

Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 18 September, 2012
Council Chamber, 1 Clayport Street, Alnwick at 6.30pm

Present

Alan Symmonds (AS), delayed arrival
Cllr. Gordon Castle (Chaired meeting), NCC
Cllr John Taylor, NCC
Susan Patience (SP), Gallery Youth
Mark Turnbull (MT)
David Lovie (DL), Alnwick Civic Society
Martin Murphy (MM), Transport Topic Lead
Philip Angier (PA), Alnwick Chamber of Trade
Colin Barnes (CB), Northumberland Estates
Ian Walker (IW)

In Attendance

Peter Biggers (PB), Project Coordinator
Bill Batey (BB), Alnwick Town Council
Charlotte Colver (CC), Planning Officer, NCC (Alnwick Planning Link Officer)

Apologies for absence

Rachael Roberts (RR), Alnwick Friends of the Earth/Transition Alnwick
Mike Fowler,
David English, NCC
Kevin Bartlett, NCC

1.0 Minutes of Last Meeting

Subject to a changes to paragraphs 5.3 & 5.7 the Steering Group agreed that minutes from the last meeting held on 14 August, 2012 were a true record.

2.0 Matters arising not on the agenda

- 2.1 SP had followed up the action to discuss possibilities for a members-only section of the website but, in discussion with BB, it had been agreed to be too expensive an option for the time being.
- 2.2 PB had followed up the action to contact Dave Chetwyn with an email.

3.0 Issues and options stage

- 3.1 PB had followed up an action to ask Caroline Stewart, if she would assist by writing the paper on tourism. Her response had been to say that because she was running a business and required to pay staff to take her place she would have to charge £450 a day, for approximately three day's work. Further to discussion the Group decided they would decline her offer as they not wish to pay more than the rate they are currently paying the Programme Coordinator. Given the experience that Steering Group members have now obtained in writing their own papers and their breadth of local knowledge, consideration was given to holding a separate meeting dedicated to working out the basis of a tourism paper between them. It was agreed that the lack of commitment from Alnwick Tourism Association was extremely disappointing and that their lack of follow through on a Tourism paper would weaken the Plan in that area.

- 3.2 The Topic Leads reviewed the following draft Issues and Options papers:
- Economy and Employment
 - Heritage and Culture
 - Retail
 - Community facilities
 - Transport.
- 3.3 In RR's absence the Environment paper was held over for discussion at the next meeting in October as were Sport and Recreation and Housing papers. Ways of proceeding with a Tourism paper by then are also being considered.
- 3.4 Having been welcomed to the Steering Group in his capacity as a School Governor, Ian Walker agreed that by the October meeting, with assistance from PB, he should have the bare bones of a draft prepared on Education.
- 3.5 Detailed discussion took place on each of the papers presented and key comments and cross-cutting issues were noted. GC suggested that suggestions could also be emailed to the individual Topic Leads and PB.

Economy and Employment

Attention was drawn to the critical question in the paper on whether the Plan would seek to make specific land allocations or take a criteria based approach, however this was not resolved.

SP suggested that the paper should include reference to the 'soft side' of the topic, i.e. employment and training including youth training, e.g. construction training near Jewsons'. PB confirmed that unlike a traditional spatial plan a Neighbourhood Plan could approach the people side of an issue.

DL suggested that the paper should consider the visual setting of employment uses for example avoiding urban sprawl. While CB responded that growth would be subtle and small-scale DL noted that there is potential for even small incremental change to damage the quality of the town setting.

MM suggested that more consideration should be given to defining what is meant by 'economically active' as the demographic issues include an ageing population and difficulty in attracting and retaining younger people.

Community facilities

CC suggested that the TA Centre could be added to the list of venues for youth activities and that the Fire Station, Ambulance provision and future of the hospital could be addressed in the Health section.

Open spaces were discussed as a cross-cutting issue and it was agreed that given that they are dealt with in both Environment and Sports and recreation papers it was agreed that the Community Facilities paper did not need to provide more detail.

It was agreed that the paper needs to address reuse and improvement of redundant buildings but detail is not available due to lack of progress of NCC's Estates' Management Plan.

Similarly no progress can be made on health facilities until the ongoing GPs' commissioning process is complete.

Culture and Heritage

DL stressed the importance of the town's setting, the need for quality in design and the potential for damage caused by small incremental change for example

to signage, shopfronts and street furniture. Significant cross-cutting issues focus on transport, traffic management and the 'floorscape' of the town.

PB noted that the Neighbourhood Plan will need to include a 'parent policy' to allow the subsequent surveys suggested by the paper including a comprehensive townscape survey and urban tree study.

MM noted that, as well as referring to cultural organisations, the paper needs to consider unorganised, personal or cultural usage.

Retail

PA noted that there are cross-cutting issues with regard to tourism, transport, the townscape as dealt with in the Heritage and Culture paper and consideration of upper floor residential use to increase town vibrancy. PA also suggested that the paper needs to direct the Plan towards a view on whether growth is wanted and how much. Some discussion followed on the impact of out of town retail on the town centre and whether the town needs more of everything or to maximise what it already has.

The paper picks up on the poor quality of disabled access, identified through the consultation process, and the need to implement the Portas report to ensure a stronger sense of town welcome.

There was also discussion of the outlines shown on the map on PA's paper and it was suggested the out of town retail are should exclude the St James Estate residential area. CC noted that the town centre boundary differed from that in the NCC Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation document and suggested that the Group may want to justify amendment of the NCC version.

Transport

MM noted that his paper derived from reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the emerging NCC Core Strategy and what people had said through the Neighbourhood plan consultation process.

He commented on existing poor traffic management and enforcement and the fact that transport had cross-cutting issues with all the other papers.

CB suggested that the paper should include reference to the need for strategic improvement is required to the poor quality of access to the A1. CC noted that this should include lighting the junctions.

Actions:

- **PB to discuss with Andrew Duff the possibility of leading a tourism forum with the Group and preparing a Tourism paper.**
- **BB to write a letter to the Alnwick Tourism Association, inviting them to take part in a forum on tourism but also expressing the Group's disappointment that they had not felt able to follow the draft outline scoping report prepared earlier by their member David Taylor.**
- **All Topic Leads to make amendments arising from discussion on their individual papers.**
- **IW to see what progress can be made on the Education paper and contact SP to obtain Gallery Youth project information on informal training skills available in the area.**
- **CC to email PA with copy of the Town Centre map provide in the NCC Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation.**

4.0 Community engagement

4.1 SP/PB had provided a brief report on community engagement, which included a proposal for a major public consultation period between November and the end of December 2012.

4.2 The Steering Group was unanimous in agreeing to the proposed consultation using a questionnaire leaflet based on questions arising from the Issues and Options Topic papers and, subject to a rota and confirmed details yet to be drawn up, to volunteering assistance at the following events:

- 30 November, 2012, Alnwick Farmers' Market, Alnwick Market Place
- Mid November, Young Person's event, possibly at the High School
- 21 December, Christmas Market, Alnwick Market Place
- Date unknown, at Alnwick North Community Centre own organised event
- Date unknown, Denwick Parish Forum event
- Date unknown, partner group event (Alnwick Civic Society and/or other?)

PB/SP have been discussing possible use of the Dreadnought bus in case of bad weather for the Market Place events – still to be agreed.

PB stressed the importance of completing Topic Papers before the consultation leaflet could be prepared and asked Topic leads to consider ensuring suitable leaflet questions are included in their final drafts.

The potential for using NCC's SNAP analysis software again was discussed and CC agreed to make enquiries.

SP suggested that it would be good to include prize incentive again in the questionnaire and the Group agreed to consider seeking vouchers and other gifts from various businesses.

Actions:

- **SP/PB to confirm availability of Dreadnought bus.**
- **All Topic Leads to consider inclusion of suitable questionnaire-ready questions in their final draft papers.**
- **CC to make enquiries about potential NCC assistance with SNAP analysis of Issues and Options questionnaire.**

5.0 Budget update (BB please update this item as I didn't catch everything that was said last night.)

5.1 At month 6 of the financial year there has been £xxx expenditure from the budget of £12,000.

6.0 AOB

There being no other business to discuss the meeting finished at 9:10pm.

7.0 Date of next meeting

Next Steering Group meeting, following the previously agreed format of the third Tuesday of the month, will be held on Tuesday, 16 October, 2012 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber