

## **Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Notes of Fourth Housing Topic Group**

**Morpeth Town Hall, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

#### **1. Present:**

Cllr. David Parker (MTC and Chair), Ian Campbell (Consultant to MTC), Simon Cox, Hugh Edmundson, Jo Gooding, David Holden, Alan Jones, Anna Jones, Martin Laidler, Tim Nichol, Cllr. Alan Sambrook (Pegswood Parish Council), Joan Tebbutt, Henry Warne (GMDT), and Colin Haylock (facilitator from CABE).

#### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Chris Offord.

#### **3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

IC had spoken with Joan Sanderson about AS's query about the status of Pegswood. It appears that following consultation in relation to the Issues and Options document, there have been amendments made, so the Preferred Options document redefines the housing delivery areas and the roles of settlements. There are now "main settlements", which includes Morpeth, and "others", which includes Pegswood. About the "others" it says that development must be appropriate to the size of the settlement.

The issues of the inner boundary of green belt around Morpeth, there are as yet no preferred options, as further work is required about this and housing numbers. There will be further consultation about preferred options in relation to these issues later in the year.

#### **5. CABE and the support offered**

Colin Haylock introduced himself. He is an Architect/Planner working with CABE and has 15 working days to work with Morpeth to carry forward the neighbourhood Plan. He has already facilitated the Workshop on "Vision" and will carry out two more workshops on 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March. He said that, when we want to keep things we may have to do something in order to ensure they are kept, but if we want change we need the right policies to deliver them. He hopes that the workshops, in which all the Topic Groups are involved, we will be able to join up the various strands.

He likes to come up with his own independent view of opportunities, and the Environment group has asked him to do that early so as to provide something for them to react to.

Straight away it appears that Pegswood wants to go a different way to what NCC envisages. Colin was going there the day after this meeting. CH said that there are some challenging issues to deal with and some brought assumptions to be made, such as the SLR and the land it unlocks and how much sewerage work will cost. Three things occurred to him:

- a. How much housing we need and what type. The nature and character of the housing is important so new development does not look like alien additions to the town.
- b. Whether the SLR would enable a richer mix of housing and employment. For this we need the right mix and the right housing.
- c. Whether the SLR radically changes the pressure on the Telford Bridge and enables us to still consider housing to the south of Morpeth. The transport study being undertaken by NCC is therefore crucial.

## **6. Discussion**

A lengthy discussion took place without much progress being made. Points raised included:

- DH indicated that it is difficult to fill in the gaps without knowing the housing numbers required. He is glad that housing and employment are to be looked at together. As that is crucial. CH suggested that we could look at the edges of the town and see what could actually be improved, and this could lead us to thinking about numbers of homes.
- SC asked if it would be best for us to decide a rough figure so we can move forward and amend later, otherwise our process is stalled. CH responded that we can collect evidence without knowing exactly how it is useful e.g. where do we feel delicate about? This may lead us to a natural figure for homes that we can feed in to NCC. We can identify capacity without knowing numbers.
- No affordable housing has been built in recent years in Morpeth, but it is difficult to deliver given current market conditions. We could look at some sites specifically for affordable housing. Little infill sites are difficult for this, but we could offer a developer a good site on condition that they deliver a small site for a registered Social Landlord at the same time.

- The cost of sewerage connection is an issue. If the treatment works are at capacity, housing cannot be delivered until funds become available through a Section 106 agreement. Physical capacity and timing issues have to be addressed during the plan period. NCC as LPA could condition a developer to deal with this through a Section 106 agreement or a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The cost could leave developers only able to build large homes in order to meet the cost of infrastructure. However, it would appear that NCC are not putting pressure on developers in this way. The question was asked whether we could use the development that **wants** to come to Morpeth to address the requirements of the town.
- NCC set out a new style plan with strategic elements. The NP must comply with the broad elements, but, if they say X housing and employment land is needed, they cannot veto it if we say we want more.
- Pegswood could be an example of how the Neighbourhood Plan process is an opportunity to feed into the work being done by NCC, who are looking county wide. We are able to look at the local scene to decide what works best for us. We could for instance say that North Morpeth plus Pegswood and brownfield sites are what should be developed. NCC appears to want to protect countryside between the two towns – is that what we want?
- The SLR and the junction changes proposed for North Morpeth changes the geography of the area between Morpeth and Ashington. There is a lot of opportunity for work and living along that axis.
- The age profile of Morpeth is a problem. We need a more balanced community. Pegswood is more affordable, but more by accident than design. In relation to sustainability, Pegswood needs employment and shops to prevent it becoming even more of a dormitory settlement.
- School catchment areas influence where people want to live.
- There are a number of strategic sites that are relevant to us even if they are not inside the plan area. These include Hepscoth Park, St Mary's and Northgate Hospital.
- We need some objectives and a road map to help us to focus. Examples included:
  - We agree that Mitford and Hepscoth are left as they are.
  - Assume a “chunk” of housing.

- Some robust criteria e.g. being mindful of heritage and environment
- North Morpeth appears to meet a number of criteria for housing and employment, although concern was expressed that access to St Georges would be to the SLR.
- We need a broad hypothesis to test out with developers and provider such as ISOS.
- An understanding of the capacity of the infrastructure is key, e.g. County have already done an impact assessment of the SLR on traffic in the town centre and the figure is only 10% or 12%, so it is not game changing.
- We need to assimilate our views and then check the realism of our aims.

### **Next steps**

IC had been using a flip chart to note objectives raised during the discussion. He will circulate these and identify the steps we need to take to be to prepare an Issues and Options document. We will use this as the first item on the agenda at our next meeting and then test it out when we meet later with Charles Robinson. It was agreed that we need extra meetings to move forward.

### **7. Dates of Future Meeting**

The next meeting will be held in Morpeth Town Hall on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February at 7pm and then Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March February 2013 at 7pm, although DP will check with Charles Robinson about his availability.