

Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan

Environment Topic Group

Town Hall, Morpeth - Monday 11 February 2013

1. Present:

Nic Best (NB) (Chair); Ian Campbell (IC); Linda Doherty; Peter Scott; Wendy Fail; Stuart Hendy; Joan Soames; John Lewis; Pat Snowden; John Earl.

Colin Haylock (CH) (CABE Built Environment Expert) also in attendance

2. Apologies:

Phil Ashmore; Alan Davison (AD); Geoff Parkin; Leslie Starkie (LS).

3. Notes of Environment Topic Group meeting 14 January 2013 and Matters Arising

These were received.

NB highlighted that since the last meeting he had circulated the following information:

- various plans prepared by Alan Davison relating to ecological interests; and historic land uses, including the approximate locations of Morpeth's market gardens;
- a copyright report prepared by Alan Davison on the environmental and historical context of the town and the wider Wansbeck Valley;
- a note prepared by Leslie Starkie on the local footpath network
- a County Council officer response to an information request on the impacts and delivery timescale of the Morpeth Northern Bypass

AD's plans and notes were considered to be highly useful baseline information for the group that would inform and influence any emerging development pattern proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan.

LS' note on the footpath network was similarly helpful highlighting maintenance issues; potential conflicts between uses and the need to strengthen local footpath networks. It also highlighted opportunities to link into more strategic walking routes across the county and the wider health and tourism benefits.

NB noted from the NCC highways officers' response that the timescale for the approval and delivery of the Bypass was not as previously understood. Subject to the application for a Development Consent Order being submitted in March 2013 approval for the scheme might be granted in Summer 2014 (approx. 16 months). Scheme delivery might then commence in Autumn 2014 with completion by Spring 2016. This delivery timescale may have a consequential impact on the delivery of development on the St. George's Hospital site.

NB advised that the Core Strategy Preferred Options was now out to consultation and various consultation "events" were to be held over the coming weeks. Any comments on the environmental (or other) policies could be forwarded to him for inclusion in a Morpeth Town Council response. Individual responses are also encouraged. The deadline for responses is 20th March.

4. Visioning

Colin Haylock outlined his role and background in respect of work he is "contracted" to undertake in support of the preparation of the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. He anticipated that the outcome of the visioning and subsequent workshops would help to inform plan objectives. The Visioning Workshop was held on 5th Feb and notes by IC had been circulated. Two subsequent workshops are

to be held on 4th March (focussing on where development might be appropriate) and on 11th March (focussing on the quality of development).

Commenting on the Alan Davison plans, CH advised that he would be undertaking some broad brush environmental appraisal work to inform the second workshop when we would consider where development might be constrained and where development might be less harmful to the local and wider environment.

5. Evidence Gathering

The remainder of the meeting revolved around discussions on how further baseline information might be gathered by Group members with the following actions agreed:

a) 'green infrastructure' – that's green spaces, wildlife corridors, landscape corridors, woodlands, street trees, interconnectivity – **Alan Davison, John Earl**

b) Footpaths, cycleways etc – **Wendy Fail, Leslie Starkie**

c) Flooding: everyone feedback to Nic Best and Geoff Parkin with detailed descriptions of **areas liable to flooding or at flood risk** beyond the town centre area to be covered by EA scheme. They all need to be listed in our Issues & Options report. Phil Ashmore and John Lewis have 'volunteered' to provide info about flood risk and susceptibility in Hepscott

d) Sustainability, renewable energy etc – mainly involves talking to Transition Town Groups: **Wendy Fail, Nic Best**

6. Next meeting:

Provisionally set for Monday 25 February 2013 (but subject to confirmation)

Following meeting Monday 25 March 2013

IHC

13 February 2013