

**NOTES OF THE MORPETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP  
MEETING**

**MONDAY 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 3pm  
IN THE CORN EXCHANGE OF MORPETH TOWN HALL**

**Present**

Councillor Nic Best  
Councillor Bob Robertson  
Councillor David Parker

Councillor David Cowans  
Peter Fuller  
Councillor Mike Sharp  
Councillor David Woodard  
Colin Pearson  
Graeme Trotter

**Representing**

Morpeth Town Council – Acting Chairman  
Morpeth Town Council  
Morpeth Town Council and Housing Topic  
Group  
Heritage Topic Group  
Transport Topic Group  
Mitford Parish Council  
Pegswood Parish Council  
Education Topic Group  
Sport and Leisure Topic Group

**In attendance**

Ian Campbell  
David English  
David Rowlinson

Project Co-ordinator  
Northumberland County Council (NCC)  
NCC

**Clerks**

Mrs Dee Cota  
Miss Louise Davey

Morpeth Town Council (MTC)  
MTC

The meeting commenced at 3pm.

**1. Welcomes/Apologies/Introductions**

Apologies were received from Councillors Joan Tebbutt, Alison Byard, Philip Ashmore and Mr David Lodge.

**2. Notes of 13 November Steering Group and Matters Arising**

The notes of the meeting of the Steering Group Meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014 were approved subject to the addition of a footnote on page 2 regarding the NCC proposed greenbelt boundaries.

There were a number of matters arising. Concerns were raised regarding:

- The lack of specific inclusion of listings of buildings and vistas identified by the Heritage Topic Group, a sketch map prepared by the Heritage Topic Group showing the connectivity of rural footpaths and the Morpeth Town conservation area:
  - A perceived lack of employment allocations due to the increased scale of housing provision.
- a. It was agreed that the listings and the footpath map will be added to the website as a supporting document. The Town Centre Composite Map will include the current Town Centre conservation area. Members were informed that that a meeting had taken place between NCC Officers, Jo-Anne Garrick, David Rowlinson and Joan Sanderson, and representatives from the MNP, Simon Cox, Nic Best and Philip Ashmore. This provided a brief as to the progress of the core strategy and how this related to the MNP. It was confirmed that the increased figure of 2100 houses was for the whole of the plan area and not just Morpeth. David Rowlinson agreed that the interpretation of this text was ambiguous and that it would be redrafted.

It was noted that a series of meetings were to be held in the New Year about town centre development. It was anticipated that attendees would include Paul Leo, Geoff Paul and Karen Ledger.

Nic Best stated that he had not yet had the higher level meeting with NCC Officers about the ad-hoc decisions being made.

- b. Bob Robertson reported that the Developer Engagement Group was to meet with Taylor Wimpey on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 in the Town Hall. He did not anticipate that their development would have an immediate impact on Morpeth.

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

#### **a. Progressing the Plan – to approve the full design version of the consultation draft plan**

David English raised his concern around the lack of distinction between planning policies that have statutory weight and community policies. He also commented on the consecutive numbering which may be taken to indicate that they were equally weighted. He referred to the Alnwick neighbourhood plan where the community policies were named community action proposals and were included in different columns.

It was suggested that the two could be differentiated by the use of colours and to separate the numbering system.

David English referred to his email suggesting changes to the Settlement Boundary Policy and expressed concerns that this had largely been dismissed. He stated that he was concerned that the policy adopted may not be consistent with the NPPF.

It was agreed that the text for the Policy be circulated prior to finalisation.

Two maps were tabled. It was intended that the green infrastructure map, map 8, would replace the current map in the plan.

Map 13 identified the key development opportunity sites. Nic Best referred to the NCC countywide study on employment land and how this would inform the plan however this had not yet been completed.

David Rowlinson confirmed that that brief had been completed but not yet been tendered.

Nic Best informed the meeting that there was outstanding information in appendices on:

- guidance for landscape corridors;
- local green space and protected public open space locations.

Nic Best advised that on advice landscape corridors would not have dimensions. Concerns about the lack of a landscape corridor approach to Mitford and a wildlife corridor through Hepscott were raised.

It was agreed that the replacement Map 8 showing wildlife and landscape corridors would be redrawn to include extension of the landscape corridor through Mitford, and the wildlife corridor through Hepscott.

Action: Nic Best and PPG

David English again raised concerns that the presentation of the plan was misleading especially the inclusion of planning policies and community proposals in the main body of the same document.

Nic Best stated that this was a problem because the draft Plan necessarily addressed two audiences – the public who wanted to see an integrated approach and the planners who were only concerned with land use planning policies.

David English said that there was a very real risk that an examiner would reject the Plan if the policies and community actions were not separated out. reviewed the plan if it would be rejected. Nic Best indicated that if the consultation was to go ahead as planned, there was no time for major restructuring, but that the PPG would work on ways of distinguishing the two elements of the Plan more clearly. He hoped that it would be possible to restructure the Plan after consultation so that the Submission draft addressed these concerns fully, without triggering the need for a further consultation.

It was debated if the quotes linked to images in the report and taken from the Issues & Options consultation should be attributed and that this would be discussed at the next PPG meeting.

**b. Draft plan summary consultation leaflet**

The draft summary leaflet was discussed in detail. A number of concerns were raised including the appropriateness of the:

- length and density of the document;
- font size;
- questionnaire.

It was acknowledged that the timescale for any revisions to the document was very tight as the final sign off with the designer was the 15<sup>th</sup> December to ensure that the timescale for delivery in line with the consultation launch could be met.

It was agreed that the PPG would discuss the options to make changes at their meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

It was agreed that A3 posters would be provided for the Parishes together with static displays from the previous consultation.

David English expressed grave concern that the Planning Policies and Community Actions were not distinguished at all in the draft leaflet. This could be viewed as totally misleading the public over the authority and powers of aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan such that an Examiner would see the consultation as being fatally flawed.

It was agreed that the PPG would make such late stage changes as were possible, including distinguishing clearly between Planning Policies and Community Actions.

**c. Strategic environment assessment report (SEA)**

It was reported that both the draft SEA Environmental Report and the SEA Final Scoping report was presented to and approved by the MTC Planning and Transport Committee – as representing the qualifying body - on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014.

It was confirmed that Rob Naples, NCC, was finalising the SEA Environmental Report. Both SEA reports will be posted on the website as part of the consultation exercise.

**d. MNP Project Plan v4**

Members were informed that the project plan remained unchanged from that reported at the Steering Group meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

**e. Consultation process: launch, drop in events, exhibitions**

It was reported that, as the Town Hall was closed in January 2015 for refurbishment, St James Community Centre had been booked provisionally on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015 for the launch. It was also intended that a market stall would be staffed on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and additional support was requested from the Parishes.

Graeme Trotter left the meeting.

Other venues and options were considered including an exhibition in the library and the Town Hall Butter Market. It was suggested that wall posters could be displayed in the Bus Station.

Action: Nic Best

**4. Resources and Support**

It was noted that significant resources continued to be provided by volunteers.

Graeme Trotter returned to the meeting.

Nic Best reported that although Ian Campbell was leaving the Plan programme he would be available for ad-hoc support. He also reported that Louise Davey would leave on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. Thanks were given to both for their hard work and support.

**5. NCC Update**

**a. Core Strategy consultation**

It was confirmed that the NCC consultation period would end on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015<sup>1</sup>. It was intended that there would be a response from the Town Council, as the qualifying body and another from the MNP overall response based on the protocol previously agreed.

**6. Any other business / Date of next meeting**

There was no other business and the date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015. The meeting ended at 5pm.

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<sup>1</sup> NCC consultation literature identifies the closing date as 11<sup>th</sup> Feb