

Terms of Reference for the Alsager Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Objectives

To deliver a Alsager Neighbourhood Plan Update via consultation with the residents and business community of Alsager and via review of expert opinion:

- that is valid until 2040 in line with the Cheshire East Local Plan Update.
- which accurately reflects any changing opinion of Alsager residents about land use in Alsager.
- which proposes compatible solutions to changing national and international issues.
- involves a Green Belt and Settlement land review.

Governance

Alsager Town Council will act as the body responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Working Group will produce the Neighbourhood Plan Update and report to the Planning, Environment and Community Committee of Alsager Town Council.

The Working Group will be formed from residents and the local business community. Elected members of Alsager Town Council may also be members of the Working Group.

The Working Group shall extend until the Neighbourhood Plan Update has been assessed and approved by the independent examiner. The Working Group shall pass the draft neighbourhood plan update to Alsager Town Council for approval prior to independent examination.

Timing

2024 – Recommendation to proceed with Plan update by Neighbourhood Plan Review Group.

2024 onwards – Full update process starts; budget applied for; information gathering through consultation; policy formation and ratification of the updated Plan.

Membership of the Working Group

The Working Group will consist of a maximum of 15 members and a minimum of 7 members.

The quorum for the group is 2 Councillors and 2 residents.

If a member of the Working Group fails to attend 3 consecutive Working Group meetings the member will be deemed to have resigned from the Working Group unless otherwise agreed by the Working Group. This provision does not prevent any member from resigning from the Working Group by providing the Chair with written notice of their resignation.

Councillor Membership

The minimum number of Councillors is 5.

The Councillor membership of the group is to be determined at the Annual Meeting on an annual basis, with any changes throughout the year due to resignation from the Group to be determined by the Planning, Environment and Community Committee, following a recommendation from the Working Group.

Resident membership

The minimum number of residents is 3.

The resident membership of the Working Group is to be determined by the Group.

Any person who wishes to become a member of the Working Group after the commencement of the Neighbourhood Planning Update process shall apply to the Working Group who shall resolve whether they shall be admitted to the Working Group.

The Working Group may form subgroups to undertake various aspects of the work involved in producing the Neighbourhood Plan. These subgroups will co-ordinate with the Working Group and act under its instructions, adhering to the same terms of reference. The subgroup will then report back to the working group.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Working Group

The members of the Working Group will:

Promote the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan Update, be encouraged to participate and provide their views and opinions on the specific topics which are covered during the preparation of the Plan.

- Arrange meetings and appoint working groups to gather views and consult on expanding policies which are considered appropriate for incorporation in the draft Plan Update.
- Assess new evidence about the needs and aspirations of the Town in terms of planning and use of land.
- Liaise with relevant organisations and stakeholders to secure their input in the process.
- Analyse the results of questionnaires or other evidence received during the planning process and use them to prepare a robust draft Plan Update

- Inform the Town Council of progress on a regular basis in order that Working Group/subgroup minutes can be noted.
- Support the local planning authority and Alsager Town Council during the referendum process.
- Manage the financial resources provided by Alsager Town Council and any other bodies by:
 - Recording any costs incurred by the Neighbourhood Plan Update Working Group in meeting minutes.
 - Ensuring expenditure is within the budget allocated by Alsager Town Council and any other bodies.
 - Ensure all expenditure is inline with the Town Council's Financial Regulations.
 - Providing the Town Council with regular expenditure reports.

The Town Council will:

- Support the preparation of the Alsager Neighbourhood Plan Update providing sufficient assistance and financial resources to ensure the plan is prepared expeditiously providing that overall expenditure falls within the budget allocated by the Council.
- Facilitate, if required, contact with the relevant statutory bodies or parties who must be consulted during the plan making process.
- Carry out all statutory duties contained within the Neighbourhood planning (General) regulation 2012 and engage with Cheshire East Council during the referendum process of the plan for which the principal authority is responsible.
- Following the preparation of the draft plan, and with the agreement of the Working Group, submit the plan to the Local Planning Authority for inspection and independent examination.

All Members of the Working Group and any subgroup formed will:

- Declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of interest in land (directly or indirectly) or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Working Group.
- Ensure that there is no discrimination in the plan making process and that it is a wholly inclusive, open and transparent process to all groups in the Town and to those wishing to undertake development or be involved in the plan making process.
- Work together for the benefit of the communities established within the Town. Treat other members of the Group with respect and dignity, allowing members to express their views without prejudice and interruption.
- Any decisions taken by the Working Group, other than those delegated to appointed officers, will be carried if the majority (more than 50%) are in favour at any given meeting. The Chair shall have the casting vote where the vote is equal.

Working Group Officers

- The Working Group shall elect a Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary from their number.
- The role of principal liaison between the Working Group and the Town Council will be carried out by the Town Clerk.
- If the Chair is not present, the Deputy Chair shall take the meeting. If neither is present, members shall elect a Chair for the meeting from amongst their number.

Frequency, Timing and Procedure of Meetings

The Working Group will usually meet at least monthly although working groups may meet more frequently as necessary.

- The Working Group and its subgroups shall keep minutes of meetings which will be open to public scrutiny. These will be publicised on the Town Council website.
- Notices, Agendas, Minutes and associated papers will be emailed where possible to all Working Group members who have attended any Working Group meeting.
- Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with set procedure to be determined and agreed by the Working Group.
- The Working Group shall be quorate when 50% of members of the total Group are present.
- The Working Group will regularly update and report its progress to the Clerk of the Town Council ensuring that they are aware of the on-going budgetary implications associated with the project.
- These Terms of Reference will be reviewed throughout the project and amended as required by the Working Group and recommended to Planning, Environment & Community Committee for approval.

Terms of Reference for Subgroups

The purpose of each Subgroup is to assist the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to prepare a neighbourhood plan for the town of Alsager. Each working group will tackle a specific area.

Each Subgroup should:

- Clearly understand its purpose and take its lead from the Working Group.
- Outline how it will gather and present information or findings to Working Group.
- Openness and transparency are important considerations in the work of all working groups and all matters discussed must be considered as being in the public domain.
- Appoint a Chair from their number, if the Chair is not present, members shall elect a Chair for the meeting from amongst those present.
- The subgroup will be quorate when 50% of the total group are present.

- Each subgroup will have a member of the Working Group as part of its members.
- Set out the timescale and estimated costs of gathering information and carrying out requested or suggested exercises.
- Each subgroup will be responsible for organising its own meetings and must provide minutes in a timely manner to the Working Group meetings via their Chair.
- The subgroup must be able to demonstrate that projects it has identified have the support of the local community and show that they have, where relevant, discussed projects with other organisations or persons who will be affected either positively or negatively or could assist in carrying out the action.
- Produce a short report upon completion setting out:
 - Introduction and purpose of the group.
 - Evidence gathered / Work undertaken (summary).
 - Subgroup general recommendation on future development.
 - List of documents, bodies, groups, individuals etc consulted.
 - Conclusion.
- Membership is not limited and is open to residents in the designated Town boundary and skilled and professional body representatives who can positively support the work of the group to achieve their aim.