

**Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum Working Group
3 April 2018, Miners' Hall**

1. Welcome and apologies

Present: John Ashby, Sue Childs, Roger Cornwell (Chair), Ann Evans, Peter Jackson, John Lowe, David Miller, John Pacey, Ros Ward.

Apologies: Pippa Bell, Matthew Phillips.

2. Notes of 27 March 2018

The notes of 27 March were agreed and **Sue** will post them on the website.

3. Categorisation of Theme 6 Community

This theme will be discussed at a workshop with DCC on Monday 16 April. **Sue** will prepare the initial table and **Roger** will present the categorisation.

4a. Workshop with DCC Officers on Theme 2b Green Infrastructure

We were joined for this workshop by Carole Dillon, Ged Lawson and Stuart Priestley

The issues were considered policy by policy.

Policy G1: Preserving and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

The main issues here concern wording and **Sue** will re-draft it in the light of the responses.

Policy G2: Designation of Local Green Spaces (LGS)

A key issue here is the identification of criteria for designating LGSs. We need to explain these clearly. We have explained why sites are designated, but we have not set out reasons why other sites have not been included. We need to carry out a systematic assessment of the sites as part of the SA and perhaps present the results in a table (see Great Aycliffe plan). **Carole** has received some advice by email about this. She will check it and then send it to Sue. **Ged** will send Sue a list of other possible sites to consider, including the Racecourse. If we do decide to designate additional sites we need to contact the landowners.

The riverbanks are not proposed as LGS but are more like the Emerald Network (see policy G3 below). The protection of the corridors between the LGSs is dealt with in policy G1.

The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) can protect LGSs in the City in a way that the County Plan cannot. The NP can identify the local value of sites. Similarly, LGS designation can provide added protection to the Green Belt (GB) in which specified development is permitted. LGS designation must be based on particular identified local value so that development would only be allowed, other things being equal, if it did not harm that particular value. The specific reasons for designation should be given in the justification, but they need to be referenced in the policy.

The DLI is a particularly sensitive site and DCC officers were not aware of any possibility of

development there other than perhaps on the footprint of the building.

The Neville's Cross battlefield is already designated as a historic battlefield and it is in the GB, but it is also of local interest. Part of the site is beyond our boundary and **Sue** will contact Witton Gilbert about this. It is the largest of our proposed sites, but coherence is more important than size as a criterion for designation.

Policy G3: Creation of the Emerald Network

This is not the same as LGS, though the use of "Green" and "Emerald" might give rise to some confusion. (Personal note: At the drop-in sessions during the public consultation I had some difficulty understanding and then explaining the relationship between maps 6 & 7. JL). They are valuable sites for wildlife connected by public rights of way. We need to make the purpose of the policy clearer and show the rights of way on the map. We need to ensure that recreational use does not harm wildlife, but we still need to improve access on some sections of path for those who have mobility problems. We need to be sensitive about lighting proposals to preserve dark corridors. This is dealt with in policy G1.

There is a tree management issue to protect significant views in the city. This is largely dealt with by the WHS Management Plan. **Ged** will discuss this with Jane Gibson at a meeting on 4 April.

Policy G4: Enhancing the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

As it stands, the policy is largely repeating the NPPF and not achieving its intention. Indeed, it might even be interpreted as promoting development in the GB. It requires greater local focus. Through the SA process we need to review specific areas of the GB and identify priorities for improvement. The NPPF does require plans to improve the GB. Developer contributions should be earmarked for such improvements and also in LGSs and the Emerald Network.

4b. Workshop with DCC Officers on Theme 1 Sustainability

Issues affecting the environment were dealt with first while **Ged** and **Stuart** were still at the meeting.

S1.3 Biodiversity: It was agreed to add "enhance" to the wording of this criterion. The comments from Gladman (L15) were helpful in adding nuance to it.

S1.5 Flood Risk: It was agreed to adopt the wording suggested by the Environment Agency (L14).

S1.7 Conservation and Heritage: It was agreed to revise the wording in the light of advice from Historic England and DCC. It was noted that gardens were a green asset and played a useful role in drainage.

S1.8 Green Assets: We need to cross reference to the definition of green assets in para 4.62. Biodiversity is dealt with satisfactorily in S1.3 but we perhaps need to mention here the importance of green assets to wildlife.

S2.5 Water Environment: It was agreed that incorporating the advice of the Environment Agency would clarify this criterion.

S2.6 SUDS: It was agreed to incorporate additional wording to show the value of SUDS for wildlife.

Policies S1 and S2 in general: DCC and other respondents found the introductory wording of these policies difficult to interpret. The wording was attempting to say that support would be given to planning applications in proportion to the way in which they met the applicable criteria. This will inevitably be a matter of judgement depending on the extent to which the criteria are met. Applicability will depend on the size of the proposed development. Applicants need to demonstrate what they can achieve. The wording needs re-thinking to achieve its purpose and in the light of the suggestions about the scope of the policies made below.

DCC explained that it was difficult to deal with sites and building separately and suggested merging the policies but sub-dividing them into themes (rather like G1). **John L** will work with **David** on this revision. This could also include consideration of the suggestion about masterplans.

S2.4 Building Standards: We should introduce the notion of “best practice” and avoid reference to documents that are time-limited.

Colleagues from DCC were thanked for their very helpful contributions.

5. Any other business

Roger was asked to check whether Locality had phoned about technical support. It is important that we are clear about the timing of this support before agreeing our future work programme on 10 April.

Dates of Next Working Group Meetings

Tuesday 10 April after 9.00 am Forum meeting: ordinary meeting, to include consideration of our future work plan. This will include deciding whether to meet at 9.00 am on Tuesday 17 April.

Monday 16 April at 9.30: **Community** workshop.

Above meetings at the Miners' Hall

Tuesday 17 April at 1.30 in the BID offices: meeting to discuss primary and secondary shop frontages with Adam. **John A, Peter** and **Pippa** to attend; other working group members welcome. **Carole** or other DCC representative also invited.