

NOTES OF THE MORPETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP MEETING

MONDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2014 **IN THE BALLROOM OF MORPETH TOWN HALL**

Present

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

Representing

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

In attendance

Ian Campbell
David English

Project Co-ordinator
Northumberland County Council (NCC)

Clerk

Miss Gillian Turner
Miss Louise Davey

Morpeth Town Council (MTC)
MTC

The meeting commenced at 3.02pm.

1. Welcomes/Apologies/Introductions

Apologies were received from Councillor Joan Tebbutt (Chairman), Councillor Andrew Kelly, David Lodge, Colin Pearson and David Rowlinson.

Cllr Joan Tebbutt will not be available until 20th October at the earliest. Given her prolonged absence the Deputy Chairman, Councillor Nic Best assumed the role of Acting Chairman and appointed Councillor Philip Ashmore and Graeme Trotter as acting vice-chairs.

2. Notes of 14th August 2014 Steering Group and Matters Arising

Councillor Best referred to an e mail he received earlier in the day from the Clerk to Hebron Parish Council. He outlined the contents as:

- Concerns of tangible conclusions of the Neighbourhood Plan
- Possibility that the Steering group may not have been properly constituted
- Ongoing delays of the NCC Core Strategy
- Lack of NCC recognition of Parish concerns regarding planning applications

The email concluded that the Parish would maintain a watching brief of further actions.

Action: Councillor Nic Best to contact the Clerk to Hebron Parish Council to confirm consent to continuing within the Plan area.

The notes of the Steering Group meeting were approved subject to the recognition that Councillor Mike Shape was in attendance.

a. Governance – confirmation of arrangements, letter from DCLG

The letter from DCLG was discussed and it noted that DCLG identifies planning guidance as the source of guidelines for managing a Neighbourhood Plan process.

The governance arrangements of the Group were discussed. It was confirmed that only Councillors can vote as specified in the document titled “The Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan Governance Arrangements” and that this was a proper arrangement.

Councillor David Parker requested that his concerns about the current structure and governance arrangements be recorded. In particular, he questioned how the process could demonstrate community engagement if the public could not attend Steering Group meetings. An alternative arrangement was not proposed.

b. Meeting with Geoff Paul – verbal report

Nic Best, Ian Campbell and Colin Haylock met Geoff Paul, NCC Head of Regeneration, Housing & Planning and JoAnne Garrick on the 28th August 2014.

Ian Campbell reported that Geoff Paul had expressed positive support for the MNP and wanted to continue to work collaboratively. At the meeting reference had been made to the recent outline planning permission granted and NCC’s new methodology for calculating the five year land supply.

The NP representatives requested that land at County Hall be used for employment and not housing. It was noted that the consultants to undertake the land study had yet to be appointed and that their report would not be completed until the end of November 2014.

Clr Parker noted that Geoff Paul had made a presentation to the North Area Committee in which he had indicated that NCC would not regenerate one part of the Council area at the expense of another.

c. Input from Colin Haylock

Colin Haylock, who facilitated initial visioning workshops and then a town centre visioning workshop has now, acting as Planning Aid support, produced sketch maps outlining the scope and character of potential development in the town centre.

The drawings will add a pictorial element to the report for the Town Centre. The opportunities for development with regard to a cultural corridor were discussed and this included the leisure centre, library and Castle Square. It was agreed that NCC opinions be requested as to how these would impact on the plan.

Action: Councillor Nic Best to write to Geoff Paul.

d. SHLAA Review consultation response(s)

All the parish and town councils will be responding to the current SHLAA review consultation. It was agreed that the various responses should be shared before submission and discussions to align them would be held as far as possible. ..

It was noted that the SHLAA is not about the merits and characteristics of individual sites and a positive outcome on the SHLAA does not imply allocation or approval for development. It was also noted that the SHLAA review follows an established methodology.

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

a. Progressing the Plan – Draft Plan Preparation: initial draft text

The first instalment of the draft Plan text had been circulated to Steering Group members. It was requested that feedback on the detail of the text be progressed outside of the meeting.

Questions were raised about the completeness of the text and if it included all headings. It was advised that some text and headings may have been removed by the editing team. Councillor Woodard questioned if it would be more appropriate for Pegswood to have its own section as he was concerned that if it was incorporated within other sections conclusions may be drawn that were not agreed with by the Parish.

It was requested that if there was disagreement with the text provided to date, that this needed to be flagged to the Editorial Team as a matter of urgency.

The NCC Officer commented on the good progress of the plan and offered informal feedback on the style and approach. It was suggested that planning and community policies be distinguished by the use of different colours and that the sequential numbering of both policies combined, should be avoided.

Councillor Alison Byard left the meeting at 3.40pm.

It was noted that the PPG now met weekly for editing purposes and that the date proposed for the sign off for the consultation period was at the Steering Group meeting on the 8th December 2014. It was agreed that that the public consultation was to be from the 14th January 2015 to 25th February 2015 which would avoid the holiday period. It was anticipated that this would allow the plan to be completed by the 31 March 2015. Concern was expressed about whether feedback from the consultation could be effectively incorporated into the plan within this timeframe. It was agreed that a press release should be prepared to explain the delay of the original planned timescale and that this would also be sent out by e-letter.

Action: Graeme Trotter to prepare and distribute an eNewsletter

b. Need for volunteers: photos, digital maps etc

It was stated that while the main body of the report had progressed there were a number of documents still required for example photographs and digital maps to put the some aspects of the plan into context. Volunteers were requested to provide these by the 24th November.

Action: Councillor Nic Brown to provide a list of the pictures required.

c. Strategic Environmental Assessment – verbal update

Ian Campbell outlined the stage of the report being at the “reasonable alternatives” drafting stage. The NCC Officer advised that the full suite of policies is required to do the assessment to finalise the report.

It was agreed that the plan objective and principles could be evaluated now by an NCC Officer.

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

It was agreed that this item had been covered previously.

4. Resources and Support

a. Funding through to end March ‘15

It was discussed how the period from January to March 2015, especially the costs of the consultation, would be financed.

At this meeting it was agreed that additional funding could be agreed in principle however that full budgets were required before a decision could be made. Concerns were expressed whether the funding from the Locality bid could be extended beyond 31 December 2014.

The Acting Chair promised to let all parish and town council representatives have – by the end of September - a Plan budget for the period Jan – Mar '15, with indicative suggested contributions weighted by electoral role sizes.

Action: Nic Best & Gillian Turner to prepare Plan budget.

5. NCC Update

a. Countywide study of employment land

It was confirmed that the consultants to undertake this work were to be appointed on the 23rd September 2014 and that the report should be produced by the 30th November 2014.

b. Pedestrian & cycling audits of town centres

It was confirmed that JoAnne Garrick, NCC, had been in contact with regard to the pedestrian and cycle audit of Morpeth and other town centres. Sustrans were due to complete this work by July 31 2014 but there has been some slippage in this plan. The findings will be presented to the Town Council and it was noted that there may be a possible impact on the MNP draft plan.

c. Current expected consultation date for next iteration of Core Strategy

A NCC Officer advised that it was intended that the statutory consultation on the Core Strategy would take place over Christmas, with the consultation draft being signed off by the NCC Policy Board on 27th November.

6. Any other business / Date of next meeting

The meeting ended at 16.15pm and it was confirmed that the date of the next meeting was 13th October 2014.