

Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum

Minutes of the Meeting

20 October 2016 at 7.00 pm, Committee Room, Redhills

Members Present: John Ashby, Pippa Bell, Roberta Blackman-Woods, Liz Brown, Sue Childs, Roger Cornwell, Adam Deathe, Alan Doig, Ann Evans, David Hook, Peter Jackson, John Lowe, Nigel Martin, Matthew Phillips, Nicholas Rippin, Kirsty Thomas, Angela Tracy-Smith, Elizabeth Williams.

Guests: Fleur Griffiths, Walia Kani, Ros Ward.

Apologies: Karen Elliott, Jonathan Lovell, Linda Lovell, David Miller, Jean Woodward.

1. Chair's Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Roger Cornwell chaired the meeting. He welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance.

Roger reported that we have secured funding of £2,679 from the Community Rights Programme to further the work of this Forum. The main items we will be spending the money on are printing costs for the summary document and also for a leaflet to go to every house in our neighbourhood, plus room hire for public meetings. We have also secured free consultancy to help us with the site assessment and sustainability appraisal.

We have reached an important stage on the road to achieving a Neighbourhood Plan. Over the past few months a working party has taken the views of local residents and other stakeholders and combined them with basic facts about our neighbourhood and taking into account the overarching national and local planning policies to reach a draft plan which is presented this evening for approval. What happens next is set out on the last page of the executive summary. From now on we aren't *writing* the Plan, we are *revising* it in the light of comments this evening and also those from a public consultation to be held early next year. There is one more stage of consultation, an independent examination, and a referendum and then if it all works out we will have a Neighbourhood Plan in about a year's time. To get that far, we need approval this evening.

Roger thanked all the members of the Working Party who have drawn up the various policies – their names are on the documents. It is a credit to them that there have been relatively few issues raised before this meeting. A special mention must go to Ros Ward, our project manager, for her expertise in guiding us and dealing with the various technicalities, including securing funding and consultancy. We offered her a fee (and she's certainly worth one) but she has turned this down and has worked for free. David Miller was also thanked for the invaluable assistance he had given to various theme convenors.

2. Consideration of the Draft Policies

Roger explained that tonight we are only seeking approval of the policies, not the whole plan, and that we will discuss them under the six themes. Where issues have been raised we will discuss these, and if it is agreed that changes are needed then careful notes will be taken and the policy changed, but we won't get into discussions over precise wording at this meeting. The supporting text is well advanced (and it can be seen in the full version of the documents) and it may well be

that comments made here will be taken on board in order to clarify matters.

Theme 1: A City with a sustainable future

S1 Sustainable development requirements of all development sites.

S2 Sustainable development requirements of all new building developments including renovations and extensions.

No issues had been raised and Policies S1 and S2 were agreed.

Theme 2: A beautiful and historic City

H1 The World Heritage Site - Protection

No comments had been made on Policy H1 and this was agreed.

H2 The Conservation Areas – Durham City and Burn Hall

Matthew Phillips had made four detailed comments on this policy. It was agreed that the Working Group would consider detailed wording about cobbles and the impact of large buildings such as PBSAs. Advice would be sought from the Council about “To Let” and other adverts.

H3 The Peninsula Character Area

This might need to take on board floorscape comments to keep in step with H2, but no discussion is needed and the policy was agreed.

H4 Framwellgate Character Area

H5 Crossgate and Gilesgate Character Areas

H6 Elvet Character Area

H7 Our Neighbourhood outside the Conservation Areas

H8 Buildings and sites of heritage value

H9 Non-designated Heritage Assets and buildings / structures of local interest

No comments had been made on policies H4 – H9 and they were agreed.

G1 Preserving and enhancing green infrastructure

No comments had been made on Policy G1 and this was agreed.

G2 Designation of Local Green Spaces

Nigel Martin had suggested that the linear park at Mount Oswald should be added to the list. This was agreed.

G3 Creation of the Emerald Network

G4 Enhancing the beneficial use of the Green Belt

No comments had been made on policies G3 and G4 and they were agreed.

Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

E1 Larger brownfield sites

No comments had been made on Policy E1 and this was agreed.

Roberta Blackman-Woods suggested that business incubators and start-ups could also be promoted on the Mountjoy site. The working group will address this suggestion.

E2 Smaller brownfield sites

Fleur Griffiths had suggested that Framwell House should be developed for housing and not for business enterprises. John Lowe supported this and added that the other proposed site at Diamond Terrace, Mainstreet USA offices, should also just be developed for housing as part of a coherent plan that addressed the access and parking needs of new and existing residents. Both sites are also listed under the housing policy D1. This was agreed.

E3 Reconsideration of site usage

This policy deals with sites where planning permission has lapsed. Matthew Phillips had suggested that The Gates and the County Hospital should be added to the list of sites. Nigel Martin pointed out that once building has started planning permission cannot lapse. The policy needs to refer to the possibility of new uses and opportunities if a site fails. It was agreed that this policy would be reconsidered by the Working Group.

E4 Retail development

No comments had been made on Policy E4 and this was agreed.

E5 Class A2 and Class A3 Use

Matthew Phillips had suggested that this policy about ground floor developments in the city centre should be extended to Class A4 and Class A5. This was agreed.

Note:

A2 = Financial and professional services

A3 = Restaurants and cafes

A4 = Drinking establishments

A5 = Hot food takeaways

E6 Improvements to the City Centre

Matthew Phillips had suggested that the parking limit mentioned in Point 9 should be extended from 30 minutes to 1 hour. This was agreed.

E7 Visitors and Tourists

No comments had been made on Policy E7 and this was agreed.

Theme 4: A City with attractive and affordable places to live

Roberta Blackman-Woods was very supportive of the housing policies which she said were well evidenced. The Forum welcomed these remarks, coming as they did from the Shadow Housing and Planning Minister.

D1 Land for residential development

No comments had been made on this policy but Roger Cornwell noted that our consultation about site viability might lead to changes to the list of sites. Policy D1 was agreed.

D2 Student accommodation in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

D3 Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

Matthew Phillips had suggested some drafting amendments that did not need discussion and Policies D2 and D3 were agreed.

D4 Housing for older people and people with disabilities

No comments had been made on Policy D4 and this was agreed.

D5 Meeting other housing needs

No comments had been made on this policy but Roberta Blackman-Woods suggested that the reference in the “justification” section about housing for families should be in the policy itself. It was agreed that the working group would address this and Policy D5 was agreed.

D6 Design of New and Renovated Housing to the Highest Standards

Nigel Martin had asked for explicit reference be made to requiring Broadband Fibre to the Property. It was agreed that it should go in the supporting text.

David Freeman had asked that we should include in this theme some comments on sites proposed for deletion from the Green Belt.

Roger Cornwell had made the following response:

“Our approach is that the Neighbourhood Plan is subservient to an overarching Development Plan which currently is the saved policies of the City of Durham Local Plan but which will be the County Durham Plan when that is adopted, which won’t be till November 2018 on the published timetable. We cannot propose major housing in the Green Belt as that would be contrary to the existing Local Plan Policies. Green Belt deletions are contentious and may or may not form part of the adopted County Durham Plan, and even if they do, these particular sites may or may not be included. The Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed when the CDP is adopted to ensure it is still in conformity.”

It was agreed to add this position statement, or something like it, to the supporting documentation.

Theme 5: A City with modern transport infrastructure

No comments had been made on policies T1 – T4 and they were agreed.

Peter Jackson had submitted comments that did not criticise the proposed policies but asked that the transport policies should address a wider range of issues and not appear to be opposed to cars. Matthew Phillips agreed that the transport policies were not intended to oppose the use of cars and proposed that Objective 4 “to reduce the need for travel and in particular travel by car” was not necessary and that Objective 5 “to reduce vehicular exhaust emissions to meet climate change commitments and national air quality objectives” was sufficient.

The working group had relied heavily on the County Council's *Durham City Strategic Transport Strategy* that described Durham as a “walkable city” and promoted a hierarchy of walking, cycling, public transport and essential services, and private vehicles.

Kirsty Thomas referred to the importance of public transport such as the cathedral bus for people unable to walk or cycle in this hilly city.

Roberta Blackman-Woods noted that road journeys are necessary for a variety of legitimate reasons. The key issue to emerge was that the Neighbourhood Plan needed to acknowledge the significance of roads in its transport theme, at the very least by referring to the responsibility of the Highways Authority to deal with these issues. Ros Ward said that it was one of the issues that she would ask the consultant about. It was agreed that the working group would look again at this theme.

Theme 6: A City with enriched community life

C1 Community Arts Centre

C2 Information Hub

C3 Provision of new community facilities

C4 Protection of of an Existing Community Facility

C5 Protection of open spaces

C6 Health Care and Social Care Facilities

No comments had been made on policies C1 – C6 and they were agreed.

3. Comments from Roberta Blackman-Woods

Roberta congratulated and thanked the working group for their excellent work. She had found the documents very clear and urged the group to make progress as quickly as possible.

4. Concluding remarks from the Chair

Roger Cornwell thanked everyone for their contributions to the work of the Forum and to this important meeting. He noted that some of the people attending were not formally members of the Forum. Anyone who lives, works, studies or runs a business in the neighbourhood plan area is eligible to become a member of the Forum. Anyone wishing to do so can use the following link on the Forum's website: <http://npf.durhamcity.org.uk/join-us/>