

# **Our Town – Our Decisions**

## **Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan**

### **2015 - 2030**

# **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

Revision: 0.2 (Draft)

Date: 14.March.2015

---

## **INTRODUCTION:**

In June,2014 Sandbach Town Council (STC) agreed to pursue the creation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Civic Parish of Sandbach, which includes the villages of Elworth, Ettiley Heath, Sandbach Heath and Wheelock in addition to the town of Sandbach. A working group was formed which comprised of councillors and community representatives from each ward of STC. The active and continuing participation of community representatives was insisted upon. The plan was to be considered as a “plan for the community by the community.” This ethos was reinforced not only by the composition of the working group, community representatives and councillors, but also by the appointment of the Chairperson of the working group from the community representation. From the outset the following consultation principles were adopted;

- Adopt a ‘front-loaded’ consultation, so that the Plan will be informed by the views of local people and other stakeholders. It was not to be a case of simply asking for responses to a previously formulated proposal.
- Ensure that consultation events took place at appropriate points in the process whereby the community were informed and actively participated in identifying matters.
- Engage with as wide a range of people as possible, using a variety of events and communication techniques;

## **CONSULTATION TIMELINE SO FAR:**

- June 2014: Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group (SNDPWG) formed.
- August,2014: Communication and Engagement Strategy defined.
- September 2014: Phase One Consultation launched at an open Public meeting in Sandbach Town Hall. Questionnaires to be returned by 22<sup>nd</sup>. September.
- September 2014: Phase One consultation period extended at the request of schools and businesses until 29<sup>th</sup>. September, making a total period of a little over 4 weeks.
- October 2014: Input of Phase 1 Questionnaire responses undertaken by community volunteers and SNDPWG.
- October / November 2014:Phase 1 results workshops held to verify phase 1 results and to elicit the more detailed statements / questions to be used for the Phase 2 questionnaire.
- December 2014: Business & Retail Workshop held, aimed specifically to gather the views and concerns of the Local Business Community.

- November/December 2014: Phase 2 Questionnaire content drafted by Community Volunteers and SNDPWG using Phase 1 workshops output.
- January 2015: Publicity campaign for the forthcoming Phase 2 Consultation -
- January 2015: Phase 2 Questionnaire distributed to every household and business in the parish. Also made available on the Plan website. 6 week period allowed for responses.
- February 2015 – Continuing advertising campaign, encouraging responses.
- February / March 2015 – Input by community volunteers of hard copy returns.
- March 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Results made available to inform policy work.

### **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED:**

The SNDPWG has strived to obtain and reflect the views of all residents, businesses, organisations and schools. Every effort has been made to encourage active participation in the consultation process. A totally inclusive approach has been consistently adopted whereby all having an association or interest in Sandbach have not been excluded. In following this approach a wide variety of different techniques have been employed, examples of which will be found in the 'Evidence Base'. These include;

- Use of Electronic Mail distribution lists. (Businesses, Community Organisations, Volunteers, etc)
- Establishment of a dedicated Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan web-site with correspondence capability.
- Press Releases in all local press.
- Banners raised at strategic locations around the town.
- Pop Up posters used at Community Events.
- Promotion cards distributed to all household and businesses in the parish.
- Newsletters created and distributed throughout the parish as well as being posted online.
- Creation and use of a dedicated Facebook page to encourage discussion on issues with over 325 members.
- Use of other Facebook pages to advertise and promote events and deadlines.
- Twitter and other social media.
- Presentations at community events e.g. Cinema group, U3A, Ladies Circle, Quiz Night.
- Stalls at Public Events; Farmers Markets, Day of Dance, etc.
- Leaflet / Questionnaire hand-out sessions at sites with significant footfall e.g. Waitrose, High Street, Market Square.
- Both Sandbach Senior Schools were heavily involved in both consultations with physical questionnaires distributed in Phase 1 and links to on-line sites in Phase 2
- All Sandbach Primary Schools were involved with physical questionnaires distributed via children to parents in both Phases 1 and 2.

### **SPECIFIC ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED:**

Whilst it has already been stated in the previous paragraph, it is worthwhile to note again that every effort has been made to encourage active participation in the consultation process. A totally inclusive approach has been consistently adopted whereby all having an association or interest in Sandbach have NOT been excluded. Once again examples are to be found in the 'Evidence Base'.

- Sandbach Traders and Retailers organisation (STAR) – The businesses, traders and retailers of Sandbach.

- Schools – All primary and secondary schools in Sandbach were individually approached.
- Churches – via the Churches Together in Sandbach organisation.
- Community Organisations – via the email list of the Sandbach Partnership organisation and some individual approaches / presentations made by SNDPWG members to U3A, Ladies Circle, Cinema Group, etc.
- Sandbach Cricket and Hockey Club played an active part in both the consultations and workshops
- Housing Market Partnership – via Cheshire East Borough Council

## **CONSULTATION EVENTS / STAGES:**

### **1. Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan Launch.- 5<sup>th</sup> September,2014.**

This event was held at Sandbach Town Hall and was very well attended. 145 residents were counted in attendance to hear a presentation by SNDPWG members explaining the background and objectives of a Neighbourhood Plan. Following a Q & A session the audience broke into groups where a member of the working group facilitated a SWOT type analysis to identify any issues of particular concern. Before the end of the evening the audience were given a feedback of a rapid analysis of the themes raised.

### **2. Phase 1 Consultation – 5<sup>th</sup>. September,2014 thru 29<sup>th</sup>. September,2014.**

A free format style questionnaire was circulated by a distribution company to every residence and business in Sandbach. Additional copies were made available at STC offices and the collection points established for the return of completed questionnaires. Five basic questions were posed; (a) What's good about living here? (b) Whats not good about living here? (c) What is needed (d) What should we look after and (e) What are the 3 most important issues you would like the Neighbourhood Plan to address.

In addition to the general public schools within Sandbach were approached individually, which resulted in a high number of returns especially from the High Schools.

### **3. Phase 1 Results Workshops.- October / November,2014.**

Various public workshops, each based upon one of the themes identified by the phase 1 returned questionnaires were held. The venues were either the Town Hall or Sandbach Literary Institute, the objective being to verify the phase 1 analysis and to produce statements / questions for a Phase 2 questionnaire, which could eventually lead to the contents of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The main factor in these workshops was again the active inclusion of members of the public who verified the analysis undertaken and formulated the questions / statements to be used in Phase 2..

### **4. Phase 2 Consultation – 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2015 thru 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2015.**

The phase 2 questionnaire was distributed on an exclusive distribution basis to each household and businesses within Sandbach, preceded by a Post Card drop announcing its imminent arrival. A Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was also included for those households affected. Spare copies of the questionnaire were made available at STC offices and each of the 11 collection points established for the return of completed questionnaires. Both questionnaire and HNS were made available on the SNDP web-site. A strong preference was stated for online completion in order to minimise the volume requiring manual input, which was achieved by community volunteers.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

- Phase 1 Questionnaire
- Phase 2 Questionnaire