

MORPETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Minutes from Local Economy group meeting 20th November 2012

Present

David Lodge – Chair	(CEO Greater Morpeth Development Trust)
Ian Campbell- Project Officer	(Consultant for Morpeth Town Council)
Leslie Starkey	(Local resident)
Carol Robinson	(Local resident/ freelance consultant)
Ken Brown	(Morpeth Town Councillor/ Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group)
Eric Fletcher	(Local resident/ retired policeman)
Kevin Cassey	(Representing Pegswood Parish Council)
Keith Ray	(Local resident/ involved with regeneration projects such as 'Go Wansbeck')
James Mee	(Local resident/ small business owner)

Apologies

None

Carol agreed to write the minutes for this evening's meeting.

Introduction

David and Ian gave an introduction to the context of Neighbourhood Planning (NP) being a community- led process.

Morpeth is working with adjoining parishes which see Morpeth as their main service centre.

NP is an opportunity to help shape future growth and development in the town for the next 15-20 years. It will sit within the County Council's overall strategic framework.

A NP Steering Group has been formed and 4 topic groups (including this local economy group) have been established to identify key issues.

The process will result in a consultation draft.

Local Economy in Morpeth

- Strong sense of identity as an historic market town.
- A view that growth and development must be in keeping with this context.
- Group will focus on strengths/ weaknesses of the local economy, the key drivers, land and employment sites available, role of the town centre in tourism.
- Perspective of outlying parishes: E.g Pegswood has a separate identity and facilities for the community but relies on Morpeth for wider services. Rural issues such as the need for high speed broadband E.g Mitford.
- Newgate Street- high number of business closures/ turnover.
- National chains have advantage- ability to pay business rent and rates.

- A strength is the number of independent shops.
- How to encourage business into the town? Accessibility: buses/ parking. Could short-stay parking on Newgate and Bridge Street be increased, especially once through-traffic is reduced with the Northern by-pass?
- Information/ signage.
- Need to attract all ages/ multi-functional.
- Is the balance right? Reference made to previous retail survey and other relevant studies such as Empty Land Review 2010, Northumberland Economic Strategy etc.

It was noted that the coach companies bringing trips to Heighley Gate could be approached to suggest extending their tour to include time in Morpeth town centre.

Potential future development

Where could a future development site be located? Stobhill or Northgate seem the obvious places. Caution against 'urbanised sprawl'.

Group members enquired about the various empty buildings and sites owned by Northumberland County Council, such as The Willows, next to the library.

It was suggested that bulky goods retailers/ distributors might be prepared to clear up and re-develop redundant sites.

Actions

- 1) **Ian** to access relevant strategies and distribute these.
- 2) **Everyone**- identify who else we need on this group.
- 3) **Eric** – to check if there are police statistics available that show crime that could have an impact on local economy (appended)
- 4) **David** – identify issues to consider before the next meeting, which might consist of a 'planning for real' format.

Next Meeting

7.00 - 8.30pm on Tuesday 4th December at Morpeth Town Hall