

CONGLETON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015

MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE HOUSING GROUP HELD AT PLUS DANE CONGLETON ON THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2015 AT 09:30AM

1. **Present:**

Jenny Unsworth (JU) – Chairman
Amanda Martin (AM)
Glyn Roberts (GR)
Laura Tilston (LT)
Chris Tyrer (CT)
Gillian Kaloyeropoulos (GK)
Guest: Steve Foster – Town Centre Group

2. **Apologies:**

Mike Watson (MW)
David Brown (DB)
Gordon Baxendale (GB)

3. **Previous minutes:**

Agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting.

4. **Matters arising:**

4.1. Affordable Housing

The meeting with Stephen Knowles of CEC is still out-standing.

Action: JU to raise issue yet again

4.2. Housing Numbers

LT had agreed to make enquiries about Waggs Road Judicial Review and confirmed that matter currently with the courts.

5. **Reports from:**

5.1 Joint Parish Working Group

Brereton NP has been written and submitted for examination.
Somerford application is still in limbo.
Issues in Hulme Walfield in that farmers, hitherto core of village life, keen to sell out.
Eaton still to apply for NP area designation.
Astbury on verge of submitting their NP for examination.

The group were advised that DB had suggested that the parishes could take CEC's LP strategic housing allocations with a promise from Congleton TC's NP to take the rest. Steve Foster disagreed in that NP should be strategic not quid pro quo. GK concurred. GR understood that Somerford want a green gap between their parish and Congleton. Debate ensued about likelihood of CEC merging strategic sites into Congleton's SZL. GR

suggests we look at strategic blobs around Link Road (CLR) with view to all parishes lobbying CEC and Inspector Pratt to give other parishes the green gap they want. JU felt that this was not our decision. GR thought it was open for representations to be made.

Steve Foster suggested that CLR should extend to A34 South through Astbury cum Moreton. GK disagreed and JU summarised that other parishes are already struggling to accept the LP's strategic sites so likely to be very unwilling to take more. JU suggests we look at available sites (as requested by GR) and our housing need.

Action: JU will make a list of all sites capable of >10 dwellings for site visiting at 09:30 Wednesday 06 May.

5.2 Town Centre – Steve Foster (SF)

Steve Foster chairs the Town Centre Group and expressed his opinion that our advisor Andrew Thompson should be asked to extend his NP expertise across all the CNP groups. Traffic gridlock in the town is a major concern for his group. He wants to know what this group is proposing for housing in the town centre especially for senior citizens. What type of housing is being proposed? He mentioned potential locations behind the town hall, the timber yard and car park behind Lawton Street.

JU explained that we have been researching housing need, the ageing population and traffic issues.

SF explained that his group have been considering a combined cinema/bowling alley & stated that some parking could be multi-storey. (GR stated that CEC have an obligation to realise the value of some of the sites and unused buildings in the town.) It is difficult when CEC seem reluctant to share their ideas/plans with the NP group. Congleton will need at least one new primary and maybe a secondary school and at least another GP surgery. JU stated that Barn Road has become retail competition for the town centre. LT confirmed that 2 other plots in that area have permission; the staff car park and the old Focus site. CT drew similarity to Macclesfield in this regard where employment sites were taken over by retail developments and this provided an alternative shopping focus. This had a knock-on effect on the town centre which is now struggling. GR & SF mentioned Compulsory Purchase Orders as being preferred to encourage developers to come forward. JU stated that the factories have vanished and that community investment had disappeared. The town seemed to be struggling to replace this. GR agreed that there are finance issues and that access to the town centre is crucial. GK commented that if means of achieving adequate funding for a decent public transport system were not available, then she saw no change to car use, town centre traffic and parking problems and there would remain a disincentive to travel into the town from the outskirts.

AM wanted to know if anything could be done about the shabby condition of some of the residential properties in the town. CT thought that action would not be possible unless those properties present a danger.

It was agreed that we need a policy for the town centre and housing that tackled the problem of places falling into disrepair and dragging whole areas down.

HMOs are to be avoided and the town centre policy is to avoid hostels, etc. LT suggested that it is not for the NP group to consider facilities for Travellers/Gypsies it being a matter for the LP Strategic Planners. AM said that to achieve objectives the NP group should talk to town centre land owners. GR advised that the primary land owner is in fact CEC so

perhaps SF could put the NP case to CEC.

Action: SF will write to Caroline Simpson, CEC, on this issue.

NP Steering Group needs to establish whether AT is writing policies or whether this responsibility rests with the individual committees.

6. Housing -Vision Statement:

6.1 GR stated that the Vision has been tweaked as required at a previous meeting.

Action: GR/LT to provide at next meeting

7. Proposed Housing Policy Objectives:

7.1 The Objectives are still being worked on. GR & LT should have something to present in a week's time. They were asked to have this ready for the next meeting if possible.

Action: GR/LT

8. Evidence Library and Project Plan:

8.1 Tom Evans (TE) is working on an evidence library for all CEC's NPs. JU has found a system called One-Drive. All can access via a password and load up data. GR suggested that we use it as a work base and when we are satisfied with our work then load it onto TE's library. SF thinks that the whole NP group needs access to a 'work in progress' library. The need to communicate with the public via a website was also stressed – NP Communications Group have this in hand.

Action: GK to re-send the email sent earlier containing sample Project Plans and to include web source links

Action: JU to look at NP Evidence Base Library and ask for same to have internal facility as well as website for external communication.

9. Next Steps:

9.1 AM is to speak with TE concerning numbers.

Action: JU to set up the liaison.

10. Any Other Business

There would be a site visit to greenfield locations on Wednesday, 6th May.

Action: JU to circulate list of potential sites.

11. **Next Meeting** will be at 09:30 on Wednesday 03 June at Plus Dane, Worrall Street, Congleton.