

**Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum
Minutes, Working Group Meeting, 4 July 2017, Antioch House**

1. Welcome and apologies

Present: John Ashby, Roger Cornwell (Chair), Ann Evans, Peter Jackson, John Lowe, Matthew Phillips, Ros Ward.

Apologies: Pippa Bell, Sue Childs, Mike Costello, David Miller, Angela Tracy.

2. Notes of 13 June

- The notes were agreed and **Sue** will post them on the website.
- John L reported that the University was unwilling to provide further details of its plans to deal with the movement of large numbers of additional students about the city because of commercial sensitivity, though more details might be made available later. It was noted that the travel impact of the St Mary's Field proposal was vastly underestimated in the planning application. **John A** will submit an objection.

3. Meeting with DCC

Roger and John L had been among representatives of the City of Durham Trust who had met on Monday with Stuart Timmiss and members of the Spatial Policy team at County Hall to discuss what was happening about the County Plan. The meeting had been requested by the Trust. It was agreed that we could share the contents of the meeting with the NPF and other appropriate groups. The following were the key points made in relation to the NPF:

- The Timetable is still evolving. DCC is waiting for guidance from central government on the methodology for the calculation of population / housing projections. Once this is received it will take 5-6 months to publish the *Preferred Option* and then a further 5-6 months to publish the *Draft Submission*. It is thus unlikely that anything will appear this year. Officers will report to Cabinet on the updated evidence base in September this year. The end-date for the plan has not yet been decided, but it likely to be put back. It has to be a minimum of 15 years.
- DCC is intending to include the Interim Student Accommodation Policy in the new plan and is open to ideas for strengthening it in the light of experience. It is similarly keeping under review the possibility of extending the area covered by the Article 4 Direction.
- Approximately 2,000 currently work at County Hall. The intention is to move half in to the city centre and to disperse half elsewhere in the County.
- We were asked about our views on the development of the Aykley Heads site. DCC's focus will be on the use of the County Hall site but would also like to use the visitors' car park at the front of the site. This is in the Green Belt. They would not intend to develop other areas of Green Belt on the site.
- They strongly objected to the notion that DCC was simply facilitating the implementation of

the university's masterplan and said they were making robust challenges about the growth in student numbers, infrastructure pinch points, health care provision and the threat to the Green Belt.

- They confirmed that DCC has not yet adopted the *Sustainable Transport Strategy* for the city, though it provides evidence for the County Plan. Measures to improve air quality would also be in the plan.
- DCC is anxious to help with the Neighbourhood Plan and to discuss any possible areas of difficulty (allocating land for development without the owner's consent was mentioned) before the public consultation. Stuart asked Michelle Robinson to discuss this with Carole Dillon.

4. Future Work Programme

Ros had distributed a draft schedule. The following points were noted:

- We need to finalise the SA/SEA before proceeding with the plan.
- In view of the information that the Cabinet will receive an update of the evidence base for the County Plan on 13 September, we know this will be made public by 6 September. It is not clear what impact this might have on our plan timetable.
- In view of the information about the delayed timetable for the County Plan, we can consider moving the start of our consultation back to give us more time and to allow more time when students will be resident.
- Statutory responses to our *Scoping Report* are due by 14 July. **Ros** will write gentle reminders to them and also arrange a meeting with Carole Dillon, preferably before the end of July, once responses have been received.

5. Our Responses to Feedback on the *Scoping Report*

So far we have only received a response from Natural England. It was **agreed** to incorporate their advice about brownfield habitats and that we need to ensure that our policies promote biodiversity and that planning applications address the issue. **Ros** will draft a reply for **Roger** to send.

It was clarified that the *Scoping Report* needed to be incorporated into the SA/SEA.

6. Our Responses to DCC's Open Space Study

Roger will discuss this with Sue at tomorrow's meeting about the Riverbanks.

In this regard, it was **agreed** that the NPF should seek representation on the steering committee of the Riverbanks project.

7. Meeting with Lydia Scarth

Roger and John L met Lydia at her request on Friday. She is a new appointment at the university with responsibility for engagement with local residents and official bodies in order to promote the

masterplan. We emphasised the importance of good liaison with the NPF and Roger has sent her a draft copy of our plan. She has established a number of focus groups with membership from across the city to explore specific issues. Roger is on the housing group and Matthew is on the transport group. The purpose of the groups is to enable her to compile a report to the university's executive by September.

8. Maiden Castle

The university has submitted its planning application with extensive attempts at justification for development in the Green Belt. DCC has agreed that their proposal does not require SEA. Colleagues shared thoughts about alternative provision that would be more dispersed, perhaps alongside County sports facilities, rather than concentrated at MC. This would promote so much more contact with a wider range of communities. It would also reduce the problem of traffic congestion, vehicles and pedestrians, at MC. **All** are asked to send their thoughts within the next two weeks to **John A** who will draft a response. He will also liaise with CPRE and the City of Durham Trust.

9. Meeting with Ian Babelon

Roger and Matthew had a meeting with Ian who is doing PhD research at Northumbria University on the subject of 3D mapping in the context of planning. He is studying the suitability of various tools and would welcome the opportunity for involvement with our work. Such involvement is likely to be mutually beneficial. **Roger and Matthew** will continue to liaise with him.

10. Next Meeting

Ros will contact Carole Dillon and try to arrange a meeting she can attend on 18 or 25 July or, failing that, on a mutually convenient date around that time. Venue to be confirmed.