

## **Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum**

### **Minutes of the Meeting**

**3 November 2017 at 7.00 pm, Lantern Room, Durham Town Hall**

**Members Present:** John Ashby, Pippa Bell, Sue Childs, Roger Cornwell, Alan Doig, Fleur Griffiths, Peter Jackson, John Lowe, Matthew Phillips, Jean Rogers, Nicholas Rippin, Kirsty Thomas, Angela Tracy, Ros Ward.

**Guests:** Carole Dillon (Durham County Council), Dorothy Douglas, R Douglas, A Lockhart, Catharina Miller, David Miller, Matthew Wright (Durham University).

#### **1. Chair's Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Roger Cornwell chaired the meeting. He welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. Since 14 Forum members were present the meeting was quorate.

The purpose of this meeting was to agree that the Draft Neighbourhood Plan should be published for the statutory period of consultation.

Roger explained that we are not taking amendments to the Plan this evening; people have six weeks starting at midnight to submit those. It's been a long journey: the possibility of setting up a Neighbourhood Forum was discussed at at least two residents' groups in the spring of 2011. The people of Durham have been involved in telling us what they want from a Neighbourhood Plan. We have drawn up that plan and, with your agreement, consultation starts tomorrow.

**2. Apologies for Absence:** Roberta Blackman-Woods, Ann Evans, David Freeman.

#### **3. Update on the Development of the Neighbourhood Plan**

Roger reminded members that when we last met in February we had just received the letter from Historic England saying that in their view a Strategic Environmental Assessment was required. The County Council was of the same opinion. Reluctantly the Working Group recommended that we postpone the consultation and prepare this Assessment, and Forum members accepted that. They agreed to allow the Working Group to draft consequential amendments to policies and texts, which were to be circulated to the Forum for consideration and approval. That is where we are today.

Producing the SEA was much more onerous and took considerably longer than we had anticipated. The two documents have between them 299 pages. Since we last met there have been 895 emails on our working group google group, and countless more between individual members. Roger asked everyone to pay credit to all the people who have been involved: their names are inside the cover of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Lengthy though the process of producing the SEA was, the Plan is much better for it. We believe that the Plan is now more robust. It is worth remembering, as Historic England put it:

Firstly, given the current stage of the Durham Local Plan, it is possible that the neighbourhood plan will be made before the Local Plan is adopted. If so, in accordance with s38 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act, the neighbourhood plan would form the most up to date development plan document for the area, and could influence the emerging Local Plan itself.

In recent reports to the Planning Committee the same paragraph is repeated almost word for word:

Although the Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum has been established, and a Neighbourhood Area defined, which includes the application site, no draft Neighbourhood Plan has yet been formally consulted on and therefore no weight can be attributed to the plan at this stage.

After 18<sup>th</sup> December, when the Consultation ends, that will no longer be the case and this plan which we have worked so hard for will start to carry weight.

Roger then invited questions and comments from the floor. Nick Rippin, speaking on behalf of himself and Roberta Blackman-Woods, presented her apologies and passed on her thanks for all the work that had been done. She wished to congratulate the Forum for its heroic efforts in getting to this point, coping with the unique issues associated with the UNESCO World Heritage Site and the Durham City Conservation Area. She offered her continuing support during the next stages of the Plan's development.

In response, Roger expressed thanks to Roberta who had convened the original meeting of the Forum.

#### **4. Consultation Arrangements**

Roger explained that if the Forum agreed to the motion that is the next item on the agenda, the consultation would start at midnight and run till 11:59pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December. That is three days more than the statutory minimum of six weeks.

We have already leafleted all the houses in Our Neighbourhood and written to all the landowners where we have made proposals for their land. There has been a story in the local press and arrangements are in hand for an advertisement too. So we think everybody who might be affected should know about this.

We have arranged four drop-in events, the first being on Monday in St John's Church at Neville's Cross. Details are on the leaflets. People can leave comments in the boxes at those venues. In addition we have taken a stall at the AAP day here in the Town Hall tomorrow.

We have placed the Draft Plan online, on our website, and also put paper copies in the Clayport Library, on the reception desk at the Town Hall, and at reception in County Hall. All of these places will have boxes for written comments.

We are also accepting comments online via our website and via an online questionnaire. In order to encourage responses, there will be a prize draw for a £20 gift voucher which can be exchanged at a number of local premises.

Copies of the leaflets and questionnaires were distributed at the meeting.

Roger then invited questions and comments from the floor. Carole Dillon, the Forum's contact person with Durham County Council, said that she had arranged for the draft Plan to be available on the Council's website and Roger thanked her for this. Alan Doig suggested that the Forum should contact all the residents' associations to ask them to endorse the plan. Ros Ward, the Forum's Project Manager, explained that she had written to all the associations to inform them about the consultation. Roger stated that it would be inappropriate to ask for an endorsement of the plan at this draft stage; what the Forum is looking for during the consultation are ways to improve the plan.

#### **5. Formal Vote to approve the Consultation Draft Plan**

Roger explained that this Draft Plan is as good as we can make it, but we know it is not perfect. That is why we are going out to a consultation, so the people of Durham can comment and help us

to make improvements.

After the consultation period the Forum shall analyse the comments and revise the Plan accordingly. The ultimate aim of the consultation process is to improve the Plan, not to approve it at this stage. It will then have to be submitted to the County Council as the local planning authority who will decide whether it is ready to submit to independent examination by an inspector. If the Plan passes these stringent tests it will be subject to a local referendum.

The following motion was put to the vote and unanimously approved by the Forum members present:

“This meeting of the Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum agrees that the Consultation Draft document prepared by members of its working group shall be the subject of a Consultation between 4th November 2017 and 18th December 2017, in accordance with Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.”

#### **6. Any other business**

No other business had been notified to the chair so Roger closed the meeting with thanks to all who had attended.