CEC	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/12/2023	Started	CARWG reviewing final comments on draft to issue to consultant for final amendments.
PLA09	C9	Explore creation of a checklist for members to appraise applications against	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/12/2023		
PLA10	E4	Undertake a review of planning decisions for tree applications over the past twelve months to identify learning points from CEC Tree Officer reports	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/12/2023		

PLA12	H3	Implement a system to ensure the conservation area management plan objectives are considered when reviewing planning applications within said areas.	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/12/2023		
PLA05	H3	Agree the timetable for public consultation on the Heathfield Square, St John's, Town Centre and Cross Town reviews.	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/01/2024		Will be determined following submission to CEC.
PLA07	H4	Undertake a review of planning decisions for heritage assets over the past twelve months to identify learning points from CEC Planning Officer reports	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/03/2024		
PLA08	H4	Develop proposals for an updated Local List of Heritage Assets	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/03/2024		Due to conflicting priorities, this action will not be completed within the current year and will be rolled over to 2024/25.

## 4.0 DRAFT 2024 ACTION PLAN

The following objectives are assigned to the Planning Committee:

REF	Objective
H3*	Work with partners to implement the management plans and protect the town's Conservation Areas
H4*	Support the protection and retention of the town's built heritage
C9	Monitor the use of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan and undertake a formal review of policies
C10	Engage in all consultations on local planning policy
C11	Engage with developers to ensure that any development which takes place delivers the maximum community benefit
E4*	Work to protect the Town's trees

Those denoted with an asterisk are shared with another committee as fits committee responsibilities. Objectives are discussed further individually below, with some ideas for how the council could work to meet these objectives in the 2024/25 civic year.

### 2.1 H3 – CONSERVATION AREAS

*We have already commenced work to review the five Conservation Areas and create new management plans to protect and enhance them. We will work with Cheshire East Council and others to ensure these reviews are delivered and that the appraisals are embedded in the revised Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan.*

The Legh Road Conservation Area appraisal is currently out for formal consultation by Cheshire East Council. Once adopted it will form a material consideration for all planning applications within the conservation area. Draft appraisals for the Heathfield Square and St John's conservation areas have also been prepared and the consultant has commenced the work on the Town Centre and Cross Town reviews. These will be completed in the current financial year.

The St John's appraisal has identified the potential for a further conservation area for Cranford Avenue. The council has previously mooted the potential of Grove Park and Shaw Heath being designated as conservation areas too. A formal appraisal would need undertaking for each area which will require a budget in a future year; the council would also need to understand Cheshire East Council's commitment to creating new conservation areas.

Suggested activity for 2024/25:

- Secure the adoption of the submitted CAAMPs for Heathfield Square, Cross Town, St John's and Town Centre

### 2.2 H4 – PROTECTION AND RETENTION OF BUILT HERITAGE

*We will work to ensure Knutsford's built heritage is recorded and afforded the appropriate protections under the planning system whilst seeking to ensure any works to heritage assets are appropriate for the buildings and their settings in accordance with the Knutsford*

*Neighbourhood Plan. We will use the review of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan to identify how we can develop policy to support the appropriate re-use of historic buildings.*

The committee already places great importance on the preservation of historic buildings within the town and carefully reviews each application accordingly. The council has previously put forward various buildings for national listing (all but one were refused as not meeting the national significance tests). The Cheshire East Council local list of heritage assets is overdue a review and the Town Council could develop proposals for this. The review of the Neighbourhood Plan could also designate 'locally valued heritage assets'

Suggested activity for 2024/25:

No new activity is proposed, noting that the development of proposals for an updated Local List of Heritage Assets will be carried forward from the 2023/24 year.

### **2.3 C9 – MONITOR AND REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

*Our Neighbourhood Plan was approved by referendum in 2019 and covers the period until 2030. We will undertake a mid-point review to ensure Neighbourhood Plan policies and the Knutsford Design Guide are effective and meet the aspirations of the plan.*

Cheshire East Council is shortly commencing a review of the Local Plan Strategy. Upon its completion, a review of the neighbourhood plan can be programmed. Officers will monitor the programming of the LPS review to bring proposals for the neighbourhood plan review forward at the appropriate time.

Suggested activity for 2024/25:

No activity is proposed in this civic year, noting that a review will follow the local plan review.

### **2.4 C10 – ENGAGE IN ALL LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATIONS**

*The Town Council will use its experience of planning policy in practice in Knutsford and its role as a consultee on planning policy (both within Cheshire East and nationally) to seek to influence policy to address the concerns of the community.*

Suggested activity for 2024/25:

- Engage in the Cheshire East Council Local Plan review process

### **2.5 C11 – ENGAGEMENT WITH DEVELOPERS**

*We cannot prevent development taking place. However, we can work to ensure development complies with the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan in order to deliver high quality buildings and public areas. We will also work to ensure developments deliver as much wider community benefit as can be achieved.*

The committee has previously had success in influencing the final strategic development proposals for Tabley Park and Parkgate Village through meetings with developers. Three sites remain to be

secure planning consent. A meeting is being arranged with the Crown Estate for an update on their plans for their Manchester Road site.

No programmed activity is proposed for this objective, the council will continue to have meetings as deemed necessary, in accordance with its protocol on meetings with developers.

## **2.6 E4 – PROTECTING TREES**

*We will seek preservation orders for the most special trees in Knutsford which are currently not subject to formal protection, seek to influence national and local policy to increase protection of trees and oppose the loss of mature trees except where they present a safety issue or are dead, dying or diseased.*

This committee reviews all applications which are submitted for works to protected trees and trees within a conservation area and there have been issues where the borough council does not properly review all s211 notices for works to trees in conservation areas. It has also frustrated the committee that a planning authority cannot require replanting of trees under a s211 notice.

Suggested activity for 2024/25:

No programmed activity is proposed for this objective, under this committee.