



# AROUND AUDLEM

The newsletter for residents of Audlem & District

Special Issue No 2 - August 2014

## Planning Audlem's Future

As you should be aware by now, Audlem Parish Council has undertaken to produce a "Residents First" Neighbourhood Plan as part of a full Neighbourhood Plan for Audlem. The decision to do this was taken at the monthly Parish Council meeting held on 14 July 2014.

To clarify what this means for our village we produce below a summary of what each of these encompasses.

## What is Residents First Neighbourhood Planning?

The following explanation has been provided by Tom Evans, Planning Officer at Cheshire East Council.

The Development Plan for Cheshire East is formed by a suite of planning documents, the backbone of which is the Local Plan Strategy. This has now been submitted to Secretary of State for Examination in Public, due to begin in September.

This document forms the strategic framework within which all other future planning documents should be created; it establishes the Council's key strategic aims on overall housing and employment need for the Borough, infrastructure, key development sites and high level policies.

The next stage of work on the Development Plan is to consider the non-strategic and detailed planning issues that shape the built and natural environment across the Borough. There are two mechanisms to address these issues, which are collectively being referred to as Residents First Planning, they are:

- Site Allocations and Development Policies Document; and
- Neighbourhood Plans

The two are not mutually exclusive in that some of the future policies within the Site Allocations Document will apply across the whole Borough, including to those areas that eventually adopt a neighbourhood plan. However the key difference is that the Site Allocations document will be prepared by

Cheshire East Council in co-operation with Town and Parish Councils, whereas neighbourhood plans will be prepared by Town and Parish Councils with support from Cheshire East Council.

## What is Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood Planning is a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work. They will be able to:

- choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built;
- have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided;
- (in very limited circumstances) grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

The Government has introduced the community right to do neighbourhood planning through the Localism Act.

Neighbourhood planning is optional, not compulsory, but the Government thinks that lots of people will want to take the opportunity to influence the future of the place where they live or work.

There are 5 key stages to neighbourhood planning.

### Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood

In areas with a Parish or Town Council the Parish or Town Council will take the lead. They will define the boundary for the plan and apply to the local planning authority (in our case, Cheshire East Council (CEC)) to accept it. CEC will check that the suggested boundary for the neighbourhood makes sense and does not overlap with other neighbourhood plan areas. CEC will advertise the proposed neighbourhood definition for a 6 weeks consultation period. At the end of that period they will (normally) confirm the neighbourhood area is accepted. (Audlem Parish Council has now determined the Neighbourhood area as the Parish of Audlem and submitted the required documentation to CEC.)



## Stage 2: Preparing the Plan

Local people will need to pull together to identify their views on what is important to residents before drawing up their plans – a vision for the future. It can be detailed, or general, depending on what local people want.

There are some ground rules to be followed in drawing up the plan:

- It must be in line with local and national planning policies;
- It must be in line with other laws, including EU legislation;
- If the local planning authority says an area needs to grow, neighbourhood planning cannot be used to block the building of new homes and businesses. It can, however, use neighbourhood planning to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development;
- Neighbourhood plans must contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The local authority planning department has a duty to provide help and advice throughout.

During this stage it is important that consultation takes place with all areas and all ages in the designated neighbourhood. There is a lot of work involved and volunteers will be needed to help ensure that all the relevant steps take place.

## Stage 3: Independent check

When the neighbourhood plan has been prepared an independent examiner will check that it meets the right basic standards. The examiner will be appointed by Cheshire East Council (CEC). If the Plan does not meet the right standards the examiner will recommend changes. CEC will then need to consider the examiner's view and decide whether to make those changes. If significant changes are recommended then the Parish Council may decide to consult the local community again before proceeding.

## Stage 4: Community referendum

CEC will organise (and pay for) a referendum on the plan to ensure that the community has the final say on whether it will come into force. People living in the neighbourhood who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote in the referendum. If more than 50% of people voting in the referendum support the plan then CEC must bring it into force.

## Stage 5: Legal force

Once the neighbourhood plan is in force ('made') following a successful referendum it carries real legal weight. Decision makers are obliged to consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood against the neighbourhood plan.

## Funding

Some grant funding is available to help with the costs and applications are being made by the Parish Council.

Further information can be found on [www.mycommunityrights.org.uk](http://www.mycommunityrights.org.uk), [www.locality.org.uk](http://www.locality.org.uk) and the Cheshire East website [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) (put Neighbourhood Plan in the 'Search' box)

## We Urgently Need Your Help!

All of the above will take a lot of time and effort and it cannot be done by the Parish Council alone. Nor should it.

We need volunteers to join the Steering Committee which will see this process through. We also need other people prepared to join smaller working groups and get involved in tasks such as typing up reports, collecting questionnaires and collating material.

We also need you to suggest areas within the Parish boundary where building could take place. You don't have to be the owner of the land to do this!

Please contact the Parish Clerk NOW if you can offer help with any of the above.

**Your Parish Clerk is Kirstin Dixon –  
01630 658456 or email  
[audlemparishclerk@gmail.com](mailto:audlemparishclerk@gmail.com).**

## STOP PRESS

Now we have the exciting news that Audlem is to be included among a group of 9 to take part in Cheshire East's "Fast Track" programme. It means that we will receive free help and advice from CEC planners - but we still needs lots of help from you!