

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group report by Liz Whiteley, 16/11/2021

There has been much activity by many members of the working group with several key elements having been successfully achieved:

- grant application for phase 1 submitted and grant has been approved in principle,
- survey document finalised, printed and distributed,
- consultant selection process complete and consultant has made a full day visit to Cannock Wood, and
- terms of Reference for Working Group agreed.

Evidence base

All planning policies must be supported by adequate and appropriate evidence. The collection of suitable evidence is well underway, as follows:

1. Survey: every residential address has now received a printed survey. Responses are coming in, with many thoughtful comments and suggestions, and analysis is underway.
2. Village organisations are being contacted to ask for their input (including Village Hall and Playing Field committees, Dickinsons, The Rag).
3. Documentary and graphical evidence is being obtained from other relevant organisations including CCDC, Staffs CC, AONB, Staffs Wildlife Trust and South Staffs Water.
4. Access to the pdf map files CCDC has shared with the parish council is needed.

Communications

Community engagement is required throughout the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- The survey forms a major element of this and there will be further formal and informal consultations too.
- Minutes of working group meetings are now available on the parish council notice board and PC website. Have requested that the terms of reference to be uploaded to the PC website.
- The lack of a fully functioning website makes community engagement more difficult. This and the fact that minutes have not been able to be made public until very recently has been criticised by some residents as part of their survey responses and verbally to those distributing surveys.
- A newsletter is being prepared and will be distributed in mid-December.
- Any oral questions to be dealt with in public speaking session of PC meetings.

Finance

Costs incurred: survey printing £510, signage £240+VAT.

Planned expenditure: payment for Village Hall room hire for the dates after the grant is received, consultancy fees as quoted.

Grant awarded of £6,796.00 for work up to the end of December 2021. It will be necessary to prepare a monitoring report and repay any money not spent as applied for very expeditiously, because an application cannot be made for phase 2 until after that. Phase 2 cannot begin until the subsequent grant award and must be completed by the end of March 2022.

The grant application process also included an application for technical support, free to the user because covered by central government. AECOM will provide a housing needs assessment which is purely to assist in policy and design code formation. No support has been asked for allocating land for housing because the Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate land for housing, not within the settlement boundary and not outside the settlement boundary.

Working Group membership

There are currently 18 members of the Working Group, of whom 3 are parish councillors. The Working Group has asked Cllr Salter, as the parish council representative on the working group, to chair working group meetings. There is very substantial involvement and time commitment from many working group members and the process is moving forward swiftly but thoroughly in accordance with the project management programme.