

# **Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

Minutes of meeting held on  
Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011, 6.30pm  
Council Chamber, 1 Clayport Street, Alnwick  
at 6.30pm

## **Present**

Cllr. Alan Symmonds (Mayor), Chairman  
Barry Spall, Northumberland Estates  
Rachael Roberts, Alnwick Friends of the Earth/Transition Alnwick  
David Lovie, Alnwick Civic Society  
Susan Patience, Gallery Youth  
Clive Mattison, Freeman of Alnwick  
Cllr Gordon Castle, NCC  
Peter Biggers, Project Coordinator  
Bill Batey, Alnwick Town Council

## **In Attendance**

Charlotte Colver, Planning Officer, NCC (Alnwick Planning Link Officer)  
John Cooper, Locality Development Officer, NCC  
Jack Butcher, National Management Trainee, NCC  
Rachel Cooper, Student Planner, NCC

## **Apologies for absence**

Cllr. John Taylor, NCC and Denwick Parish Council  
Karen Ledger, Head of Development Services, NCC  
David English, Principle Planning Officer, NCC  
Carlo Biagioni, Alnwick Chamber of Trade  
Peter Halliwell, North Country Leisure

## **1.0 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Steering Group agreed that the minutes should state that members are expected to report back to other related organisations in their sector as well as their own organisations. Other than this, the minutes from the last meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October were agreed as a true record.

## **2.0 Matters arising not on the agenda**

- 2.1 Charlotte Colver raised two issues not on the agenda. The group was informed that Karen Ledger would be reporting on progress of the Front Runner projects to the County Council's scrutiny committee.
- 2.2 The group were also informed that two students had contacted NCC with queries about the Front Runner projects. Both had sent questionnaires and it was agreed that the questionnaires should be sent to Bill Batey in the first instance but that NCC could begin to pencil in some responses should more similar requests arise.
- 2.3 John Cooper raised the issue of the name of the Steering Group. So far there had been some inconsistency amongst documents regarding the naming of the Steering Group. It was agreed the name should appear as "Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group".
- 2.4 John Cooper also suggested Cllr. Roger Styring be recognised as a deputy for Cllr. Gordon Castle and that he be added to the contact list and kept up to date with progress. This was agreed by the Steering Group.

**Resolved:**

**The Steering Group should now be referred to as “Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group”**

**All correspondence circulated to the Steering Group should also be circulated to Cllr. Roger Styring.**

**3.0 Coordinator Appointment**

3.1 The Steering Group was informed that the position was duly advertised and the panel, which was agreed at the previous meeting, shortlisted the applications down to 4 candidates for interview.

3.2 Following the interviews, Peter Biggers was appointed the Project Coordinator. The position is funded until April, 2012 but it was hoped that funding would be extended beyond then.

**4.0 Terms of Reference for Steering Group**

4.1 Bill Batey informed the group that the changes agreed at the last meeting had been made, including changing the name of the document from “constitution” to “Terms of Reference”.

4.2 Bill Batey brought the group’s attention to paragraph 5 which was a new addition to the Terms of Reference. The paragraph clarified the discussion at the previous meeting about the qualifying body for decisions. It made clear that the Steering Group has full delegated authority to take the plan up to draft stage.

4.3 It was suggested “consultation draft” be reworded to “submission draft” as this referred to the stage of submitting the draft to the county council as local planning authority which would first need the formal approval of Alnwick Town Council as qualifying body. The group agreed with this.

4.4 It was agreed the wording regarding feedback to organisations would be changed to reflect previous discussions about members feeding back to their respective sectors as well as their organisations.

**Action:**

**BB to make adjustments to the Terms of Reference as outlined above.**

**Resolved:**

**The Terms of Reference were agreed by the Steering Group. The Terms of Reference will be presented for approval by Alnwick Town Council and Denwick Parish Council.**

**5.0 Engagement Strategy and Update on Proposals**

5.1 Susan Patience updated the group on current progress. The group were informed that the advert had been circulated in the Alnwick Cryer which informed the community of the first stage of engagement and invited ideas for a logo.

5.2 The Engagement Sub Group had previously discussed an early engagement

questionnaire. A draft of the questionnaire had been circulated to the Steering Group.

- 5.3 It was suggested a space for general comments could be included in the questionnaire. Some members of the group, however, expressed concern that this would make the questionnaire harder to analyse. It was also identified that the aim of this questionnaire was to get a trawl of ideas to be able to identify emerging issues. A space for general comments would allow for this.

**Action:**

**JC to adjust questionnaire to provide a space for general comments.**

- 5.4 It was noted that there was a likelihood that most of the issues raised in the comments section would be similar, making them easier to analyse. It was, therefore, suggested that this was an idea the Engagement Sub Group could look at.
- 5.5 The group were informed that the questionnaire would be available in paper format and electronically. The Engagement Sub Group was aiming to put them in key places such as libraries and shops.
- 5.6 It was suggested that if questionnaires were to be posted to houses they should include a pre-paid envelope though this would attract a cost. It was noted that NCC have a freepost address which could possibly be used but this would still attract a cost. The Steering Group agreed that the option of using the NCC freepost address should be explored.
- 5.7 Although the engagement strategy identified 6 weeks as a timescale for engagement events, the group agreed a shorter timescale would be more appropriate for the questionnaires (3-4 weeks).

**Resolved:**

**Timescale for the initial questionnaire to be shortened.**

- 5.8 The group looked at the idea of latching onto other events to promote the questionnaire. The Steering Group agreed that it would be a good idea to take the questionnaires to events to encourage people to fill them in.
- 5.9 It was suggested that Steering Group members come back to the next meeting with lists of events that their organisations will be doing and suggest taking questionnaires to those events.

**Action:**

**Steering Group to look into any events their organisation may be holding which could be used to promote the questionnaires.**

- 5.10 Clive Mattison suggested the group may be able to use the Town Hall for events subject to dates and other events.
- 5.11 It was questioned whether or not the questionnaire would be anonymous. John Cooper pointed out that the questionnaire asks for personal details but it was not a necessity. However, they would hope for at least a postcode.
- 5.12 It was suggested that the questionnaire could ask whether or not people wanted to be kept informed of the progress of the plan, if they chose yes they would then have to provide contact details.
- 5.13 It was noted that planning committee would not accept anonymous comments to be put forward, though it was noted this was not a major concern at this stage of engagement.

- 5.14 Charlotte Colver offered to provide the Steering Group with an Access Database as part of NCC's technical support. The database would be used to keep an audit trail of consultations and would be filled in and regularly updated by the Steering Group. The Steering Group accepted this offer.

**Action:**

**CC to provide the Steering Group with an Access Database for the Steering Group to keep an audit trail of consultations.**

- 5.15 John Cooper introduced the group to the Engagement Strategy and outlined what the 2 parts were about. The first half was more generic, outlining the process. The second part was an action plan, which he outlined for the Steering Group.
- 5.16 The Steering Group then looked at section 5 of the Engagement Strategy and made some changes to the commitments set out. It was agreed that they should be referred to as the commitments of the Steering Group rather than Alnwick Town Council and Denwick Parish Council.
- 5.17 The Steering Group suggested some change to the wording of the commitments to clarify what the community could expect from the Steering Group and what the Steering Group could realistically commit to.

**Action:**

**JC to make changes to the wording of section 5 of the Engagement Strategy in line with discussions.**

- 5.18 Some members of the Steering Group expressed concern that, with the current project plan, there would be months of engagement before the issues and options stage of the plan could begin. Peter Biggers suggested some engagement stages could run in parallel rather than after each other.
- 5.19 The group agreed that there could be some scope to reduce engagement time so that at least a submission draft of the plan could be prepared by May 2013.
- 5.20 It was agreed that the Steering Group should aim to have a draft before for local council elections in May 2013.

**Resolved:**

**Steering Group agreed to aim for May 2013 as a deadline for at least a submission draft of the plan.**

**6.0 Neighbourhood Planning Event for Community Representatives.**

- 6.1 The group discussed the forthcoming CLG event to be held in London. Invitations had been extended to community representatives involved in frontrunner projects and the Steering Group discussed whether or not they should send a representative. Prior to the meeting, Susan Patience expressed an interest in attending the event. The Steering Group agreed that it would be useful to send a representative and agreed that Susan should attend. John Cooper confirmed NCC had agreed to cover transport costs.
- 6.2 The group discussed whether to send a second representative, perhaps a youth representative, and Peter Biggers also offered to attend subject to other commitments. The group agreed to extend the invitation to absent members if Peter Biggers could not attend so that a second person could attend the event

subject to NCC agreeing to cover the transport costs for two people.

**Actions:**

**SP and anyone else attending the CLG event to provide JC with travel details so NCC could arrange their travel.**

**Resolved:**

**SP definitely to attend the CLG event and possibly another person. SP to check availability of youth representative.**

**7.0 Any Other Business**

**7.1** The issue of Steering Group membership was raised as some members of the group had noted regular absences by others. It was also noted that these absentees were not always being represented by reserves despite that practice being agreed previously by the Steering Group.

**7.2** It was noted that there had been interest from other organisations with regards to a representative joining the Steering Group.

**7.3** It was noted that several recent meetings had been rescheduled due to circumstances beyond the Steering Group's control. The need for a regular timetable of meetings was reaffirmed. The group again agreed that meetings should take place on the third Tuesday of every month.

**Action:**

**BB to circulate schedule of future meetings.**

**Resolved:**

**Meetings to take place the third Tuesday of each month in order to try and develop a routine and increase attendance**

**Steering Group members agreed to ensure that reserve members attend meetings / events if they are unable to do so**

**8.0 Date of next meeting**

**8.1** It was confirmed that the next meeting is to take place on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2011 at 6:30pm in the Alnwick Council Chamber, Clayport Street.

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm