

MORPETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Minutes from Local Economy group meetings 26th February and 6th March 2013

Present

David Lodge – Chair	(CEO GMDT)
Ian Campbell- Project Officer	(Consultant for MTC)
Doug Cockburn	
Ken Reed	(Local business) – 26/02
George Williams	Morpeth District Chamber of Trade
Ken Stait	MDCT/local business – 26/02
Alan Sandbrook	(Rep Pegswood Parish Council) – 26/02
Doug Phillips	(Chair GMDT) – 26/02
Colin Haylock	CABE – 26/02
Carol Robinson	(Resident/ freelance consultant) – 6/03
Keith Raine	(Resident/ involved with regeneration projects such as 'Go Wansbeck') – 6/03

Apologies

Cameron Scott	
Eric Fletcher	(Local resident/ retired policeman)
Julie Stephenson	(Representing Pegswood Parish Council)

The meeting on the 26th February stimulated a lot of debate and linked into the visioning aspects of the neighbourhood plan through the contribution of Colin and it was agreed that there needed to be a follow up session to set up three key actions teams within the Economy Group to review existing evidence and start to develop technical detail to underpin the strategic direction that the group believe should be in the Plan, this session was held on 6th March and the minutes below are a combined note to update all the group.

- 1) **Gaps within the Group** – aim to get these individuals to contribute to the work done by Economy sub groups and if possible attend the next meeting on 26th March.
Ray Browning (ARCH) – KR
Iain Ogilvie (NCC Euro Funding) - DL
Young Peoples View – JS?
Eddie Campbell (retired planner) – DC ?
Medi – Sandersons Arcade – DL
Les Sage – Property Owner
Commercial Sector – Ian Rickard
Commercial Sector – Simon Haggie
Commercial Sector – Barry Tait
King Edwards (KEVI) – Victoria Najafi
- 2) **Economic Vision** – Discussion at previous meetings to determine the economic role of Morpeth (as economic driver for the Plan Area) and economic objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan relating to the vibrancy

/ vitality of the town centre; its visitor / and tourism role; employment sites and the supply of general employment land; business accommodation; Pegswood; the rural economy have covered wide ranging areas but proposal below was agreed by those attending.

“Economic role: primarily rural service centre, but also in contributing to the regeneration of wider South East Northumberland (in the light of the Morpeth Northern Bypass), and the wider Tyne and Wear city region “offer”

Objectives relate to issues but a few starters for discussion might be :

- To maintain the economic vibrancy of the town centre as an economic driver
- To develop Morpeth as a key hub in the region’s tourism economy
- To provide a range of employment sites and business accommodation that enables Morpeth to develop a more sustainable economy

and for the wider plan area:

- To further develop the local economy in Pegswood in order that it better fulfils its role as a more sustainable community
- To promote the growth and diversification of the rural economy

Three key topics come out of this and leads agreed, namely:

- a. Tourism - Ken Reed kenreed55@gmail.com
- b. Retail - Carol Robinson carol.srobinson@btinternet.com
- c. Land Use - Doug Cockburn cockburn322@btinternet.com

It was agreed that sub groups would take away evidence provided by DL in hard copy form and carry out further research and review points identified in meeting notes (Appendix 1) – with an aim to report progress back to the group at the next meeting on 26th March and plan to complete the exercise by mid April.

Although Ken, carol & Doug have agreed to lead these exercises they will be looking to tap into support from other groups members and please contact them to offer support.

- 3) There was debate regarding the role of the group and how much impact it could have on the Core Strategy and how much of the NCC Core Strategy was a given and not subject to influence. IC stated that the role of the NPEG was very influential and could help shape the Core Strategy by delivering a layer of detail that NCC could not aspire to get to because of lack of resources. [IC has gone through most of this document and detailed below are some preliminary observations.](#)

1. The role of neighbourhood plans is acknowledged throughout the document
2. There is a slippage in the timescale for plan preparation even since Issues and Options; with the Independent Inspectors report not now anticipated until Autumn

2014 and adoption winter 14/15 this will presumably have consequences for the delivery timescale of the neighbourhood plan

3. Sustainable development and sustainable communities are an overarching aspiration for the plan; there are also overarching plan objectives but no subject objectives

4. There remains a lot of ongoing work related to housing requirements and demography; employment land requirements and green belt but the document does include draft policies which are of interest in themselves and allow us to consider the level of detail that might be required beneath these strategic policies and within the neighbourhood plan; there has also been updated work on retail / town centre and baseline infrastructure study; there is no reference to local NP communities being eligible for 25 % of CIL

5. There is reference in Policy 2 Spatial Distribution to “additional large scale growth and development and growth will be focused on key locations in Blyth, Cramlington, Ashington and **Morpeth** (but no current indication of what that might be!)

6. We are aware of the revised settlement strategy of main towns; service centres and other settlements; by implication Pegswood is an “other settlement”; similarly there is a revised approach to delivery areas – Morpeth is located within the Central Northumberland Delivery Area

7. Policy 5 sets out strategic planning principles for Central Northumberland Delivery Area; still believe it fails to effectively articulate the functional relationship between Morpeth and the Tyneside conurbation.

8. Plan sets an affordable housing target of 30% but with the expectation that a higher target might be achieved in higher value areas (Morpeth?); no minimum site threshold for affordable housing contribution

9. There is no current policy on provision of employment land but importance of tourism and rural businesses acknowledged; plan includes a windfall employment policy to accommodate large scale employment

10. Rural employment policy will apply outside the main towns and service centres – no allocations (criteria based / development principles approach in Policy 14) but continue to support existing centres – need to review carefully; similarly Policy 15 Tourism

11 Policy 16 sets out a hierarchy of retail centres (town; district and local) based around main towns and service centres – each level of the hierarchy will be planned and growth encouraged on a scale and to a level which helps cement or reassert the role of the centre within the hierarchy; implications for Pegswood?

12 Need to review carefully any implications arising from Policy 17 Role of town and district centres and Policy 18 Defining centres (in terms of town centre and primary shopping area – potentially a matter for neighbourhood plans?)

13 Green Belt – no policy but indicates the general extent of the GB around Morpeth may be reviewed as well as defining inner boundary and what settlements are to be “washed over”

14. Renewables – large scale renewables not a NP matter; similarly can we rely on Core Strategy policy for small scale renewables and low carbon generation?

15. Policies on Natural and Historic Environment; Natural Environment; Landscape and Historic Environment and Heritage Assets; flood risk; water quality; sewage treatment – how would any such policies in NP complement these Core Strategy Policy

Core Strategy Preferred Options – currently these have no formal status but they do point to areas of interest for the Local Economy Group. These include draft policies on:

- Windfall Employment Sites;
- Rural Employment Policy;
- Tourism;
- Hierarchy of retail centres;
- role of town and district centres;
- defining centres in terms of town centre area and primary shopping area (there are plans of these for Morpeth in the annex to the Consultation document).

Remember we’ve got to be in general conformity with these strategic policies – but I would see the Neighbourhood Plan filling in the local detail around these policy areas

- 4) Keith Raine produced a summary note on the Market Town Welcome Report and this is detailed below:

Comments on Miller’s Report: Destination Planning for Morpeth

I agree very much with the general thrust of the Executive summary re the importance of tourism as a contributor to local economic potential and the need to promote the growth and quality of the retail and hospitality sectors.

Also consider that the “By 2020” vision statement is entirely relevant and appropriate to the town. Stronger identity and consolidation of the visitor offer are indeed key priorities. There are lots of attractive and interesting aspects to Morpeth but none individually have a “wow factor”. I cannot believe that we do not make more of the Collingwood/Trafalgar connection!

The shopping offer has improved immensely with the new arcade. There is already a good range of eating and drinking places which provide a solid platform for coordinated promotional effort.

Some already host live entertainment and a concerted effort to boost the music scene in Morpeth might be worth considering (not only to attract visitors but also to pull local residents into the town centre). Maybe the latter could be addressed in the context of an “enhanced events strategy”.

The hub concept fits Morpeth perfectly. Many visitors to surrounding big attractions could appreciate time out relaxing in Morpeth’s lively but small town atmosphere.

The day visitor market is hugely important. In this context I was shocked to realise that Morpeth does not seem to make much of an effort to cater specifically for coach trips in spite of the town’s obvious potential attractions as a destination in its own right or at least as a “tea and pee stop” as it is known in the trade.

How to do what is needed will depend on what funds/ resource are available, including voluntary from local businesses and larger nationals represented in the town.

Incidentally there has been much comment in the group about provision of local employment opportunity for our young people, often in the context of development of local employment land and sites. We should not overlook the importance of the retail and hospitality industries in providing what will often be their first experience of work for many youngsters (whatever they go on to achieve in the future) and one which can equip them with the valuable customer handling, communication and other interpersonal skills which so many employers look for.

5) The next meeting is scheduled to take place on:

**7.00 - 8.30pm on Tuesday 26th March
at Morpeth Town Hall (Council Chamber)**