

Neighbourhood Plan
Steering Group Meeting Minutes
Friday 12th June 2015

Present

Brian Hogan
Andrew Thomson
Paul Bates
Bob Edwards
Jackie MacArthur
Peter Aston
Neville Price (guest)

George Hayes
Amanda Martin
Steve Foster
Peter Minshull
Jenny Unsworth

Apologies

Apologies were received from Laura Tilston

1. Feedback from Master Planners meeting

The meeting with the parish liaison group and the Master Planners employed by CEC was not wholly successful because there remain fundamental differences between the town and parishes about the provisions of the Local Plan. This led to some differences of opinion.

As a consequence the Master Planners did not go through their presentation properly nor did they receive any coherent feedback from those present on their proposals

Earlier on the same day members of the Chamber of Commerce met the same planners and had a very productive meeting and exchange of ideas

Some concerns that did emanate from the planners included:-

- a. Housing density of 30 homes per hectare is unlikely to be achieved, it could be more likely 25 per hectare, therefore more land will need to be allocated to housing
- b. Site constraints in certain parts of Somerford and Hulme Walfield in particular
- c. Employment land impinging upon housing
- d. Employment land access going through housing land
- e. Need cycle ways and footpaths designated in the area
- f. Concern at Master Planners appeasing land owners in this exercise
- g. Should have equalisation policy for land sale
- h. Need list of topographical constraints in the area

2. Parish Liaison

The fact that different members of the local parishes are attending the meetings arranged by CEC to facilitate liaison to find some common ground, is frustrating this goal as there is no consistency on who attends which does little to build trust.

It is though the responsibility of CEC to sort out this issue and they need to be reminded of this.

3. Prioritise Housing

In the latest submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspector pointed out that CEC have increased the growth figure from 0.4% to 0.7% which has to have an effect on housing numbers and the amount of employment land needed

Finally the Inspector is hinting that CEC may have undertaken fundamental changes to the spatial approach and strategy and if this is shown to be the case CEC may be asked to withdraw the Local Plan.

If the Local Plan is withdrawn, this would make the Neighbourhood Plan even more important as the only tool available to prevent a developer free for all.

4. Questionnaire feedback/design of new questionnaire

So far there have been about 800 responses, but, only a few hundred have been entered into the data base so far. The early respondents are predominantly from the older generation and this is seeing results somewhat skewed

The next questionnaire will need to be more complex as the teams analyse the results of the mini questionnaire and request responses on more complex issues.

Teams are requested to consider constructing the questions now as data will be needed in 4 to 5 weeks' time. The questionnaire which could be 16 pages long will need to be completed electronically, but, paper versions will be available

5. Food and Drink Festival/Roadshows/ Workshops

A road show was carried out inside Tesco to raise awareness of the plan and the questionnaire. A similar roadshow will be undertaken at West Heath on Saturday 13th June, then at the Food and Drink Festival on Sunday 14th June

A workshop to display progress on the plan, setting out the work the themed groups have undertaken, including maps and evidence gathered so far, will take place from 4pm to 8pm on the 8th July in the Town Hall. Refreshments will be provided

6. Feedback from Groups

Transport

The group met with Jenny Mills to obtain more information on public transport usage, but, the information provided was limited.

Most of the buses in Congleton are subsidised because of their low usage.

The team need a travel survey to find out where people live, where they are travelling to in order to help produce their transport strategy. Such data should ideally be collated in a neutral month. An expert may be required to analyse this data, identify possible costs for this work

They may also require some traffic modelling; AT will provide some contacts for this type of work

Town Centre and Heritage

The evidence data is being prepared, whilst David Roth and Mike Warke are looking after heritage.

There was a meeting recently with Caroline Simpson of CEC who was very supportive.

The survey undertaken by White and Green on retail capacity is being updated by CEC, requested that Congleton is one of the first towns to be reviewed

Sustainability

The key factor focussing the group's attention is examining green space and open space which is a challenge

5 areas of the town have been identified as key areas which include:-

- a. Uplands from Tall Ash Farm to Timbersbrook
- b. Canal corridor
- c. River Dane corridor
- d. Land at Priesty Fields to Lamberts Lane
- e. Bath Vale

The areas will be mapped from a topology and geology perspective including identifying any natural obstacles

The team does need help with mapping skills and these may ne to be bought in. Cheshire Community Action will be contacted to see what skills they can provide

Communication

There are some current problems being experienced with the website availability, but, this should be resolved shortly

Questionnaire is going out to school children to ask how what they want Congleton to look like in 2030

Roadshows have been organised in various locations. A workshop has been set in motion.

The next challenge for the team is to get the next questionnaire constructed.

Housing

Require some financial assistance to add data to the evidence base, helping to identify housing needs now and in the future. The consultants proposed by Groundwork UK as part of technical assistance, should be able to help in this area

Economic Development

This group met with the Master Planners and strongly consider that the NP team should produce our own masterplan

The team produced a leaflet which set out some of the aspirations of the team, provided evidence and some proposals on employment sites

7. Timetable

Imperative that we carry on with the NP as it is possible the Local plan maybe rejected

8. Actions

- a. Start producing questions for the next questionnaire – All
- b. Arrange to meet the developers – BH
- c. Distribute constraints map and green belt map – JU
- d. Produce a larger version of maps – JU/LT
- e. Arrange workshop on 8th July - JM/BH
- f. Produce material and man workshops – ALL
- g. How do we market ourselves to attract new retail (vision for Town Centre) – PB/GH/TMc
- h. Identify costs for analysing data and traffic modelling - PM

9. Date of next meeting

9am 26th June 2015 at TMC

Brian Hogan