

NP Environmental Group Meeting 25th March 2013 - Town Hall - 7 pm

1. Present: Phil Ashmore (PA), Nic Best (NB) [chairing], Eric Fletcher (EF), Stuart Hendy (SH), Peter Scott (PSc), Pat Snowden (PSn) [notes], Leslie Starkie (LS)
2. Apologies: Alan Davison (AD), John Earl, Wendy Fail (WF), Geoff Parkin (GP)
3. Notes of 11th Feb accepted
4. Updates:
 - a. **Housing Group met with HCA** [PSc attended] - who are pursuing development on St. George's. Contrary to previous indications, they are now proposing to develop the existing buildings area (which has had planning permission) as Phase I (c 250-300 ho) with access up The Avenue (from foot of Whorral Bank), with the larger Phase II development (650-750 ho?) with access from the proposed bypass later. The HCA need to be aware of the concerns and interests of the Env Group – and engage with the NP process as a whole.
 - b. **Northern Bypass** – NCC has tendered for a contractor for early involvement in the scheme.
 - c. **CABE Workshops** [SH, PSc, PSn, NB attended] – It was useful to see how different groups interact and to put Env Group work in context. Integrating the concerns and interests of the different groups and lobbyists will be difficult. It is not certain if and when the env report promised by Colin Haylock (CH) will materialize.
 - d. The **Where? Workshop** looked at constraints (sewage, transport network, infrastructure, valued characteristics) pointing towards St George's and possibly Pegswood as suitable sites for main development, though the choice of concentrated vs dispersed development was discussed.
 - e. The **How? Workshop** looked at what made Morpeth 'special' and how development could be designed and located to retain and enhance this. CH highlighted the green and wildlife corridors, esp the access routes to the town, echoing much of Env Group's views – and recommended collecting extensive visual evidence.
 - f. MTC has responded to the NCC Core Strategy Preferred Options, the response should be on the NCC website. Main concerns were delays to the process overall and Green Belt designation in particular, absence of local housing numbers, weakness of policy on green infrastructure – and the

pressure from developers and the end of the NPPF transition period. LS noted the potential loss of green spaces and likely sprawl if Morpeth is required to take a large number of houses. He noted that the current talk about the by-pass does not mention the purpose of improving ex-mining towns. The Core Strategy does cite Blyth, Cramlington and Ashington as well as Morpeth for 'additional growth'. NB observed that the bypass is expected to improve access to Pegswood which is one reason for identifying it for growth in the NP.

5. **Flooding:** NB noted that the intention was to write-up a number of current non-town centre flood locations in the Env Technical Report and draw out common causes and issues. PA had written up flooding in Hepscoth (which is the Blyth catchment) in a form that could well be used as a template. Anecdotal reports have been received re: flooding at Abbey Mills (river valley and bridge-related) and Lancaster Park (poor drainage and runoff). Other sites that need to be recorded include Highmoor (Morpeth Common), Leyland Place, Cotting Burn, The Heron's Field, The Chip (Loansdean), Church Burn, Catchburn (related to Hepscoth flooding) and County Hall Pond. Appeals through the TMNP website and consultation need to identify other areas.

LS raised the issue of collecting 'grey water' from rooftops (sustainability) etc – agreed that this could reduce flood risk. The report should also note where future development can create or worsen flood risk, with an argument that all residents downstream of a development should be consulted. PSc raised the issue of flood risk blight and the need to be careful in distinguishing between actual and potential flood risk.

A meeting with Les Hall of NWL scheduled for Tuesday 9th April. NB, GP and PSc to attend from Env Group, PSc to attend either from Housing or Env Group.

6. **Transport:** Five 1:10000 scale definitive maps have been provided by NCC (thanks to WF for making contact and EF for collecting them). They show all rights of way but not all footpaths. While it would be good to join them up wherever possible, that would be a huge task. Important issues include identifying where existing footpaths need to be protected if surrounded by new developments, and that any diversions retain or enhance the overall network. And we need to look at walking (and cycling) access leisure, and for access to schools, workplaces etc. **LS and PA agreed to look at the maps and report back**, building on LS'

earlier report on footpaths. AD might be a useful contact. It was noted that there is an increase in mountain biking on footpaths.

Arising from the Morpeth Transport Review commissioned by NCC from Phil Jones (workshop report available) which concentrated mainly on the Telford Bridge traffic lights, a **NP Transport Group** is being set up including Peter Fuller, Charles Robinson (MDCT), JE, PSc and NB. First meeting on Thurs 4th.

WF reports that **cycling routes** around Morpeth are mapped out on the Sustrans FC10 South East Northumberland Cycling Map (PDF available)

7. **Green Infrastructure:** Following up CH's recommendation of photo evidence, SH agreed to *work with others* to **identify key locations to be photographed and to collect photos**. These would include: approaches to Morpeth, place-defining views, townscapes and landscapes, view from key locations (intervisibility), car level line of sight, long distance landscapes. Liaison with the Heritage Group would be useful.

8. **Technical Report:** NB tabled a draft framework for the Local Environment Technical Report with sections on Vision, Green Infrastructure, Flooding, Transport (if no separate transport report is produced) and 'Building In Sustainability'. SH said it needs to be cross-referenced with the Core Strategy. Ideally we need to start drafting text for these sections by the next meeting:
 - Vision: EF noted the various resources he had identified including landscape character assessments and lists of SSSIs. NB agreed to post these on the website
 - Green Infrastructure: SH agreed to work on important views and settings (collecting images), and with others source wildlife surveys and identify sites needing protection and/or designation. AD and Colin Marley named as people to be involved in this. NB agreed to seek meetings with key resource people identified and interview them with WF, SH and others.
 - Flooding: Various people agreed to write up identified flood locations and NB agreed to publicise a call for to identify further locations.
 - Transport: LS and PA are reviewing the rights of way maps
 - Building-In Sustainability: WF, NB and others to carry out a web search for suitable ideas with spatial planning implications, and NB to collate. Ideas to date include: grey water systems, well-engineered and maintained SUDS, high energy conservation and

efficiency standards, land for community orchards etc, embedded renewables like passive solar heating, pv.

9. Local Elections:

NB noted that the local elections on 2nd May could result in changes on both Town & County Councils. The possible implications for the Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan were briefly discussed.

10. Next Meeting – 22nd April 7pm