

Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum

Note of meeting with AECOM Consultants, 26 June 2018

Present

1. This meeting involved Alastair Peattie and Rosie Cox of AECOM who are providing two related pieces of technical assistance: Sustainability Appraisal and Housing Site Assessments.
2. Durham County Council was represented by Carole Dillon and by the County Council's Head of Sustainability (Steve Macdonald?). The NPF were represented by Roger Cornwell, John Ashby, Sue Childs, Ann Evans and Ros Ward.

Sustainability Appraisal

3. Alastair explained that he would be taking a standard approach developed over many years' experience. The emphasis is on cumulative impacts and on proportionality, using qualitative judgements not scores and matrices. He said that the Forum's Scoping Report is fine. The focus of the SA will be on alternatives, mainly housing sites, green spaces, student accommodation and economy sites. AECOM will appraise themes and particular policies where appraisal is needed, and then the whole Draft Plan.
4. As the call for a SEA/SA had been from Historic England, AECOM would pay particular attention to their concerns and will share draft findings with Historic England and at several stages with the County Council.

Housing sites

5. The SA technical assistance work cannot commence until the housing sites technical assistance has been carried out. Wherever possible, the County Council's site assessments for the SHLAA 2018 and County Local Plan Preferred Option should be relied upon now that they are available. Durham County Council will provide as soon as possible a figure for housing need in Our Neighbourhood. This will be a gross figure, not broken down into particular needs such as affordable, elderly, student, etc.
6. The Forum representatives emphasised that no site in the existing Green Belt would be considered. Accordingly, the only new sites that have emerged from the Regulation 14 consultation that AECOM should assess are Lovegreen and the University's PBSA sites, not the Former Skid Pan nor Fernhill. However, in referring to the potential new dwellings capacity in Our Neighbourhood we can and should include the 50 new dwellings on the Former Skid Pan site that Preferred Option is proposing.
7. The University submitted seven PBSA sites to the Forum whereas six are proposed in the County Local Plan Preferred Option, the difference being a site at Green Lane. The University's latest boundaries for the six sites need to be checked against the boundaries

in Preferred Option to ensure that the County Council's assessments are applicable.
Note: this appeared to be the case during the site visits on 27 June but will be verified with the County Council. On this basis, the Forum will be recommended to express support in the Neighbourhood Plan for these PBSA sites with the proviso that if for any reason the County Local Plan experiences significant delays then the Neighbourhood Plan should be amended to make these sites formal allocations. For the Green Lane site, AECOM will carry out a full assessment so that the Forum can consider whether to allocate it in the Neighbourhood Plan.

8. AECOM will also provide, as an addendum, an updated assessment of the housing sites in the Consultation Draft Neighbourhood Plan, using notes to be provided by the Forum.

Timeline

9. AECOM would hope to have a draft report on the housing sites by 10 July and a draft SA report by late August. The SA has to be contemporaneous with the finalising of revisions to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and therefore the timelines will need to be kept under review.