

NOTES OF THE MORPETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP MEETING

MONDAY 13th October 2014 at 3pm
IN THE CORN EXCHANGE OF MORPETH TOWN HALL

Present

Councillor Nic Best
Councillor Bob Robertson
Councillor Alison Byard
Councillor David Parker arrived 3:40 pm
Councillor David Cowans
Councillor Mike Sharp
Councillor David Woodard
Councillor Philip Ashmore
Colin Pearson arrived 3.14pm

Representing

Morpeth Town Council – Acting Chairman
Morpeth Town Council
Morpeth Town Council
Morpeth Town Council and Housing Topic Group
Heritage Topic Group
Mitford Parish Council
Pegswood Parish Council
Hepscott Parish Council
Education Topic Group

In attendance

Ian Campbell
David English
Rob Naples

Project Co-ordinator
Northumberland County Council (NCC)
NCC

Clerk

Mrs Dee Cota
Miss Louise Davey

Morpeth Town Council (MTC)
MTC

The meeting commenced at 3.05pm.

1. Welcomes/Apologies/Introductions

Apologies were received from Councillor Joan Tebbutt, David Lodge, David Rowlinson and Graeme Trotter. Rob Naples of NCC was introduced with regard to his involvement with the Strategic Environment Assessment report.

2. Notes of 15 September 2014 Steering Group and Matters Arising

The notes of the Steering Group meeting on the 15th September 2014 were approved.

There were four matters arising.

a. Feedback from Hebron PC

Councillor Best reported that he had formally written to the Clerk to Hebron Parish Council in the previous week.

b. SHLAA Review consultation response(s)

It was reported that the SHLAA review consultation responses have now been submitted and that the Plan Preparation Group had access to all the responses made by Steering Group members.

c. County Hall update

It was proposed that this item be deferred until Councillor Parker joined the meeting.

d. Press release / e-update on MNP progress

Due to the ongoing proceedings concerning the re-location of County Hall it was agreed that the proposed press release to provide an update on the progress of the Plan be deferred.

It was however stated that there was to be a meeting on the 28th October 2014 between Councillor Best, Geoff Paul, Paul Leo, Karen Ledger and Joanne Garrick to discuss County Council strategic assets, focussing on Morpeth Town Centre.

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

a. Progressing the Plan – Draft Plan Preparation: further draft text for SG approval (appended to agenda)

Reference was made to the draft report previously circulated to the Group and immediate comments were requested.

Councillor Cowans noted that the heritage connectivity for humans had not been included in as much detail as for animals.

Action: Councillor Cowans to contribute text for this section.

Councillor Woodard noted that there was an absence of comment on green spaces around Pegswood and also that there was no space for development on the Pegswood side of the bypass.

Action: Councillor Woodard to provide additional wording.

Colin Pearson arrived at 3.14pm

Councillor Best requested any further comments on the policies to be submitted to him by the 15th October 2014 to be fed back to the PPG on the 17th October 2014.

David English questioned the wording of some of the policies. The example provided was development on the open countryside. He commented that it should be more specific to the type of development, reference made to the NPFF criteria and clarify that appropriate development be permitted.

The issue of affordable housing was discussed especially in Mitford. If developers had to provide for this how this could be “policed”. It was concluded that this remained a difficult issue.

Councillor Best advised that any internal inconsistencies would be corrected at the final editorial stage.

b. Strategic Environmental Assessment – verbal update on progress

Ian Campbell gave a verbal update on the SEA and how there needed to be a continuing compatibility between the SEA and the MNP objectives.

Rob Naples referred to the workshop held on the 7th April 2014 and the work that followed on from this this assessment. Ian Campbell tabled an extract of the report which showed a fresh assessment of the compatibility of the revised objectives. The assessment scored policy on the three smaller villages as negative, because taken alone, it did not appear to allow development that would allow the settlements to remain inclusive. It was noted that the objectives should not be taken in isolation and that it was important to look at the integrated picture.

David English confirmed that a cross in a box need not show an overall failure if an explanation could be given for the outcome. Rob commented that he would review the text in the light of the Steering Group discussion.

Ian Campbell requested approval of the document and stressed that when taken overall it was not flawed. It was agreed that with minor modifications, that is the explanatory paragraphs, that the document was approved.

c. MNP Project Plan – verbal report: consultation draft schedule

A verbal report on the progress of the plan was given by Councillor Ashmore. He also presented a paper showing the key milestones and completion deadlines titled “MNP Project Plan Version 6 – 13/10/14”. He commented that the dates had been determined working back from the deadline of the 31 March 2015. He stated that the PPG had committed to meet every Friday morning until Christmas and each meeting had specific tasks allocated against it.

It was noted that deadline 6 should be for pre-submission draft policies to be approved by the Steering Group on the 10th November 2014 and that 11 was for information only. It was stated that the document submitted to the County Council may not be in general conformity with the Core Strategy as this was not yet known however the objective was that it would not be materially different.

Councillor Parker arrived at 3.40pm.

David English questioned if Morpeth Town Council approval, as the qualifying body, was required. Councillor Best stated that the Planning and Transport Committee had delegated authority however depending on timing the consultation draft Plan would be presented at a meeting of the Full Council for approval.

Councillor Bayard left the meeting at 3.47pm.

It was resolved that if the text and policies could be signed off at the Steering Group meeting on the 10th November that it was intended that the draft documents incorporating the images and maps would be signed off at the Steering Group meeting on December 8th 2014.

Councillor Best requested that images and pictures to be considered be submitted to him within one week.

Item 2c was now considered: County Hall Update

Councillor Parker reported that he had attended three meetings in relation to the closure of County Hall; the Petitions Committee in July, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September and most recently the NCC Policy Board where he presented the Town Council objections.

Councillor Parker noted that motion for County Hall closure was proposed and seconded before he had the opportunity to put forward his evidence. He concluded that the County Council were ignoring the impact of the closure of the building on Morpeth and had considered the move from a strategic planning perspective. He expressed his disappointment that there were no Planning Officers in attendance at the Scrutiny meeting.

He proposed that a Deputation be formed to lobby the Leader of the Council that the land be designated for economic purposes and not housing.

It was debated whether this deputation would be made in conjunction with the meeting with Geoff Paul on strategic assets referred to earlier in the meeting or whether to retain as two separate strands. It was concluded that these meetings should remain separate.

It was proposed that Councillors' Sharp, Parker, Woodard, Ashmore and either Councillor Best or Councillor Tebbutt take forward the Strategic planning meetings and that Councillor Best, Ian Campbell and David Lodge the Partnership meeting.

Action: Councillor Best to request meetings.

4. Resources and Support

a. Funding through to end March '15 – verbal update

A paper was tabled which showed the budget and expected outturn for the preparation of the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan to 31 March 2015. This showed the additional contribution already requested from each Parish Council to cover the shortfall of £306. It was discussed if a contingency to £1000 should also be funded and it was agreed that this would be provided if required at the year end.

5. NCC Update

a. Evidence Base studies update (Employment Land study; pedestrian and cycle audit of town centre)

David English advised that Consultants had not been appointed to undertake the Employment Land demand study and that the contract is to be retendered.

It was stated that the Sustrans pedestrian and cycle audit, due July 2014, has not yet completed.

b. Core Strategy Update

It was stated that there was no further updates on the Core Strategy that had not already been covered in the meeting.

6. Any other business / Date of next meeting

Councillor Cowans referred to GMDT and if the MNP could be used for the short term development of the Heritage Plan pending the recruitment of Consultants.

Action: Councillor Best to contact the Morpeth Heritage Group to clarify the approach.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 10th November 2014 at 3pm in the Corn Exchange.

The meeting concluded at 16.37 pm.