

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE REPORT AND 2025 ACTION PLAN



Report Reference PL-24-05
Meeting Date 6th January 2025
Agenda Item 8
Prepared by Town Clerk

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. It is notable that a number of actions remain outstanding due to officer workloads and conflicting priorities, any actions uncompleted at the end of the civic year will be rolled over to the 2025/26 action plan¹.

The committee is also required to agree its action plan for the 2025/26 civic year.

2.0 DRAFT 2025/26 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 2025/26 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.

¹ Subject to any review as part of the planned strategic plan actions review.

The Conservation Area appraisals for Heathfield Square, Cross Town and St John's have been submitted to Cheshire East Council and are awaiting progression. The Town Centre Consultation is undergoing final revisions ahead of its submission to Cheshire East Council.

The Environment and Transport Committee (which has a remit for heritage) will be progressing resident guides to the conservation areas.

Suggested activity for 2025/26:

- Develop a reference guide for the Planning Committee for key aspects of the appraisals for use when reviewing planning applications

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.

Suggested activity for 2025/26:

None under this committee.

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.

The council has created a reserve to fund work on the Neighbourhood Plan in 2027/28, subject to a new local plan having been developed by then.

Suggested activity for 2025/26:

None.

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.

Over the past year, the council has engaged in both national and local planning policy consultations. CEC is currently reviewing the implications of the new NPPF in relation to its programme for developing a new local plan.

Suggested activity for 2025/26:

- 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.

No programmed activity is proposed for this objective, the council will continue to have meetings as deemed necessary.

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.

Suggested activity for 2025/26:

No programmed activity is proposed for this objective. Lobbying efforts will continue in relation to the protection of trees.

3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should

- a) Review the progress on implementing the agreed action plan to date (section four)
- b) Agree an action plan for 2025/26 (draft, section two)

3.0 PLANNING COMMITTEE ACTIONS REPORT DECEMBER 2024

	Origin Year	A Ref	O Ref	Action	Lead Officer	Target Date	Status	Committee Update
	23/24	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	31/05/2024	In Progress	Town Centre to be finalised before submission. Awaiting consultation on other plans.
	23/24	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	31/05/2024		
	23/24	PLA08	H4	Develop proposals for an updated Local List of Heritage Assets	Town Clerk	31/08/2024	In Progress	
	23/24	PLA09	C9	Explore creation of a checklist for members to appraise applications against	Planning and Facilities Officer	30/06/2024		
	23/24	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	30/09/2024		
	23/24	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	31/07/2024		
	24/25	PLA13	H3	Secure the adoption of the submitted CAAMPs for Heathfield Square, Cross Town, St John's and Town Centre	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/03/2025	In Progress	Town Centre to be finalised before submission. Awaiting consultation on other plans.
	24/25	PLA14	C10	Engage in the Cheshire East Council Local Plan review process	Planning and Facilities Officer	31/03/2025	Complete	
	24/25	PLA15	E4	Lobby Cheshire East Council for increased protection of trees under the planning system	Town Clerk	31/05/2024		
	24/25	PLA16	E4	Lobby Government to amend s211 of the TCPA 1990 to enable planning authorities to	Town Clerk	31/12/2024	In progress	Written to Esther McVey MP. Written to Baroness Taylor (Lords Minister) and Baroness Young (Lords VC of APPG)

			require replacement planting under said section				on Trees and Chair of Woodland Trust). ChALC passed motion to lobby for NALC to lobby. ChALC has approved a motion to request NALC lobbies the government.
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