

## CONGLETON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015

### MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE HOUSING GROUP HELD AT PLUS DANE CONGLETON ON THURSDAY 03 JUNE 2015 AT 09:30AM

#### 1. **Present:**

Jenny Unsworth (JU) – Chairman  
Amanda Martin (AM)  
Glyn Roberts (GR)  
Gordon Baxendale (GB)  
Laura Tilston (LT)  
Gillian Kaloyeropoulos (GK)

**Guests:** Peter Aston – Sustainability & Green Spaces Group  
Peter Minshull – Transport & Traffic Group

#### 2. **Apologies:**

Mike Watson (MW)  
David Brown (DB)

#### 3. **Previous minutes:**

Agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting.

#### 4. **Matters arising:**

##### 4.1. Affordable Housing

Inter meeting information: CEC had corresponded with GR dealing in part at least with the matters relating to requested meeting with Stephen Knowles of CEC which is still outstanding.

**Action:** GR/JU continue to pursue.

##### 4.2. Housing Numbers

AM still needs data from and meeting with Tom Evans CEC for agreed position with housing completions statistics. It was still proving difficult to get relevant information from CEC.

**Action:** JU/AM to chase

##### 4.3 Evidence Library & NP Website

JU advised group members to ask her to arrange for additional items to be added – item 8 of 16 April minutes refers.

**Action:** All

LT to take a good look at the NP website, check housing group Vision Statement on same

and provide feedback to her.

**Action:** LT

## 5 **Reports from:**

### 5.1 Joint Parish Working Group

Hulme Walfield and Eaton have not as yet submitted applications to CEC to be recognised as a Neighbourhood Plan area, but intend to do so. Somerford NP application has still not received agreement because of unresolved issues between the parish and CEC. Nonetheless, Somerford parish have published their first questionnaire, which cites a maximum of 600 new homes.

The issue of shared cross-boundary sites is still not resolved. The issue of CEC's Local Plan and is also unresolved and the final housing need figure for the key service centre is, therefore also unresolved. Possible solutions are:

1. Write to all parishes in the same way as we dealt with Brereton, however the relationship between the town and Brereton, in respect of the LP proposal to place a large share of Congleton's growth in the adjoining parishes of Somerford, Hulme Walfield and Eaton, is significantly different from the relationship with Brereton.
2. Draw a line around the land within the strategic sites which overlaps the boundaries and designate these as a pool for future phased development. Identify other sites within the town boundary. Identify the town's needs using census information and forward projections and see whether there is sufficient scope to accommodate this on viable non-strategic sites within the town boundary.

**Action:** It was agreed that, as the qualified planners in the group, GR and LT should consult with regard to the latter option and report back with their views.

### 5.2 Sustainability & Green Spaces – Peter Aston (PA)

Peter Aston chairs the Sustainability & Green Spaces Group. JU explained that he had been invited to attend as we had now reached the stage where site locations were being examined. It was recognised that many residents view green areas, trees, wildlife, and so on, in their locality as very valuable community assets. It would be necessary to have clearly defined and robust criteria to inform and support the decision-making process in respect of site locations.

The following items were discussed:

1. PA explained that they have divided the town into 5 principal areas of green space; (1) Uplands (2) Dane Corridor (3) Canal Corridor (4) Priestly Fields/Lamberts Lane to Canal (5) Biddulph Valley Way. This will enable comments as to what should be done on and around these corridors. The group will put forward ideas for the further evolution and safe-guarding of those areas when they have undertaken site visits. The group is now also looking at additional sites. It was recognised that these choices had to be well evidenced.

2. This work constitutes landscape characterisation and GR suggested that for guidance they look at examples that had already passed through Examination. PA explained that Jack Swan and Matt Axford had consulted with Cheshire Wildlife Trust and confirmed that David Roffe (Landscape Historian) is also on the panel and is dealing with landscape value aspects.
3. It is recognised that green areas in Congleton are already being lost to development and it is anticipated that this will continue, albeit some of these areas form part of the distinctive landscape of the town. PA identified the current problem to be the absence of a town vision on macro green space but confirmed that an evidence base is being built. GR and LT said that, in their professional opinions, a robust evidence base is essential. This work will help us in choices about sites for development.
4. It was explained that during our group's site visits we had identified some buildings that we thought might be worthy of protection. The Town Centre group was covering heritage but some of these buildings are outside that area. Some buildings are not listed but might still have some value. PA expected that the public consultation exercises would also reveal information about the areas that are valued by the townspeople.

**Action:** JU/GR/GK/AM are involved in collecting evidence for site evaluation and will ultimately pass these to PA's group for comments.

### 5.3 Transport & Traffic – Peter Minshull (PM)

PM chairs the Transport & Traffic Group but although this group does not have very many members, it is required to carry out a lot of technical assessment. The Housing Group's work on sites would need to be informed by work carried out by them. JU expressed concern that a proposal to the Steering Group that resources in the form of outside Traffic & Highways consultants be provided to PM's group had yet to be followed through.

1. PM explained that because of issues such as sustainability and air quality, it was important to get people to consider alternative ways of travel, in particular, to reduce the number of trips made by car. JU pointed out that many residents expressed the view that Congleton had a poor public transport system and that Census data showed that the private car was the predominant method of transport. This did not always seem to be reflected when traffic surveys were presented and there appeared to be a gap between public perceptions and what was presented as evidence. PM offered the explanation that there is some leeway within the TRICS methodology for selectivity. LT pointed out that the TRICS database is nationally approved. It was agreed that it might be necessary to have some high quality work carried out to obtain evidence to get a true picture of what the actual traffic and travel conditions in the town are, but this would be very expensive.
2. PM is currently examining the Congleton Link Road survey. It only covered motorised transport, and did not cover walking or sustainable transport. There was no data from vehicles about where their journeys had originated or their points of destination. Lorries and HGVs had not been surveyed as the police objected to their being stopped for questioning. PM had examined Jacobs' data and felt that he had important questions to ask the AECOM team but no arrangements had as yet been made to accommodate this. It had been suggested in the Steering Group that extensions to the Link Road (south and east) would be beneficial, as had a potential link between the A34 and Mountbatten Way. Whilst all these ideas recognised the public perception of traffic as a real problem for the town, they would require expensive feasibility studies.

3. Janet Mills from CEC had visited PM's group with information on bus services. This showed that only one bus service (No 38 Macclesfield/Crewe) made a profit and that the other routes were not only subsidised but were either sporadic or offered a very limited service. PM is trying to get data on bus and rail patronage. Congleton has relatively high car ownership levels, but apparently 34% of residents in the Bromley Road area, which is one of the poorer areas of the town, resort to taxis in the absence of useful bus services.
4. JU enquired about the possibility of a comprehensive travel and transport survey specifically for Congleton as this would be helpful in assessing sites. PM explained that a multi-modal model would cost thousands of pounds. He has carried out trip rate surveys for several sites in Congleton and these provide useful comparisons with evidence presented in TRICS.

It was agreed that solid evidence and information about transport and traffic is very important for the Neighbourhood Plan and that our Group should work to persuade the Steering Group to engage a consultant to assist that team. It was also agreed that all Group members need to think about the kind of questions we need to ask PM's Group.

**Action:** LT/GR/JU to lobby Steering Group for more support for PM's team. All group members to consider what kind of information we needed from PM's group.

#### 5.4 Local Plan Workshops: Report from JU and PM

JU had attended these as an observer and PM had been a participant on the first day. The workshops had taken place on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May. Adrian Fisher for CEC had explained that their purpose was to inform participants in the examination process of the results from several studies that they had commissioned in response to the Inspector's comments on the suspended Local Plan. The matters covered were as follows:

- (1) Housing and Economic Strategy. Interestingly, the consultants had predicted a higher growth figure and a corresponding housing number of 36,000 houses. From the feedback at the meeting, this appeared to please nobody although the consultant pointed out that any growth prediction must be speculative and could only be a best guess.
- (2) Objectively Assessed Needs. Again, the objectors appeared to have been unimpressed by this work. Those against the LP on the grounds that the numbers were inadequate still maintained that position, whilst those against on the grounds that there was over-provision also maintained their position.
- (3) Green Belt Provision. There were concerns raised about the methodology that was used.
- (4) Spatial Distribution Methodology. Again, the methodology was questioned and there appeared to be no change in the positions of the participants. In particular, there was concern that CEC might be proposing to introduce new sites without consultation.

It was stated on the documentation that there would be no further formal consultation. At the same time, Mr Fisher did not rule out the possibility of another round.

**Action:** GB and DB to keep a watching brief.

#### 6. Housing -Vision Statement:

GR confirmed that the Housing Vision Statement had been sent to Brian Hogan for the

website and the evidence library.

## **7. Housing Policy Objectives:**

These are still under consideration. It was agreed that feedback from public consultation and from the other groups was still needed. GR to hold a watching brief.

## **8. Locations Visit Summary:**

JU/GR/GK had carried out a tour of sites concentrating on the larger tracts of land. It was agreed that this working party would meet at 2pm on 15 June to work on a brief assessment of these and to decide what should be done next. AM asked to join the working party and this was agreed.

## **9. Revised Local Plan:**

It is completely unclear what will happen with this. Theoretically it is on target, but the feedback from the May workshops does not support this.

## **10. Next Steps**

1. It was felt that inviting the leaders of other groups to the meetings was very helpful and it was agreed to contact the two remaining groups and ask them to send representatives.
2. The work on housing numbers and housing needs assessment should be continued.

## **11. Any Other Business:**

### **11.1 Estate Agent Visits–GR/GK**

John Robinson of Whittaker & Biggs had been visited. Initial response was, that whilst there was a need for development in Congleton, the current lack of a plan and its implications on land and house values was a matter for concern. He thought that it would be helpful to move quickly to a finite, well-defined, list of sites. Insufficient supply of bungalows and shortage of property for people needing care etc. exists. He understood why developers choose to build what they do and felt that Congleton would experience pressure from Manchester. The second visit was to Belvoir Lettings which had no notable lettings for bungalows. Its main client base aged 20s to mid 30s seeks 2-3 bedroom houses for young families.

**Action:** GK and GR to visit remaining agents and compile evidence reports to be agreed with agents.

## **12. Next Meeting will be at 09:30 on Tuesday 30 June at Congleton Town Hall**