

CONGLETON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HOUSING GROUP HELD AT CONGLETON TOWN HALL ON MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2015 AT 1:30PM

Present:

Jenny Unsworth (JU) – Chairman
Amanda Martin (AM)
Glyn Roberts (GR)
Laura Tilston (LT)
Mike Watson (MW)
Gillian Kaloyeropoulos (GK)

In Attendance: Andrew Thomson (AT)

Apologies:

David Brown (DB)

Previous minutes: This being the first meeting, there were no previous minutes.

As a starting point members were asked to give a brief resume of their backgrounds and the group includes experienced planners in both private and public sectors, including a former Inspector, people experienced in administration and technical work in both public and private sector, public sector housing provision, and people with experience in the voluntary and charitable sector, including councillors at both town and borough level. All members of the group are residents of the town.

Current Position viz a viz Local Plan (LP):

1. The Local Plan is currently suspended and CEC (Cheshire East Council) is addressing the issue of housing numbers. Peter Minshull from the Steering Group and AT will attend a 'by invitation' meeting with CEC, developers and others Friday 23/01/15 to identify housing numbers. **Action.** AT to report back to group.
2. The CNP must be made broadly in-line with the Local Plan in terms of housing numbers. GR & AT expect housing numbers for Congleton, Key Service Centre (CKSC) to be greater than the currently proposed 3,500. AM pointed out that the Local Plan Inspector had identified that the housing shortfall is in the north of the borough, not Congleton. AT & GR stated the north has greenbelt constraints, however the real position is yet to be advised. It was agreed that we proceed through investigating the housing need until such time as we were informed of any new allocation.
3. JU pointed out that strategic allocations for CKSC added to commitments (714) and completions (290) leaves a shortfall of 296 dwellings to achieve 3,500 target over the plan period. Shortfall needs to be met within the CKSC which includes Congleton Town Neighbourhood Plan area (CNP). Local Plan strategic areas within CNP area of 27.04 ha are expected to deliver circa 811 dwellings (estimate based on 30 per ha. It is not clear whether Back Lane Playing Fields is included) towards the CKSC target. Tom Evans had provided a breakdown of the current situation but AM thought these required detailed examination. **Action.** AM to analyse and present to the group.

The Dichotomy - CNP v CKSC: the NP must work alongside the LP.

1. There are boundary issues. The LP's CKSC identifies significant areas of land for Strategic sites which sit within other parish boundaries. Preparing the CNP in isolation from these other parishes presents difficulties. AT is meeting Tom Evans, CEC to try and resolve the boundary issue later today. **Action.** AT to report back to group.
2. JU and DB have been tasked with liaison with the Steering group on this issue and have contacted the relevant parishes, including Somerford who have not welcomed the LP. GK asked if the neighbouring parishes could perhaps be invited to attend the group's next meeting as GR had indicated that top down decisions would be imposed in the absence of neighbourhood plans – thus in everybody's interests to work together on the cross boundary issues. GR stated that there are other sites, exclusively within the CNP area which the group can look at. **Action.** JU to continue negotiating with the other parishes within the CKSC

SWOT Analysis: the discussion showed the following:

Strengths – popular place, well placed for M6, good green space in the CNP area (canal, mere, park, Cloud), good community spirit, excellent schools.

Weaknesses – local traffic congestion, air pollution, town centre accessibility especially from the west of the CNP area, limited leisure opportunities and youth entertainment, town centre access for ageing population, no university/college, slow housing market, limited public transport, declining work opportunities.

Opportunities – tourism trail, proximity to Little Moreton Hall, improved connectivity to the town and other areas of East Cheshire following completion of Link Road, upgrading of services and associated employment.

Threats – limited youth employment, shortage of school places, doctors, Link Road could draw Congletonians to shop elsewhere (Macclesfield regeneration an example), withdrawal of Link Road proposals would impact severely on viability of community and housing provision.

Housing Needs:

1. Housing for the elderly and 'affordable housing' (market and social) were central to discussions. GR pointed out that over the plan period C2/Extra Care housing could be expected to release some existing housing stock. He mentioned the small scale of Adlington's Mossley House scheme. LT stated that the company no longer saw this as a viable option. **Action.** We need to identify all C2 permissions which are not viable.
2. GR stated approximately 1330 people in CKSC will have dementia by 2019. **Action.** Contact CEC to confirm/update that figure. GR stated that we need to consider an ageing population which can be expected to migrate back towards the town centre for proximity to shops, doctors etc. JU suggested that other areas might also have necessary support facilities. **Action.** Identify suitable areas.
3. AT observed that 2/3 bed affordable market housing was not being built. AM wants to know why bungalows are not being built and has observed a need for one bedroom flats. MW stated that because of the way in which the system worked, Dane Housing had not

identified such a need. JU requested that he provide supporting information. **Action.** MW, GR and GK to investigate this.

4. JU pointed out that housing waiting lists contain duplication and that they required further analysis to be meaningful. GK asked MW if his association could identify those applicants on the Cheshire Home Choice database who, having chosen Congleton as the place in which they wish to live, have a direct connection with Congleton as opposed to the broader area of Cheshire East. MW explained it would not be possible since every application would have to be checked to extrapolate that information. LT asked if he could provide a list of what Plus Dane actually have evidenced as a need in Congleton. GR suggested that GIS mapping would be useful for progress. **Action.** It was agreed that GR and GK would meet with MW at Plus Dane to obtain necessary information.

Other Matters:

1. GR pointed out that some perceived constraints by the community may not be physical and some of those can be overcome. **Action.** The group needs to identify constraints.
2. AT advised that it may take 5-10 years to deliver the Link Road and that the CNP needs to allow for the rolling housing growth.
3. A review mechanism needs to be applied to the CNP, probably every 5 years.
4. The group needed to consider what style of homes we wish to see in our community and their eco-friendly credentials.

Evidence Gathering:

1. The group had agreed that mapping was helpful to understanding the geographical position and Tom Evans had provided a map showing greenbelt. GR felt the group also needs a topographical/constraints map. **Action.** AT will ask CEC for an interactive map.
2. GK mentioned comparisons between last ONS 2001 & 2011 census. Changes to electoral boundaries also complicated matters. GR suggested that trends needed to be taken into account and is to provide some information to AM who will then action. **Action.** GR and AM.
3. AM will also contact estate agents for length of time homes are taking to sell or let and LT stated that they should also be able to provide information on demand for types. JU again asked how to avoid duplication but nobody clear on this. **Action.** AM to contact and ask for information.
4. It was agreed that LT will provide sites status map. **Action.** LT to provide sites status map.

Next Meeting: 10 February 2015 at 1.30pm in the De Lacy Room, Plus Dane Group, Shepherds Mill, Worrall Street, Congleton CW12 1DT.