

**Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum Working Group  
5 June 2018, Miners' Hall**

**1. Welcome and apologies**

**Present:** John Ashby (Chair), Pippa Bell, Sue Childs, Ann Evans, Peter Jackson, John Lowe, David Miller, John Pacey, Angela Tracy, Ros Ward.

**Apologies:** Roger Cornwell, Matthew Phillips.

**2. Notes of 29 May 2018**

The notes of 29 May were agreed and **Sue** will post them on the website.

Matters arising:

- Ann distributed notes about the very helpful **dementia training** she had attended. The intention is to have Durham recognised as a dementia friendly city. It was **agreed** that this was something we should support in Theme 6 and as a project, but it was recognised that the primary responsibility lies with the parish council.

**3. Revision of Theme 3 Economy**

Pippa presented the revised version that she and David had prepared. She drew our attention to the following key issues:

- **Aykley Heads:** DCC believes that AH is “strategic” and should not be included in our plan. It was **agreed** that we should keep it in. There is no clear definition of “strategic” in this context. It might well be considered strategic in terms of the whole county, but we can also make local points about, for instance, its connectivity. Perhaps we should describe it as “larger and more sensitive” rather than “strategic”.
- **Mountjoy:** DU has objected to the requirement for a 15m buffer. DCC proposed it and it was **agreed** that we should keep it to protect the neighbouring wood.
- **Blagdon Depot:** DCC is concerned about its inclusion as it is in the green belt. It was **agreed** that we should keep it as a valued community asset, but restrict the height of any new building to the current height. The policy should be presented more positively.
- **Core retail area:** Should residential use be permitted on the upper floors in the core retail area? This is a difficult issue but flexibility is needed to avoid empty properties and to ensure the vitality of this area. The public benefits of occupying such properties need identifying in the text. There should be no reduction in the space needed for retail and the use of such space for business opportunities (e.g. small offices) should be promoted. DCC’s regeneration scheme for North Road and beyond shows what can be done at street level; a similar scheme could operate above the retail premises. There are some concerns about the possible predominance of student accommodation as the Interim Student Accommodation Policy only applies to HMOs and PBSAs. However, the lack of parking and sometimes difficult access does mean that such accommodation might be more suitable for students. Proper fire protection is essential. It was **agreed** that both options should remain open and be subjected to the SA process.
- **Food take-aways:** concern had been expressed during the consultation about the high number of take-away food outlets. However, there is no evidence to show that the numbers are too high. Licensing and planning restrictions are now harmonised and this is dealing

with late-night disturbance issues. There is a policy option to require at least 50% retail in a given area and it was **agreed** that this should be considered as part of the SA process.

- **New tourism policies:** David introduced the two new policies dealing with tourist attractions and accommodation. They supplement the approach being taken by DCC and Visit County Durham (VCD). **Pippa** will consult these bodies about them. It was suggested that there should be more emphasis on building on the WHS attraction and on the economic significance of the city to the wider county in terms of attracting visitors. Policy C1 and Project 14 are also important for the promotion of tourism.
- **Paragraph 5.131:** It was **agreed** to delete the last sentence.

Building on the notion of the importance of the city for the county, it was **agreed** to ask Councillor Carl Marshall to contribute a foreword to the plan expounding this theme.

John L reported that DCC has conducted a retail study that was mentioned at the AAP City Centre Group. He has asked Sarah Billingham to provide us with a copy but it contains sensitive commercial information. DCC intends to prepare an executive summary that will be shared with us.

#### 4. Review of Treatment of Projects

David had distributed a paper suggesting ways to improve Chapter 5 (Implementation and Monitoring) and Appendix A (Projects).

**Progressing the Plan:** It was **agreed** that this opening section would be re-written by one of the parish councillor members of the working group to set out the role of the new parish council in the next stages of the plan.

**Implementing Plan Policies:** It was **agreed** that there should be no projects in Chapter 5; they should all be in Appendix A to avoid confusion. This section of the chapter should give an overview of how the policies will be implemented using a whole city / neighbourhood approach. It should provide a logical bridge between the policies and the projects.

**Monitoring the Plan:** This is clearly the role of the parish council in conjunction with DCC.

**Indicators:** These need further consideration and key indicators need identifying.

#### 5. Draft Sustainability Appraisal Template

John L introduced the draft template that he and Sue had developed. It was adapted from that used by DCC in the SA workshop. Option 1 would normally be the draft policy submitted for public consultation and option 2 would be the policy revised in the light of that consultation. We must not fabricate options. The impact scores will need to have their characteristics added to help to understand the weight to be given to them. We will re-do the original impact scores in the light of our further understanding of the process and the knowledge gained from the consultation.

Carrying out the SA must be a group exercise. To test the template we will do a worked example on the Sustainability theme on 12 June. We need to check the template with the consultants on 26 June.

## **6. Arrangements for AECOM Visit on 26/27 June**

John A reported that the landowners concerned are available and willing to co-operate. **John A** and **Sue** will accompany them on their visits as required.

Ros reported that the consultants will arrive on the evening of 25 June. It was suggested that John A and Sue should meet them for dinner. They will attend our meeting at 9.00 on 26 June to discuss their visit and to talk about their technical support for the SA. They will leave early in the afternoon of 27 June without a further meeting with us.

Ros reported that she had contacted Debbie Lamb from Locality about the role of the consultants. We need to obtain from them a schedule for their work programme.

## **7. Any other business**

- Consideration of the application for building more offices on the Milburngate House site was deferred to the next meeting.
- Peter distributed some ideas about a Street Gallery.
- Concerns were expressed about the lack of information / knowledge about events in the city.

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 12 June following the 9.00 am Forum meeting at the Miners' Hall.

The main item on the agenda will be DCC's *Preferred Options*.