

Greenspace Groups Forum Minutes 07b

Meeting held 20/10/14 at Morecambe Town Hall

Present: Rita Gerard (Poulton the Sands & Morecambe Cemeteries), Simon Gershon (Lancaster Green Spaces), Mick & Hilary Short (Fairfield Association), Tabitha Middleton (Fairfield Association), Brian Crawley (Carnforth Coke Ovens), Steve Wearden (Ryelands Park), Helen Ryan (City Council), Chris Norman (Aldcliffe Residents), Roger Frankland (Civic society), Louise Belcher (Thwaite Brow Nature Reserve), Gail Capstick (Community Land Trust), David Redmore, Dave Brookes (Canal Triangle). Plus Rebecca Richards and Maurice Brophy

The theme was: "The Importance of Green Spaces on the Local Plan"

There was a lot of information in Maurice's and Rebecca's presentation and this is not a full summary. The full presentation can be seen on the LGS website [here](#).

The Local Plan

Every Local Authority has to produce a 'Local Plan' based on central government guidelines through the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Plan is made up of several Development Plan Documents (DPDs). In our case these are:

- Development Management DPD
- Morecambe Area Action Plan DPD
- Land Allocations DPD
- Arnside and Silverdale AONB DPD
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD

These will replace the current 2008 Core Strategy and other older local planning documents such as the 2004 Local Plan. DPDs will be supported by a number of additional Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), including a Lancaster District Open Space Provision & Residential Development SPD'. These will be prepared on a rolling basis providing additional detailed guidance. Importantly SPDs do not set policy.

The current position is that the Development Management DPD and Morecambe Area Action Plan have been approved by the Planning Inspector and are being taken to Full Council for approval for adoption on 17th Dec. The documents incorporate some amendments suggested by the Planning Inspector.

In addition to the Development Management document and Morecambe AAP the council has also sought to progress preparation of the Land Allocations document having undertaken extensive consultation on options for additional housing growth over the summer. This follows work undertaken as part of its Preferred Options document in 2012, more recent work on its Strategic

Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) published in March this year and new information on housing need in the district as described in its reviewed Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

These will feed into a further draft of the Land Allocations DPD which is likely to be published in late 2015 for comment. Land Allocation deals with all uses, but housing is the most significant because government policy currently means that Lancaster City Council has to allocate a lot of land for future housing. This is based on an objectively assessed 'need' which determines the number of extra dwellings. In planning for future housing needs Local Authorities are required to maintain a 5-year supply of housing. This can include sites already benefiting from planning permission as well as additional sites identified through the council's evidence base.

In the meeting several people questioned whether the housing 'need' was based on solid principles, both on philosophic and pragmatic grounds.

The number of dwellings identified as being 'needed' In Lancaster comes from an independent report prepared on behalf of the council by Turley Associates. This is based on a range of factors including ONS demographic trends data. The report can be found on the City Council website. This report provided for the basis of the councils summer consultation which sought to identify opportunity for 12,000 additional houses. There are currently around 56,000 households in the district so we are talking about more than 20% increase.

A full report detailing the comments received on the consultation is available on the council's website. Specific concern was noted in relation to the suggested housing need in the district with this figure disputed by a good number of people. The supposed need for sites is further distorted by the small number of new-builds in the last 5 years – and rather than taking this as evidence of reduced demand, the city council has to allocate even more housing sites in order to catch up on the previous 'shortfall' (!).

But current planning law is in favour of development, and good evidence is needed to support a lower official figure. But a proper process of designating land for housing takes time, so the council is currently unable to have as many housing sites ready to go as it should. The result of all this, is that it is more difficult for the planning committee to refuse housing applications on what would otherwise be considered unsuitable sites. Or at least, the Planning committee must show that the negative impacts 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits, and taking into material consideration the need to supply 5 years housing.

Green Infrastructure

There are now fewer separate policies on environmental protection and enhancement; most policies are now embedded in the Local Plan and reflect national policies on Green Infrastructure which are intended to give a **'Strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green**

spaces and other environmental features. Rebecca gave us details of these (not yet adopted though), and they are as follows:

Policy DM25 Green Infrastructure

- Integrity and connectivity of green infrastructure network will be managed, maintained, protected and enhanced.
- Encourages the integration of green spaces and green infrastructure into development proposals and forge linkages with existing green space networks.
- Where on-site provision is not possible a financial contribution will be sought towards the creation of new facilities off-site
- Development proposals which would result in the damage to the integrity of or severance of a green corridor will be resisted by the council.
- The loss of green spaces and corridors will only be considered acceptable where it is allowed as part of the development plan process and on balance achieves wider policy aims and objectives.
- In such circumstances it would be expected that replacement habitat/provision be provided which is of an equal or better standard (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) than existing.
- Allotments
 - Seeks to protect existing allotments
 - Supports the provision of new allotments
- Garden Provision
 - Resists proposals which will involve the loss of garden spaces to built development

Policy DM26 Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities

- Protects areas of open space of environmental, economic and community value from development which would result in their loss either partially or fully.
- Where exceptional circumstances justify the loss of space the council will require the re-provision of equal or better provision than currently exists.
- The loss of space will only be considered where it can be demonstrated, via consultation, that the land in question no longer has an economic, environmental or community value.
- Development proposals located in recognised areas of open space deficiency will be expected and encouraged to provide appropriate contributions towards open space provision, either on-site or where this is not possible via a financial contribution towards provision off-site.

Policy DM27 The Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity

- Provides protection for international, national and local designated biodiversity sites.
- Includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ramsar, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) and Local Nature Reserves.

Policy DM28 Development and Landscape Impacts

- Provides protection for designated landscape sites (National Parks and AONBs)
- Provides protection for the locally designated Key Urban Landscapes
- States that these areas will be conserved and important natural features safeguarded. Within these areas the council will only support development that preserves the open nature of the area and the character and appearance of its surroundings.
- Outside of protected landscapes the council will support development which is in scale and keeping with the landscape character and which are appropriate to its surroundings in terms of siting, design, materials, external appearance and landscaping.

Moving on – Note that this was not part of the meeting but has been added subsequently.

1. We will be able to remind our city councillors, planning committee members and council officers of their responsibility to give fair weight to policies DM25-28 in the Local Plan.

2. We will be able to contribute in 2015, to consultation for the Land Allocations DPD. This will formally allocate key areas of greenspace in the district, identifying:

- Allotment provision
- Areas of active recreation
- Amenity areas
- Green space networks/local ecological networks
- Nature Improvement Area
- Key Urban Landscapes

Rebecca Richards and Maurice Brophy have indicated their willingness to come back to the Greenspace Groups Forum another time.

Next Meeting

Monday 8th December – The Cornerstone Cafe, off Dalton Square, Lancaster 7-9pm. The meeting theme will be: '**Volunteer Training**'. Jane Attfield and Yak Patel (the new CEO) will attend and we will identify training needs in our groups and how CVS can help us with this.

We will also generate and appraise ideas for future Greenspace Fora themes – Maybe we would prefer to have a mix of indoor talking and outdoor practical meetings?