

Cars Area Together



Our final plan

November 2023-September 2025



What happens next.

Cars Area Together is a Big Local funded programme working in the north of the Borough of Solihull. The Smith's Wood housing estate was initially developed in the 1960's and early 1970's when it was within Birmingham Council's boundaries – and many of the properties were occupied by local families who had previously lived in the high-rise blocks in the east of the City or from the City centre.

In 1974, boundaries were re-drawn and Smith's Wood – the large housing estate of which the Cars is part, became the responsibility of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. In many cases, our families have lived in the Cars area for many years and much of the estate is very settled- albeit the population is obviously aging. In recent years however, there has been "churn" with new - younger – families arriving and taking up vacant properties. There has been a steady change too in ownership among our families. Some have bought their properties under Right to Buy legislation, while others rent from private landlords. The principal landlord is Solihull Community Housing (SCH) – an ALMO organisation previously part of the Local Authority. Tenure is now mixed, and this gives more variation in family types and sizes.

Our community's main concern has always been the lack of communal- and community- spaces – there is no local school, no doctors' surgeries, library, church and only one small local shop. There are few natural meeting places for local people. The Big Local project was initially set up in 2012 and really took off in 2014. Cars Area Together has been the Big Local organisation delivering against a community led plan since that time. The plan focuses on working with residents to show them what the area does have to offer them rather than what it hasn't.

Residents have become very involved – in all sorts of ways- and have valued what Big Local has brought them and what can be achieved by working together. Some have identified skills and talents – some of which they didn't know they had so they have been part of the programme.

Our current plan has really focused on:-

“How do we keep this going?”

How do we keep hold of and develop the resources we do have – including our people and our spaces. How do we continue to create or influence the development of our infrastructure and partnerships to make sure we have a thriving community?

We have carried out lots of work with our people, our partners and others who have come to know us and we have worked hard in the past 2 years to make sure that even more people know us and about what we do. We know that we have learned lots about seeking feedback. What happens in the next plan is the result of the consultation we have undertaken – both formally and informally, the questions we have asked, the conversations we have captured, and the feedback people have left for us.

Our community are determined that the Cars Area Together will continue long after 2026 and to do that, we need to focus on a series of priorities which are detailed in our Plan. These are themes which our community have told us are important; themes that will enable the community to thrive. The priorities are underpinned by a set of principles which state that we will not “do to” people but rather we will “do with”. The priorities aim to support our people to grow, form good partnerships, and represent the community at all levels. The priorities aim to work towards working with partners who share our principles and values and which make best use of the skills and talents of our team, our volunteers and our community.

Our priorities are: -

- **Cars Environment Together** – making the most of our spaces.
- **Cars Traditions Together** – ensuring we keep offering the things people love.
- **Cars Community Together** – encouraging more people to become involved and letting people know about what we do and want to achieve.
- **Cars Well Being Together** - focusing on the health and wellbeing of our people.

In order to achieve these, we need fundamental changes to the way we are governed. This will make sure we are fit and healthy and well prepared for whatever comes next. Our principal priority therefore is to set up our new governing structure for Cars Area Together. This will enable us to receive the assets we are hoping to manage and in turn achieve the priorities set out for us by our community. A new governance structure will also enable Cars Area Together to act as a Community Anchor Organisation for people and communities across Smith's Wood in the future. This is a bold and ambitious aim – but the work that the Board, staff and volunteers have done in the Big local period shows that we are ready to take this step to be ready for what comes next.

Governance Arrangements.

Why do we need to think about our Governance?

Big Local for Cars Area Together – and all similar projects - comes to an end in September 2025 (with some opportunities to tidy up by March 2026). This plan will capture what we need to have to ensure we have a Legacy body to be ready to progress.

Currently Cars Area Together is a constituted group – established in 2020 – operating with monthly meetings and annual reviews. The next stage is to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or possibly a Community Development Trust. Both are types of organisations which would be appropriate for Cars going forward and there would need to be a transition period over the coming months so that this Legacy body is in place by April 2024. The new body can operate alongside the current Board – in fact some members may want to become part of the new organisation as we will still need trustees/directors, a new Business Plan and Plans for what comes next.

Transition arrangements

There are several things which we need to think about to achieve our transition and continue to operate under our priorities.

- Plan our budget so that we ensure all Cars Area funding is allocated and continue to secure other funding ready for new arrangements once Big Local monies are used (bearing in mind Local Trust advice published August 2023 and added as an Appendix to this document.)
- Merge the Big Local Partnership Board and the new organisation.
- Consider staff arrangements.
 - what staff are staying,
 - what staff will the new organisation require,
 - who will be the employers,
 - will there be any redundancy issues to address?
 - ensure that Local Trust are satisfied with upcoming arrangements.
- How are we going to consult the community and partner organisations and ensure we take on board their views.
- Ensure we take on board feedback including dynamic consultation where we take on constant feedback in what we are doing and how we are addressing our priorities.
- Make sure we take on board what we have learned from previous plans.
- Make sure we keep an eye on Big Local Outcomes.

What about our ongoing priorities? How do we make sure we don't lose sight of the priorities which our people have told us are important to them.

One way on ensuring that we keep abreast of our priorities has been attaching each priority to a staff member working with volunteers. In that way, the team ensure that equal importance is attached to our ambitious aims while preparing for what is to come.

Regular reporting to our Board also lets people know what we are doing, challenges of the plan and its priorities, change or "work arounds" and adaptations need to "keep on track".

Keeping agile keeps us “on task”. Being able to react quickly to new opportunities means we have to change and embrace new opportunities. This will be a feature of the new structure – maintaining a presence – but in a wider area.

This plan identifies what we need to do to keep on task with our priorities. We also need to capture our progress in developing our Legacy Body and this will be captured while we look at the more detailed elements of the plan. We need to make sure we look at the Governance work in the coming months so that we have a new organisation in place by Spring 2024. This body will need to identify a Business plan , its structure in relation to others eh out LTO, what the strategies of the new structure will be and how they relate to the priorities which are already imbedded in to the way in what Cars Area Together operates.

Key to the future of Cars Area Together will be to identify how it is to be funded. The Business Plan will look at what funding is needed what can be drawn down and what can be earned through contracts. This cocktail of funding streams will enable a new purpose built organisation to be developed – while keeping the brand, ethos and principles that have become so important. It will aim to be bold and ambitious while remaining sustainable and fit for purpose. There are risks going forwards and part of the work is toi identify what these are and how they can be managed/mitigated.

The reminder of this plan looks in a more detailed way at what our priorities look like in the coming months. They will be updated, changed and improved as we move further into the transition period.

Priority - Cars Environment Together

| Goal – by 2025 | What needs to happen | Who with | What will it look like | Progress |
|---|--|---|---|----------|
| To take on the management of Bosworth Wood Field | SMBC to agree to the transfer as an asset /long lease. | Land and property/Education/Stronger Communities/Planners | Cars will manage the new recreation ground | |
| | Ensure a realistic, sustainable Business Plan in place | Work with Locality and others to prepare Business Plan which works | Programme of activities and events on community space | |
| | Set up new model of Governance e.g., CIO or CDT to receive the asset/lease | Partnership Board, partner organisations, residents | Cars Area Together CIO? | |
| Set up network of walks and trails – extending to other parts of Smith’s Wood | Liaise with other partners eg Solihull Active, Public Realm etc to establish local trails etc | SMBC, Wildlife Ways, Warwickshire Wildlife | Trails identifies for people to follow in safety. Walking groups to undertake trails – addressing health & well being | |
| Extend Gardening project across Cars and beyond. | Using initiatives which encourage people to acre for gardens and green spaces. Green my streets Litter picking friends | Residents, landlords (eg SCH) to take care of open spaces. Public Realm – tree planting initiatives. | Green spaces maintained by community for their benefit. Healthy food grown. Trees and plants – addressing health & wellbeing issues | |

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| <p>Look at other open spaces and seek views from residents on whether they want to extend/expand interest</p> <p>Work with agencies such as Park Play/BCFC/WCC to make best use of our green spaces</p> | <p>Work with others to map green spaces and who is responsible</p> <p>Identify funding to enable people to care for spaces, plant up eg spring bulbs, summer bedding etc.</p> | <p>SMBC, SCH, Public Realm, Warwickshire Wildlife, Wildlife Ways etc</p> <p>Planning Department – what is planned for spaces.</p> | | |
| <p>Trees – what is planned for our area.</p> | <p>Kings Canopy?</p> | | | |

Priority - Cars Traditions Together

| Goal – by 2025 | What needs to happen | Who with | What will it look like | Progress |
|---|---|--|--|----------|
| To sustain and increase/improve our annual calendar of events. | Identify volunteers and groups to help put events on. Enable them to develop confidence to take on organising tasks. Identify funding to make sure the events can happen. Ask people what they would like to see in the events. | Residents and other partner organisations who will help deliver, arrange, organise, host etc | Calendar of events which residents have devised, helped to organise, groups taking on activities and events to make sure they are sustainable. | |
| Seek out more volunteers to help with Boards, organising committee, run events etc | Recruitment locally through various networks, social media, word of mouth. Training as and if required to build confidence. | Advertising, taking to groups, parents, carers, group leaders etc | Lots of events and activities across the community that residents can get involved with if they want. | |
| Look out for more “pop up” events – getting to know our neighbours in Smith’s Wood. | Look across social media and notifications, newsletters to see who is organising what. Share info and expertise if required. | Various groups, organisations etc. | Chance to focus on special interest events, information sharing, sharing volunteers. | |
| Publish a calendar of events and invite people/groups to add into it so it becomes | Contact people/groups through various routes to understand what is happening where. Make sure people know about them eg at pub | Cars Team and other groups across Smith’s Wood. | Publish calendar and keep updated and shared regularly. | |

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| community wide. | | | | |
| Look at possible venues across Smith's Wood and maintain a register of access arrangements, costs etc | Contact to establish updated information on who to contact, how to contact, costs, payment arrangements, numbers in venue etc. | Venues across North Solihull noted and mapped. | Mapped venues and facilities. How toguide published and kept up to date. | |
| Build partnerships of associated groups and organisations with an interest in our area. | Contact to establish updated information on who to contact, what do they do and how do they operate in Smith's Wood. | Groups across Smith's Wood and beyond | Mapped groups with contact information | |

Priority - Cars Community Together

| Goal – by 2025 | What needs to happen | Who with | What will it look like | Progress |
|---|--|---|---|----------|
| Ensure there is a twice yearly newsletter distributed with updated information on what is happening contact information, advertising locally if required. | Look at reach of newsletters to see how far they should go? See if local volunteers want to become involved in copy, production etc | Working with partners to fill with reliable, updated, accessible information. | Regular, reliable, accessible, up to date information. | |
| Regular local radio slots on what is happening across the estate and beyond | Contact local radio stations to establish regular update slots. | Switch Radio, Birmingham Updates, BRMB etc | Regular updates, chance for people to share information, get involved themselves. | |
| Establish what other local groups of interest meet to share information eg SMBC, SCH. WCava, etc | Establish links and ensure know who attends to share information | Anchor organisations, local agencies who work across the Borough, local Councillors – including parish- who know local organisations. | | |
| Maintain a strong brand for Cars – but expand reach | Seek opportunities to show brand and increase spread. | Team, volunteers, organisations, people. | | |
| Explore opportunities to work with Polce and PCSO's via Street watch or similar initiative | Arrange a follow-up meeting (or series of) to explore what community would like to get involved in and how to proceed. Look for local | Team, volunteers, Police and PCSO's. Diary of catch up's , training, familiarisation with what needs to happen. | | |

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| | champions to take this forward | | | |
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Priority - Cars Well Being Together

| Goal – by 2025 | What needs to happen | Who with | What will it look like | Progress |
|---|---|--|--|----------|
| To have an established network of agencies and organisations who provide health and well being services for local people. | Mapping what is already in place and noting contact arrangements, venues etc | Solihull Active, NHS services, Health watch, doctors surgeries, health visitors etc | Information up to date giving local advice of what is available/possible. | |
| Map what else needs to be provided according to our people. | Consultation – formally and informally, working with agencies such as Health Watch to see what our people would like to see locally. | Solihull Active, NHS services, Health watch, doctors’ surgeries, health visitors etc | God knowledge of local networks so can properly advise interested people/help local community to access good, affordable programmes. | |
| Support the development of well being facilities eg Family Centres, health centres, venues for specialist help/advice, leisure centres etc. | Keep in touch with what is coming in local communities and ensure team know what is available eg through local networks, Age Concern, CAB etc | Solihull Active, NHS services, Health watch, doctors’ surgeries, health visitors etc | People will know where, how, when and how much programmes/activities are and whether they are right for them | |
| Continue with Welcome to..... sessions if our people want this type of doorstep/local service. | Understand what works for people, what they will access and what impact this will have e.g. weight management, moving more, etc | Slimming World, Solihull Active, Gateway Family Services, Everyone Active, Think Active. | Calendar of events, programme of activities. | |

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| <p>Highlight successes so that people can see what is possible in health and well being improvements.</p> | | <p>Look out for local media to see how programmes are running, how to access, where, when how.</p> | <p>Local champions showing how programmes have worked for them and how they can support other people.</p> | |
| <p>HAF type programmes give unique access to local young people to identify champions, discuss opportunities to exercise etc</p> | <p>Look at calendar of events to see how HAF can promote good health and well being.</p> | <p>Various partner organisations e.g. BCFC, WCC, Wizzleworld, Think Active, Solihull Active etc.</p> | <p>Children and Young people can understand what works for them and have access to range of information which is useful to them</p> | |
| <p>Work with partners eg BCFC/Strike 9 for programmes such as “Thrive on your doorstep”.</p> | <p>Promote the programme to make sure people know how, when and where.</p> | <p>Various partner organisations e.g. BCFC, WCC, Wizzleworld, Think Active, Solihull Active etc.</p> | <p>Lots of well organised programmes, well attended by local people</p> | |