

Neighbourhood Plan

Notes of Second Housing Topic Group

Morpeth Town Hall, 11th December 2012

1. PRESENT:

David Parker

Ian Cambell

Hugh Edmunson

Alan Sambrook

Joan Tebbutt

Tim Nichol

Peter Scott

Simon Cox

Henry Warne

APOLOGIES:

Martin Laidler

Alan Jones

David Holden

Jo Gooding

Anna Jones

2. It was noted that the minutes had not been circulated to all. Of the tasks identified as needed for this meeting, all had been completed except that we await the Housing Needs Survey being undertaken by NCC and this will hopefully be ready in January 2013. It was noted that the Glossary of Terms had been taken from www.locality.org.uk, which is a useful website with accessible information. All other documents to be prepared were available except for the summary of the Lock Report, due to an oversight. It will be circulated and is very useful, but we need to look at evidence first. David Parker (DP) will ask MTC to send out all documents prior to each meeting.
3. DP informed the group that the Issues and Options Consultation on the Core Strategy has been completed and the number of Housing Delivery Areas is to be increased, with Morpeth now in the same area as Ponteland. Housing Allocations will be done on that basis but will also be drilled down to smaller areas e.g. where a NP is taking place. That will give us the housing figures we need to work with.
4. **Feedback from Launch Events**
Ian Campbell (IC) talked about his findings from housing related comments from the public attending the various events. Although this was not a formal consultation, a readily available audit trail of consultations and comments is required and all the Chairs of all the Topic groups will receive copies of the representations.
The most frequently raised issues for **Morpeth** were:

- **Location.** There were positive statements about where growth should go e.g. St George's, brownfield and North of the town. There were also negative statements such as no development in greenbelt, none south of Loansdean and avoid flood plains.
- **Housing Choice.** Again there were positive and negative comments. Affordable housing was seen as a critical issue, plus housing for all ages, starter homes etc. Re house types some considered that there should not be too many flats or town houses.
- **Cost of Housing.** Prices were referred to as Morpeth is a high cost area.
- **Infrastructure.** Concern was expressed that existing infrastructure is not able to cater for development e.g. schools and roads. Shops were also referred to.
- **Housing/Neighbourhood Design.** Homes should be smaller and eco friendly. Development must be in proportion to the size and nature of the town. Transport links must be planned at an early stage.
- **Concern re perceived overdevelopment.** This concern was not raised by many people but we need to have regard to their view.

Pegswood consultees were more receptive to development. Comments included:

- More people – more facilities
- Affordable housing but not “cheap” housing
- Mix of house types on each estate.
- Better integration of new estates.

Mitford consultees were more resistant to development because:

- There is a wish to ensure the village remains unspoilt
- We must avoid settlements coalescing.

The Core Strategy will state the role of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP), which will shape and manage future growth patterns. The main drivers are Housing and the Local Economy, but we must also have regard to environmental and heritage aspects as cross cutting issues, because this is our sense of identity/place. Growth patterns will be determined by our infrastructure e.g. transport, education, community infrastructure, sports and leisure. There are some issues that constrain development, e.g. flood plains, but others facilitate development.

A question was raised as to whether the community responses will form part of the N P. IC said they will be available on the website and as evidence for the Examiner, and it was agreed that they should be included as an Appendix to the NP and should provide threads through what we address/produce.

Protection of the Environment e.g. environmental corridors and green spaces must be covered and it was confirmed that this is being addressed by the Environment Topic Group.

5. Key Players to Engage in Discussion

There are key players whose future actions will have a bearing on what form development takes. We need to find out their aspirations and what they can deliver. Who are they? How do we engage with them? Is there anything we should look at to get direct evidence?

As regards non commercial/market housing ISOS was suggested. We need to find out what rules govern them as the key delivery agency. Johnny Johnson was also suggested. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is also important and they want to put an application in for the St George's site in the near future. We need to satisfy them that we are serious re the process and keen to involve them. Glendale Gateway Trust was suggested as they operate in rural areas.

Tim Nichols, who is a Trustee of KEVI, indicated that the school has a huge site and since many acres, in addition to the site proposed for McCarthy and Stone, could be used for development, we should meet with them.

There are also numerous private development companies. It may be that we can consult them through the House Builders' Federation so we can treat them all the same. There was some discussion about whether we prepare our proposals before meeting with them or request written representations and pick up issues needing clarification at meetings with them later. There is a limit to the amount of documentation we would want from them, so perhaps a carefully worded questionnaire could be designed. We need a draft to discuss.

Concern was expressed that this could be taking us away from what the public want. However, it was agreed that it is not the community who will be delivering development and we must be in a position to rule out what is not deliverable. E.g. the HCA are there to meet the government housing agenda and have a strategic site for which they have outline planning permission. There is no point coming up with a plan they cannot meet.

It was agreed that when we do things is possibly more important than what we do, as we can make provisional decisions first then focus discussions down with developers so we are not unduly influenced by their proposals.

It was also agreed that it could be useful to meet at an early stage with:

- the Glendale Gateway Trust as they have no axe to grind and it is community led;
- NCC asset management, as NCC owns many of the sites; and
- Dransfield.

Partnership and looking for win/win scenarios is the best way forward. We need “profit” for the community and for the developers.

6. Strategic Housing Availability Land Assessment (SHLAA)

Hugh Edmundson (HE) presented his guide to the SHLAA. It is not a plan or a policy, but simply a list identifying pieces of land where it is possible to develop housing. We need a 5 year supply of housing land to meet NPPF requirements and the SHLAA gives a rough idea of where housing might be developed.

The SHLAA fits in with the Local Development Plan (LDP) that NCC has to produce. The main strategic document for that is the Core Strategy, which is an overarching document with no details of sites. The Northumberland Delivery Document will do that and this will use an updated SHLAA, although this may not be available until late 2013 at the earliest. We could identify a plan for housing that could be slotted into the Delivery document.

The SHLAA will guide development and the NP will feature SHLAA sites. The Examiner may not approve development of sites in the NP that are not within the SHLAA. However, it is not a recipe for a planning application. It covers the period to 2026, but timing of the delivery of sites may be dictated by specific constraints such as access, flood plain, cost of development etc.

The SHLAA is a subjective assessment that is never fully comprehensive or correct. It identifies 141 sites in the Morpeth NP area and these are all of different size, constraints and timing. NCC has the list of land ownership for the sites. Until we know the housing need figures we do not need to look at possible land availability and, in any case, any site may be needed by another Topic Group.

For more details please see HE’s document.

There was no time to discuss the SHMA at this meeting.

7. Next Steps

We must now look at needs rather than supply, and this is more complex. We need NCC to finalise their work on housing need. IC will try to get hold of some of the up

to date work and invite somebody to our next meeting. We will also invite the Glendale Gateway Trust.

DP will check with the MTC office about distribution of documents.

Preparation of a draft questionnaire for developers was postponed for a later time.

8. Date of next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in Morpeth Town Hall on 15th January 2013 (**NOT** 8th as previously suggested) in the Town Hall. The date may be altered depending on the availability of people we wish to invite to talk to us.