

Monkseaton South Ward Community Conversation Saturday 30 November 2013

Present: Cllr Ian Grayson (Chair), Cllr Carole Burdis (Community Engagement Cabinet Member), Cllr Joan Munby, Cllr Bill Caithness, Martin Craddock (Capita), Peter Slegg (Capita), Kevin Ridpath (Capita), Gary Walker (Capita), Lindsey Horwood (NTC), Cait Foley (NTC) and 27 residents.

2. Welcome Housekeeping and Community Conversations

Cllr Grayson opened the meeting explaining that this was a new way of carrying out community engagement that will take place at least three times a year in the Monkseaton South ward. In addition the Elected Mayor will be undertaking listening sessions. These are open to all residents and will move around North Tyneside, so take place in Monkseaton South ward once every 20 months. The meeting had been publicised on the council's website, 'Our North Tyneside' magazine, posters around the ward and letters to people who have attended council meetings in the past.

Cllr Munby explained the choice of venue as being central to the ward and stated that it had been chosen to accommodate her disability and to allow her to attend the meeting.

3. Consultation on the North Tyneside Local Plan

Martin Craddock and Peter Slegg gave an informal presentation on the consultation that is currently open and referred throughout the presentation to the map of the borough and the map in people's handouts of this ward. North Tyneside Council has not had an overall plan as to how land in the borough is used since 2006. This has meant that developers who wish to put in place new schemes can do so more easily. The new Local Plan will set out areas for development which have been decided following consultation with residents. There have been changes in planning legislation, which now states we should have one Local Plan per local authority area.

We have identified a range of potential development sites, and these are more in number than we actually need, but we want to seek people's views on their choices and priorities. Based on projected statistics, we may need to build between 12000 and 18000 new homes between now and 2030. In addition, we have taken into account employment, retail, land allocations, policies projections.

This stage of the consultation closes on the 6th January 2014. Information has been given to all residents and full copies of the proposals are in the Libraries or available on line.

The Chair then asked for people to comment on what they had heard or ask any question they had. (Q – question, C – comment, R – response)

Q. Why have you not had a plan in place for 7 years?

R. Policies of the last adopted plan the Unitary Development Plan remain in place whilst production of a new plan to respond to amendments in the planning system has been an priority, including production of Core Strategy Preferred Options in 2010 and 2011. Further amendments to national planning policy in 2012 have placed even greater importance on having an up to date plan that means we are in a position of having less strength when approached by developers. Having a plan in place will improve this situation and the council is focused on delivering a new plan as quickly as possible. We are following national guidance in terms of how land will be used in the borough and requirements for growth. It will give the council a voice when deciding where to develop land in the future. There is a commitment to protect the greenbelt.

Q. I am trying to sell my property but the street I live on has been flooded twice now. I think what the Government is doing is daft, when current home owners are unable to sell their properties, they are telling councils to keep building new properties. You have not mentioned redesignating land. I think it is ludicrous that the area highlighted in pink at Murton could potentially have housing built on it. You need to look for land which is not agriculturally active.

R. The plan must respond to needs and requirements that arise from the demographics of the Borough that exist regardless of current availability to finance house purchases. We are also aware there are currently financial challenges in the market that have real impacts in terms of delivery, but this plan must look beyond that between now and 2030.

Q. I would like to ask about the money the local authority get for building – is it all used for that purpose?

R. Yes that's right, the monies were receive are all ring fenced for that purpose.

Q. There will be a real impact on the services in that all of our schools are now full. What will happen to school places?

R. Yes you're right. In terms of all new developments, the plan will have to consider new services including education, traffic generation, roads and other services. It will need developers to come forward and with more resources. One example of this is the new development linked to Backworth Primary School – the school is due to be extended and relocated, which means there will be more places for local school children.

Q. Can you tell us more about affordable homes?

R. We have evidence in terms of the needs of people to have affordable homes, which includes the target we have been given by central government. This is approximately 400 per year. The term 'affordable home' in planning terms has a very specific definition which is 'social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices'. 25 % of housing should be 'affordable homes' and the sites we are looking for your views are those marked in pink on the map.

Q. Can you clarify please are we talking about land which is 'owned' by the council?

R. No we are talking about all land in the borough. There are a number of organisations which own land, which includes the council, but also Persimmon and the Duke of Northumberland (The Northumberland Estates).

Q. I am trying to sell my property but the street I live on has been flooded twice now. I think what the Government is doing is daft, when current home owners are unable to sell their properties, they are telling councils to keep building new properties. You have not mentioned redesignating land. I think it is ludicrous that the area highlighted in pink at Murton could potentially have housing built on it. You need to look for land which is not agriculturally active.

R. We are aware there are currently financial challenges in the market, but this plan will look beyond that between now and 2030.

Q. But there are so many people who are struggling to sell their homes following flooding.

R. We will be covering flooding later in the meeting.

Q. I think the information in the ward information leaflet is inconsistent with the information given in the whole borough map, and this is misleading.

R. Everyone has a copy of the ward map and information in their packs. If you want to look at the consultation in more details, please come and look at this map or visit your local library or the website to see more information and share your views.

C. (Cllr Caithness) I am on the Council's Planning Committee and we have been looking at small areas in the borough where we can build. We have just completed some new build houses in the Wallsend area. We are developing more local authority building within the overall plan.

Cllr Grayson thanked the officers for their input and informed the meeting that the officers would be around at the end to answer any specific questions residents might have.

4. Flooding Response

Cllr Grayson introduced Kevin Ridpath and Gary Walker from Capita who are part of the engineering team working on the alleviation of flooding in the borough. They came along with maps and plans detailing the different schemes that are being developed in the ward, and gave an informal presentation about each one.

They then asked for questions from residents.

Q. I would like to say thank you for this good news. It is a pity that no-one mentioned this at the flooding event I attended recently at your Quadrant office recently. I am aware that the water from Briar Vale goes into a small culvert under St Annes. Does the ditch you have described take advantage of the natural topography there? Is it manageable?

R. Yes and it would be the local authority's role to manage it.

Q. The bank that runs alongside the ditch would be a risk as it is. It would need to be robust and not wear down by people walking on / alongside it.

R. The ditches will be safe and self-cleaning. They will be 7 metres wide, which will make them fairly easy to keep clean. They will be added to the Sustainable Assets list in 2014, so it will be in the council's best interests to keep them well maintained.

Q. I would like to ask how big the culvert is that goes down from Foxhunters to the sea.

R. It is one metre in diameter.

Q. Who owns it?

R. Culverts, which are rivers, are looked after by the Environment Agency. Each culvert belongs to whoever's land it goes through.

Q. Does that include homeowners?

R. Yes that's right.

Q. From Otterburn Avenue, how will you run under the Metro line?

R. Water will run under the Metro line and into the ditch.

Q. How far will the ditch be from people's houses?

R. There will be a bund put in place and then that will be moved back away from housing.

Q. My question is about the culvert at Fairfield Green. Water is going into a tiny culvert. There had been talk of some form of piling but that does not seem to be happening.

R. We are not discounting that at this point in time. There is the possibility of using sheet piling, which we will take up with the local authority.

Q. I live at Fairfield and my understanding is that piling as a barrier is already going ahead as timber has already been put in place. I have known about this for some time but the date for completion has been pushed back several times now because of negotiations with Persimmon Homes. There are other landowners involved and I do not understand why enforcement action has not been taken. I now read in an article in the News Guardian that negotiations have been concluded. That does not sound right to me. It seems to me that you are being very soft with landowners.

R. Since we have become a Flood Authority, we are able to move issues forward that we could not do previously. I would like to apologise for the time these issues are taking to be resolved. We could go down the compulsory purchase route but this is very time consuming. I would like to deliver these schemes as quickly as we are able and the approach we are taking, we expect will be quicker.

Q. I live at Westward Green. It sounds like you're going to redirect water and I do not want to see a river running across near me. I think we will be flooded if you take the action you are proposing, as we are lower than lots of other properties.

R. We will be redirecting the water, and the expectation we have is that it will improve the situation for everyone. If you would like to, at the end of the meeting, I will explain to you your situation in more detail.

Q. I am concerned that the proposals will not alleviate my problem. I have been flooded 7 times now. Your plans have come too late for me.

R. The water will be collected away from people's houses into holding ponds. We are also diverting culverts.

Q. How long will the programme you are describing today take to be implemented?

R. We cannot give definite dates as this is a process we are working through. As I said earlier we have prioritised specific areas and this ward is one of these. We will keep sharing information with people so you are kept up to date with developments.

Q. What is your best estimate?

R. You will see improvements in 3-4 months time.

Q. When Northumbrian Water was looking at Briar Vale recently they did not seem to know where the water pipes were. When were the culverts last surveyed with video equipment? Ownership must be a real mine field.

R. There are lots of issues we are working on together. We are building up the Asset Register, looking at the issues of ownership and the possibility of using new powers we have not implemented before.

Q. The areas you discussed which will attract wading birds, will they be marsh areas?

R. They will dry out for part of the year and be wet for the remainder.

The Chair thanked Kevin and Gary for their presentation and responses to people's questions.

The Chair then informed people that the next Community Conversation meeting will be on Saturday 15 March 2014 from 11am-12.30pm at the Scout Hut, next to Whitley Bay Ice Rink.

The meeting was then formally closed.