

**Minutes of the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting
Acomb Village Hall on Tuesday 15th November 2016 at 6.30pm**

1. Present: Jane Wrigley (Acomb Parish Council, and Steering Group Chair)
Lorna Farr (Acomb Parish Council/Action 4 Acomb)
Sybil Gill (Acomb Parish Council)
Charles Enderby (Chairman, Acomb Parish Council)
Matilda Bevan (Local Resident)
Rachel Gagliano (Action 4 Acomb)
Norman Robson (Local Resident/ Minutes Secretary)

Invited guests: Jenny Ludman (Independent Planning Consultant)
David English (Strategic Planning and Housing, NCC)

2. Apologies: Naomi Liller (Acomb Parish Council)
Bill Grigg (Clerk to Acomb Parish Council and Steering
Group Secretary/Treasurer)

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 11th October 2016:

These were accepted as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere in the agenda

None

5. Housing Need Survey – the Acomb chapter

General

It was agreed that the Group was generally happy with the final version of the Acomb-specific report. Jane would send a copy of it to Jenny.

Action: Jane

It was felt that Housing Costs were not higher in Acomb than Hexham but that, because of the small number of transactions in Acomb, this “conclusion” of the report was probably a statistical anomaly.

It was acknowledged that there was no need for more Affordable Housing (although this should be included, at 15%, in any new developments, to avoid social engineering in a growing community, and to conform to current, but optional, NCC policies). It was also acknowledged that there was limited tenure choice, particularly for the private rented sector.

In any event, there were no identified potential development sites in the Parish. However, it is understood that such sites may become available in the future, and there is a need for a Housing Policy within the plan, to cover this eventuality.

Jenny agreed to supply a brief “Straw Man” example of what such a policy may look like, encapsulating our views.

Action: Jenny

David reinforced the need for evidence to support those views.

i. Feedback from meetings held on October 19th and 26th

Charles and Lorna had attended the meeting on the 19th October. It was apparent from the Survey, that Acomb did not have a need for additional Affordable Housing. However, there is insufficient information about the needs of older people in the Parish. Rachel added that vacancies in the Pensioners Bungalows were largely filled from outside the Parish as local people did not want them.

Matilda had attended the meeting on the 26th October. The point was made that older people may want apartments (of which there are currently none in Acomb) rather than bungalows, because the “footprint” of bungalows was too great, and because the bungalows had only 1 bedroom.

The overall view from the meetings was that there was little need for increased Housing in Acomb.

ii. Future use of the survey

It was agreed that the data in the report was valuable evidence which would be used to support any relevant policies, and that it would be recorded in the Evidence Section on the website.

iii. Publicity

It was agreed that copies of the report would be available on the website, in the Post Office and in the Village Hall. Notification of its existence would be published in the Courant under Village Notes.

6. Grant Application to Locality

Jane advised the Group that the Grant Application had been provisionally approved.

7. The Hermitage – views on future land-use for this site

The Group’s views about how the Hermitage could be developed were primarily about the protection of the parkland, and the separation which it gave Acomb from Hexham. The building itself is Listed, so there is little control that the Neighbourhood Plan could have over future development and use. It seemed unlikely that any plans would be considered in the foreseeable future.

8. Working with our planning consultant Jenny Ludman – future activity and strategy

Jenny advised the Group that she had been reviewing its documentation and thoughts, to date and had a number of immediate questions. There was much debate on the issues which Jenny raised. In particular, there were several Objectives which were already covered by National and Local Policies, and which David advised would be ignored, as such, when it came to Independent Inspection of the Plan.

It was agreed that:

- a) The Natural Environment objective included the SSSI, the Pit Heaps and the Village Environment
- b) The objectives relating to Renewable Energy and “Village Feel” should be deleted as they are covered by National Policies/ Green Belt
- c) The Flooding Prevention objective should be restricted to supporting Flood Alleviation Plans.
- d) The Protection of Green Spaces objective should identify the spaces and reasons for protection.
- e) Members of the Group should read the Conservation Area Appraisal document relating to Acomb, to see how this impacts their relevant objective. This is stored on the NCC Website.
- f) The Group should specify the Community Facilities it wishes to protect, again with reasons.
- g) There may need to be a Business Survey, to identify the needs of small businesses in the Parish.

Action: All

Jenny would be producing a report, reviewing her findings on the Group’s work to date, for discussion at the next meeting.

9. Updates: Steering Group vacancy – no further progress on new members

Website – this was up to date

10. Date of next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in the Village Hall at 6.30 on 17th January 2017.

The meeting closed at 8.40