

NOTES OF THE MORPETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP MEETING

MONDAY 18th AUGUST 2014 **IN THE CORN EXCHANGE OF MORPETH TOWN HALL**

1. Present

Councillor Nic Best
Councillor Bob Robertson
Councillor Alison Byard
Councillor David Parker
Councillor David Cowans
Councillor David Woodard
Councillor Mike Sharp
Graeme Trotter

Representing

Morpeth Town Council, Deputy Chairman
Morpeth Town Council
Morpeth Town Council
Morpeth Town Council and Housing Topic Group
Heritage Topic Group
Pegswood Parish Council
Mitford Parish Council

In attendance

Ian Campbell (IC)
David English
David Rowlinson
Rachel Thompson

Project Co-ordinator
Northumberland County Council (NCC)
NCC
NCC

Administration

Miss Louise Davey

Morpeth Town Council (MTC)

The meeting commenced at 3.04pm.

1. Welcome/ Apologies and Introductions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joan Tebbutt, Andrew Kelly and Philip Ashmore and David Lodge and Gillian Turner. David Rowlinson introduced Rachel Thompson, a placement student from Newcastle University.

2. Notes of the meeting held on 14th July 2014 and matters arising

The notes of the previous meeting were approved.

A verbal report was given to update on the petition on the proposed closure of County Hall as presented to the Petitions Committee. The presentation raised concerns about the impact on Morpeth and the MNP. It was stated that the Steering Group would be included as interested parties within the NCC plans and this has been included in the minutes of the Petitions Committee. It was noted that Councillor Parker had been invited to the NCC Scrutiny Meeting on the 23rd September 2014 and that the NCC Policy Board would be considering the business plan on 7th October. It was suggested that progress had been made with regards to formally produced reports on the economic impact and planning engagement.

3. MNP – Preparation of Pre-Submission Draft / Feedback from PPG Meetings

It was agreed that agenda item 3a be taken after items 3b and 3c.

3b. Vision / Plan Objectives – agreed by PPG for Steering Group approval

Comments were requested on the draft paper “Vision and Objectives”. No comments were received and the document was approved. It was agreed that the paper would be placed on the website.

Action: Louise Davey

3c. Implications of recent planning decisions

The implications of recent planning decisions were discussed and the growth of housing were noted, both at outline and application stage, at Northgate Hospital, Fairmoor, Loansdean and Stobhill South. It was noted that this growth in these areas would make impact on the location of housing in the MNP.

It was noted that if Morpeth is to be a strategic growth area as suggested in the emerging Core Strategy, then land for employment as well as housing would be needed. It was understood that – following the approval of housing on the Fairmoor site which had been allocated as employment land - NCC has appointed consultants to assess opportunities for provision of alternative employment land. It was requested that consultants engage with the Steering Group about the MNP. NCC officers agreed to forward this request and to confirm the timescale for the review. NCC acknowledged that the strong views of the MNP were known.

It was confirmed that the number of houses in the plan area may be modified by the core strategy and reiterated that the MNP could not provide for less.

It was suggested that recent NCC planning decisions were not plan-led but being made in an effective planning vacuum. Concerns were expressed that the core strategy and the MNP were diverging. It was emphasised that the Steering Group needed to continue to voice opinions to NCC so that their views would not be disregarded. It was proposed that engagement with NCC continue and that a meeting had been requested with Geoff Paul (NCC) week commencing the 25th August 2014.

It was considered whether the MNP should include areas of infrastructure which would be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). NCC stated that it was unlikely that revenues from the CIL would be allocated in the South-East of the County.

An NCC officer commented that the plan was about more than housing and asked if there was a risk of losing all the other elements if the Plan not taken forward because of recent development decisions.

3a. Progressing the Plan –Draft Plan Preparation – verbal update

It was stated that drafting of the plan was going to be complex, and that some volunteer capacity had been diverted towards the South Stobhill Inquiry. The preparation initial

timetable was likely to be stretched. It was anticipated that at the next meeting of the Steering Group on 8th September 2014 there would be some text provided on the basic policies.

It was questioned how work on the plan would be financed if there were delays as it was confirmed that the budget ended the 31st December 2014. It was stated that the PPG recognised that progress was important and were meeting more frequently, at least once a week. It was proposed that costs to extend the project plan be calculated to the 31st March 2014 and be referred to the town and parish councils.

Action: Ian Campbell

3d. Strategic Environmental Assessment – verbal update

It was understood that there were some outstanding tasks before NCC could write the Environment Report. However, it was observed by an NCC officer that this could not be done without the draft policies as these would be referred to in the report. The sequence tasks for drafting the report was discussed at length. It was agreed to have further discussions with NCC about the development of the report and the outstanding actions.

3e. MNP Project Plan v 4 – verbal report

The Detailed Project Plan for Stage B5 – Draft Plan Report and Consultation (pre-submission Draft) was introduced. It was stated that the PPG had noted an increased number of “red alerts” and that in recent weeks target dates had not been met, mainly relating to draft policies and allocations..

It was stated that it was anticipated that the consultation completion would take place by mid-December.

4. Resources and support

NCC identified that bids for direct support were available from Locality however this would not be in the form of money.

5. NCC Update

NCC outlined the suggested confirmation of governance arrangement between Morpeth Town Council and the Parishes.

Action: LD to circulate the documentation

It was noted that the PPG intended to include “saved policies” from the Castle Morpeth Local Plan within the MNP report as an appendix. NCC noted that the “saved policies” would not be replaced by the Core Strategy and would have planning ‘weight’ as long as they were in line with NPPF. NCC are proposing to prepare a ‘delivery plan’ after the Core Strategy which would contain development control policies which would replace the “saved policies”, but there would be consulted on extensively at the time. PPG will take these comments on board.

6. Any other business/ Date of the next meeting

No other business was declared. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as September 8th 2014 at 3pm in the Corn Exchange at Morpeth Town Hall

The meeting ended at 4.26pm.