

The minutes of the Meeting of Acklington Parish Council held on 7.00pm on 18 April 2023 at Acklington Village Hall.

**PRESENT:** Cllrs L Craig, S Ingleby, S Malone, T Mezza, J Newton (Chairman), S Thorpe.

#### 2022/91 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Barras and Shanks

#### 2022/92 Disclosure of Interests

None to declare: Cllr Ingleby has checked Government Guidance on declaring interests and it is clear there is no interest to declare simply by virtue of being on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and therefore involved in the drafting of the Plan. The Parish Council noted that Cllrs Craig, Ingleby and Mezza do not have a pecuniary interest in the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### 2022/93 Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council considered the Draft Neighbourhood Plan which has been submitted for its approval by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Several councillors had made insightful comments by email on receipt of the Draft Plan and were thanked for this. The Parish Council agreed to work through the Plan, raising any comments or questions, which the Steering Group can then take into account. The following points were raised:

- a. Paragraph 2 – Should this be made more generic? For example, an additional paragraph could be added about the diversity of Acklington Parish.
- b. Paragraph 3.3 – Who do we have in mind when discussing housing needs, for example, young people, downsizing? The Steering Group clarified that these possible needs were identified via the Vision and Objectives Consultation, in which people were asked what kind of additional housing would they support, if any.
- c. Paragraphs 5.1, 5.10 and 5.11 – Are the references to EU Regulations still required? The Steering Group will check this point with the Planning Consultant.
- d. Paragraph 6.1 – Is the word ‘Civil’ [line 1] needed? Should the paragraph be re-ordered/redrafted to include North Broomhill in the first sentence with the other larger settlements? Arguably there are more residents living in the North Broomhill area of the parish than in Guyzance. The Steering Group will review this paragraph and will check whether there are any implications of classifying areas as settlements or otherwise (due to presumptions for or against development in each case in the Local Plan). The Steering Group will consider whether areas which it is desirable to treat as open countryside (i.e., presumption against development) should be excluded from any description as a settlement in this paragraph. The Steering Group noted that the word “village” should be removed in Line 2.
- e. Paragraph 6.20 should be re-worded to better describe where development has taken place, for example the very recent developments in the centre and to the east.
- f. Paragraphs 6.21, 6.26 and 8.1 – The Steering Group will consider whether these should be expanded to explain what is meant by “the needs of people in the parish”. The second bullet point of 6.26 refers to needs which have been identified. The plan cannot simply say ‘no more housing’ but can seek to control the types of housing and what it looks like. It can’t insist on improved community facilities or infrastructure. To show that a particular type of housing is needed, there would need to be a Housing Needs Assessment. To control the look of properties, a Design Code would need to be drafted and

- included. The Steering Group will check with the Planning Consultant whether the statement in 6.26 (second bullet) should be included or whether this creates a presumption in favour of development. If a housing need is identified, it is necessary to identify suitable sites.
- g. The Steering Group explained the rationale for not including a redefined Settlement Boundary for Acklington. Any changes to the Settlement Boundary, however minor, will trigger the need for a SEA, which will take time and carry an additional cost. The Settlement Boundary from the Local Plan cannot be repeated exactly in a policy in the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan as this would be refused by NCC as duplication. The Steering Group carried out a balancing exercise: on the one hand the need to ensure those residents living in Acklington Village feel heard and can see this on reading the Plan. On the other hand, the longer the delay in bringing the Plan to referendum, the longer the parish goes without the protections which the Plan will offer.
  - h. The smaller settlements within the parish do not have a Settlement Boundary in the Local Plan.
  - i. The Steering Group will check whether Togston/North Broomhill have a Settlement Boundary in the Local Plan.
  - j. Paragraph 7.1 – The Parish Council commented that this could be more ambitious. Dark skies have already been affected by development in Acklington. The Steering Group explained that the ‘big idea’ embodied by the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan is that the rurality of the parish remains the same. Everything in the Plan is a direct result of community consultation. Respondents really prize the rural nature of the parish, the woodlands, the dark skies etc. The Parish Council noted that it will be necessary to manage expectations of what the Plan can achieve.
  - k. Section 8 – Is this section strong enough? Following on from the discussion on 6.21 and 6.26, the Steering Group will consider whether this section should be expanded to make it clear that the Settlement Boundary in the Local Plan does already offer a level of protection, and perhaps to set out what development is allowed outside of the Settlement Boundary, so that anyone reading the Plan can see why the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan does not need to repeat this.
  - l. Paragraph 8.1 – The Steering Group will check whether the included plan is the correct one.
  - m. Paragraph 8.4 – “2-3 years” should be amended to “5-6 years”.
  - n. Paragraph 9.3 – The Steering Group explained the rationale behind defining three areas to which this policy will apply. The Local Plan applies a threshold of 20%, which taken over the parish as a whole would not be met. However, there are pockets within the parish where the percentage is much higher. The Steering Group explained the data which Cllr Craig and Mr Craig had collated from Business Tax information and holiday let websites. This data will be used by the Parish Council to monitor the situation, which can then inform the Parish Council’s response to planning consultations. The parish is a residential parish and should remain so. The three areas were identified by the Steering Group in order to offer each the best protection possible via this policy. The second area should be defined as ‘Guyzance Conservation Area’, not ‘Village’.
  - o. Paragraph 10.4 – Remove CF4. The Steering Group will consider whether the Play Area and Bus Shelters should be included.
  - p. Paragraph 11.6 – Should evidence of the trees and hedges be collected so that these can be discussed in detail with knowledge in planning responses? This could be done by way of a survey once the Neighbourhood Plan is in force.
  - q. ANP3 – Why is Guyzance specifically mentioned in ANP3 when other areas of the parish are not? This feeds into a wider point, that Guyzance Conservation Area is specified multiple times across the ANP. This could create the impression that it is the ‘Guyzance Plan’ not the Acklington Parish Plan. The Steering Group explained that the Policy describes the types of woodland/trees which will be afforded protection under the Policy and seeks to protect as many as possible. Ancient Woodland is a

recognised legal status with protections, recorded on DEFRA's Magic Map System; similarly veteran trees, which are registered on the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory. Wildlife corridors are introduced. Mature hedgerows are protected. However, there is a limit to the extent to which trees can be protected. Not every area of woodland can be protected. The trees within the Conservation Area can be protected as they are referred to in the character appraisal, giving grounds for including them as a specified area.

- r. ANP4 – Guyzance is again specified in ANP4. Why is Green Space protection needed if these areas already fall within the Conservation Area? The Steering Group stated that the Plan seeks to afford as much protection as possible to all parts of the parish. Guyzance has more opportunities for protection due to the Conservation Area and the number of holiday lets (etc) and so is mentioned more frequently than other areas. However, at each stage and for each policy, the Steering Group has considered each area of the parish and has thoroughly explored how each area can be best served by a policy and what the implications of including references to each area would be. Recording the two areas within Guyzance as Green Spaces adds an additional layer of protection to that already in place due to the Conservation Area. There is no good reason not to include this additional protection if it is available.
- s. ANP4 – The initial list of Green Spaces included more locations. However, there is a set of statutory criteria which must be met for a location to qualify as a Green Space. On review, the Steering Group removed those locations which did not meet the criteria. It would be possible to add some of these back in but they could be removed when the Plan is assessed by NCC if they do not meet the criteria. Any areas with Highway Status cannot be included. This rules out the wide verges. The Parish Council would like to include the fields to the east of the village (on the north side of the road) and perhaps those beside North Broomhill, as these create a green belt effect, stopping the two villages from merging and so contribute to the rural character of the parish.
- t. LGS5 and LGS6 need a better description.
- u. Paragraph 12.4 – The Steering Group will check whether there is a more up to date photo available as the image does not show the new developments. A better description of the modern part is needed in Line 7 – the new developments are also in the centre and to the east and there is a large estate to the south east which is not 'historic'.
- v. A few typographical errors were also identified which will be corrected.

#### 2022/94 Neighbourhood Plan Public Consultation Period

**RESOLVED** To progress to public consultation with the Draft Plan, subject to the comments raised above. The Steering Group will either incorporate these in the version published for consultation or will include a cover sheet setting out the comments for review alongside the Plan.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:55pm.