

Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Minutes of meeting held on
Tuesday 18th October 2011, 6.30pm
The Centre, 27 Fenkle Street, Alnwick

Present

Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Mayor), Chairman
Bill Batey, Alnwick Town Council
Cllr John Taylor, NCC and Denwick Parish Council
Bruce Hewison, Alnwick Tourist Association
Sue Patience, Gallery Youth
David Lovie, Alnwick Civic Society
Rachael Roberts, Transition Alnwick/ Alnwick Friends of the Earth

In Attendance

David English, Principle Planning Officer, NCC
Charlotte Colver, Planning Officer, NCC (Alnwick Planning Link Officer)
Jack Butcher, National Management Trainee, NCC
Rachel Cooper, Student Planner, NCC

Apologies for absence

Clive Mattison, Freeman of Alnwick
Colin Barnes, Northumberland Estates
Maurice Hall, Duchess's Community High School
Peter Halliwell, North Country Leisure
Peter Biggers, Argyle Planning Ltd.
John Cooper, Locality Development Officer, NCC
Karen Ledger, Head of Development Services, NCC

1.0 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27th September were agreed as a true record.

2.0 Matters arising

- 2.1 Bill Batey confirmed that, after a meeting with NCC last week and from discussions with Denwick Parish Council, the extent of the plan should cover all of Alnwick Town Council Area and Denwick Parish Council area.
- 2.2 Charlotte Colver provided 3 assorted scale maps of Alnwick and Denwick and confirmed that NCC could provide further maps as and when they would be needed.
- 2.3 Bill Batey reported that the Town Council agreed that the community partnership would continue (Alnwick Town Council and community organisations). He also confirmed that the initial draft terms of reference for the Steering Group had been agreed by the Town Council.
- 2.4 The Steering Group discussed the issue of creating a name and "brand" for the plan and all subsequent work. Bill Batey suggested this could be referred to the Engagement Sub Group, which Sue Patience stated that she would be happy to do. The Steering Group agreed to this.
- 2.5 The issue arose of whether or not neighbourhood plans were truly a new concept as other similar concepts such as Parish Plans had been around for a while. David English pointed out that neighbourhood development plans are a completely new concept being community-led plans that, subject to conformity with other local and national planning policy and subject to approval at local public referendum, can be adopted as part of the local planning authority's

statutory development plan. Planning legislation will require that planning applications are determined in accordance with policies in the neighbourhood development plan.

2.6 David English confirmed that NCC will provide secretariat for the Steering Group and the Engagement Sub Group.

Actions:

- 1. The Engagement Sub Group will develop a name and branded materials for use in preparing and publicising the neighbourhood development plan for Alnwick and Denwick. Progress on this matter will be reported back to the Steering Group.**
- 2. Bill Batey to provide names and contact details of all Steering Group members to Rachel Cooper. This will include email, telephone number, postal address and the name of the organisation each member represents.**

3.0 Constitution

3.1 Bill Batey led the group through the draft constitution document, circulated at the meeting, which included an outline of the Terms of Reference, previously agreed by the Steering Group and approved by the Town Council.

3.2 The document outlined individuals and organisations who would be members of the Steering Group in relation to specific interest areas. It was agreed that membership could be flexible to reflect any changes as the proposed plan progresses. It was agreed that Steering Group member organisation groups could select an appropriate, alternative representative as a reserve if they could not attend a meeting. It was noted that members of the Steering Group and their reserves are expected to report back to their organisation after meetings.

3.3 The issue of how long the Steering Group would remain active was discussed. Some members were concerned that, if the group was to dissolve after the independent examination of the plan, they would not get an opportunity for any follow-up engagement. It was agreed that the document should state "...Steering Group will remain active *at least* until the independent examiners report..". It was agreed that the Steering Group need not be time limited.

3.4 It was discussed whether the Steering Group can make decisions itself or whether decisions would need to be referred to the Town Council for approval. Bill Batey pointed out that the Town Council had agreed that the Steering Group is to prepare and monitor the plan and the Steering Group has therefore been given delegated power to act on behalf of the Town Council as the plan making qualifying body. It was agreed that the Steering Group is responsible for decision making. However it was also recognised that wide ranging engagement is essential throughout the process of preparing the plan.

3.5 It was agreed that the terms of reference shall state that the Steering Group will be considered quorate if four voting members are in present. It was agreed that the terms of reference shall state that when a majority decision has not been achieved the Chairman shall have the casting vote.

3.6 David English expressed concern that the term 'constitution' could cause confusion because Alnwick Town Council, which is the lead local authority for this project, is already a formally constituted body. It was suggested and agreed that the document should be known as "Terms of Reference" for the Steering Group.

3.7 It was noted that no Steering Group member had yet been nominated from Northumberland County Council. Councillor John Taylor attended as a representative from Denwick Parish Council. It was suggested that this place could be taken by Councillor Gordon Castle. It was agreed that the matter should be resolved as soon as possible by NCC.

Actions:

- 1. Bill Batey to prepare a revised draft Terms of Reference to clarify the decision making process and to reflect the issues resolved below. The revised Terms of Reference will be reported to the next Steering Group meeting and to Alnwick Town Council and Denwick Parish Council for their formal approval.**
- 2. Charlotte Colver to clarify name of NCC representative for the Steering Group for the next meeting.**

Resolved:

- 1. The whole document is to be referred to under the heading of “terms of reference” rather than “constitution”;**
- 2. It was agreed that the terms of reference shall state that the steering group will be considered quorate if four voting members are present.**
- 3. It was agreed that the terms of reference shall state that when a majority decision has not been arrived at by the Steering Group the Chairman shall have the casting vote.**
- 4. Agreed that member organisations can nominate a substitute representative if their named representative is unable to attend any meeting**

4.0 Press Release / Advert

4.1 It was reported that NCC had commented on a draft press release and Bill Batey had issued it for circulation in time to meet the Northumberland Gazette’s Tuesday deadline. The draft advertisement was close to being finalised for inclusion in the November edition of the Alnwick Cryer. The focus of the advert will be to inform the communities of Alnwick and Denwick about the proposed plan. . It was confirmed that the Alnwick Cryer is circulated to Denwick Parish.

4.2 David English suggested that the Steering Group decides on branding before they carry out any engagement. However the Steering Group considered that the process of developing a brand could generate interest from local people who may not otherwise get involved. Therefore it was agreed that the branding issue should be taken to the Engagement Sub Group for their consideration as to how to involve public debate, prior to reporting back to the steering group.

Action:

1. Engagement Sub Group to finalise the advertisement and arrange circulation in the Alnwick Cryer.

5.0 Brief for Coordinator Position

- 5.1** The group is seeking to appoint a coordinator to help progress the plan and at the meeting Bill Batey circulated a draft brief for the role.
- 5.2** It was agreed that it would be necessary to define the extent of the budget and what was meant by “day” (“2 days assistance per month”) especially if evening attendance was expected from the coordinator. The group agreed that this should be included in the brief. After suggestions from members of the group it was also agreed that the closing date for applications should be extended for a further two days, making it 4th November rather than 2nd November.
- 5.3** Concerns were expressed about the requirement, in the draft brief, to give planning advice. The steering group agreed to a change of wording so that the requirement would be to “give advice regarding planning requirements” rather than “give planning advice”, which would avoid the role appearing to be open only to professional planners. The group discussed who should be on the panel for shortlisting / interviewing candidates for the coordinator role. The group was in general agreement that Cllr. Symmonds should chair the panel with a representative from Denwick (John Taylor) and Rachael Roberts.
- 5.4** The group agreed the brief should be circulated to as wide an audience as possible. Steering Group members agreed to circulate it around their networks and appropriate contacts.

Actions:

- 1. Bill Batey to make minor amendments to the brief as suggested by the Steering Group before circulating it as widely as possible.**
- 2. David English would provide a list of consultants to whom previous similar invitations to tender for work from NCC had been sent.**

Resolved

- 1. Interview panel to comprise Cllr Alan Symmonds as chair, John Taylor and Rachael Roberts.**

6.0 Topic Allocation Update

- 6.1** A table of topic allocations was provided in the minutes of the previous meeting and Sue Patience requested that she should not be identified as the lead for two topics as this would demand too much time. It was suggested that not much would happen with the list until the coordinator was in place following which, the Steering Group could work towards outlining the responsibilities of the leads.
- 6.2** As the housing and transport topics do not currently have a lead, the group discussed whether they should be looking for people outside the steering group who could lead those topics. It was agreed that such ‘calls for help’ might be a way of gaining additional expertise but they would have to be in some way representative of the community. Bill Batey asked whether NCC

could help with key topics such as housing and transport. David English explained that as this is a community-led plan, it would be inappropriate for NCC to lead on a topic area. The NCC team would support whoever took on those roles using the available expertise at NCC. It was agreed that lead roles on housing and transport were to be left unfilled for the time being and would be resolved once a project coordinator was in place.

7.0 Any Other Urgent Business

7.1 David English and Jack Butcher provided a report on the recent neighbourhood planning engagement event for the Allendale project. Consultation materials were left with Sue Patience after they were passed around the group.

8.0 Date of next meeting

8.1 It was confirmed that the next meeting is to take place 15th November 2011 at The Centre, Fenkle Street, Alnwick. Sue Patience informed the group that there would be an Engagement Sub Group meeting before then and the report from this would be part of the agenda for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8:10 pm