

**Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum**  
**Working Group Meeting, 19 July 2016, Wharton Park**

**Present:** John Ashby, Sue Childs, Roger Cornwell (Chair), Ann Evans, David Hook, John Lowe, Kirsty Thomas, Ros Ward.

**Apologies:** Pippa Bell, Adam Deathe, Karen Elliott, Nigel Martin, David Miller, Angela Tracy-Smith, Matthew Phillips.

**In attendance:** Gavin Scott, Durham County Council

**1. Notes of Working Group Meeting 5 July**

The notes were agreed and **Sue** will post them on the website.

**2. Discussion with Gavin Scott**

The main purpose of this meeting was to seek advice from Gavin, particularly about the format and formulation of the plan. The following points were made:

- Gavin drew our attention to the inspector's report on the Sedgfield plan. John L noted that he had found it very informative. A copy is attached with these notes.
- The inspector had emphasised the need for evidence to justify policies.
- The inspector had deleted policies that simply repeated the NPPF.
- He had also deleted policies that were imprecise / aspirational and did not offer clear guidance to decision makers.
- Gavin advised that it would be OK for us to include a student accommodation policy.
- He commended the Great Aycliffe plan to us as an example of good practice.
- He advised that it is OK to prohibit development in particular areas provided that other areas are identified for development. One of the inspector's criticisms of the Sedgfield plan was that it prohibited development in some areas but failed to specify alternative possibilities.
- We can ask the County Council for help, and apply for funding, with sustainability appraisals for proposed development sites. **Ros** will speak to Gavin to arrange this.
- It is sensible to refer to the Durham City Local Plan of 2004 as appropriate, but if we adopt policies from it we need to make them our own and not simply reference it.
- That plan does not contain a specific policy for the Burn Hall conservation area; the general policy on conservation areas applies.
- Gavin advised us to include rather than exclude policies at this stage and to share our work with him for further guidance.
- We need to document our consultation and plan development process. **Sue** will send Gavin our existing documentation about this.
- **ALL** are asked to send Sue any outstanding notes of stakeholder meetings so that she can include them in this documentation.
- Gavin suggested it would be helpful, but not essential, to identify and contact the owners of sites proposed for development. We should certainly supply a list of these sites in response to Question 15 of the County Council's *Issues and Options* consultation document. **Sue and John A** would do this.

### 3. **Format of the Plan Document**

We sought Gavin's advice about this. We agreed to move the “Justification” section dealing in general with the theme to follow the “Context” section. Any more detailed justification for a specific policy would accompany that policy.

Gavin also cautioned against including a section on general planning requirements as these could be too onerous for relatively simple planning applications. The Sedgefield inspector had also made this point. There is also no need for an overall sustainability requirement policy as all policies have to meet the sustainability criteria of the NPPF.

**Sue** will revise the document in the light of this advice.

### 4. **Timetable for producing the plan**

This had been agreed at the meeting on 5 July, but Gavin informed us that the Council also has to include a six-week consultation period before it submits the plan to an inspector. He also noted that there would be a period of purdah before the May local elections. **Ros** will review the timetable in the light of these considerations and the timetable for the County Plan.

### 5. **Our Consultation Process**

Sue raised the question of the nature of the leaflet we are planning for the consultation. It was **agreed** that it should be a short executive summary and people would have to consult the full plan to answer the questionnaire about the policies. Gavin distributed copies of the Council's summary booklet for the *Issues and Options* consultation as an example. He also advised that it was not necessary to leaflet every address but we should target areas near proposed developments. We should also use the press to publicise the plan and the consultation process.

### 6. **Maps and Funding**

**Roger** will discuss the provision of maps with the Council. **Sue and Ros** will bid for funding for maps and the consultation through the Council.

### 7. **Next steps**

**Theme convenors** are to finish drafting their policies by mid-August and send them to **Sue** who will place them in the new document depository.

The **next meeting** of the working group will be on **Tuesday 6 September, 10.00 – 1.00, in Wharton Park**. Gavin will attend the meeting and we will scrutinise and agree the policies.