

Linlithgow Planning Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held at 6, Springfield Grange 24th March 2016

1. **Present:** John Kelly, (JK) Convenor (L&LBCC), Martin Crook (L&LBCC, TMG), Roger Livermore (LCAG), Mike Vickers (MV), (LCT, L&LBCC & LBA), Ron Smith (RS), (BB, LCT, L&LBCC), David Timperley (DGT) (of LCT), Councillor David Tait (DT) (LBA, WLC, Black Bitch Mag)
2. **Apologies:** Chris Long (LCT, BB)
3. **Matters arising:** (Not discussed). The complaints procedure open to Community Councils simply involves a letter to the Chief Executive of WLC. The WLC complaints procedure must be exhausted before making a representation to the Local Authorities Ombudsman.
4. **Planning applications:** The following planning application has been notified since the last PF meeting
 - a. Clarendon Farm - 0187/P/16 - A planning application has been received. The application appears to be identical to that refused by WLC and by the Reporter on appeal. JK to draft a letter of objection and circulate.
5. **Discussion with Chief Planner and Chief Architect:** A meeting has been arranged for 10am on Monday 4th April at 6 Springfield Grange. The agreed agenda is:
 - a. the most effective and efficient ways of involving the Community (in our case defined by the settlement of Linlithgow) in the planning process
 - b. the requirements for consultation (the Statutory consultees) and what this means in practice
 - c. our experiences, from a settlement perspective, with regard to housing development and the impact of development on infrastructure.

Introduction:

JK to give a brief introduction of our experience of the Local development Plan process and introduce the Linlithgow Plan for the Future as a vehicle for engaging with the Linlithgow community and sensitising us to the issues so that we can respond effectively within the limited period for comment (for both the LDP and individual planning applications).

Item a. the most effective and efficient ways of involving the Community in the planning process.

The following points to be made:

- Our community is defined by the settlement boundary of Linlithgow but the LDP is representative of the whole of the West Lothian unitary authority area. The LDP is not sensitive enough to recognise individual communities and it is difficult to effectively engage Linlithgow residents in a generalised plan.
- Following on from the above community input can only be by settlement. This was the case with the reported comments to the MIR.
- WLC officers made themselves available to answer queries on the LDP but did not record any comment or opinion from individuals attending the “consultation”.
- There was no paper based questionnaire at the sessions; attendees were requested to make their comments on line.
- In respect of individual planning applications we can react reasonably promptly because we have the Plan for the Future.

Item b. the requirements for consultation (the Statutory consultees) and what this means in practice

- The Community Council is defined as a Statutory Consultee but in practice this does not confer any rights beyond those of any other member of the public. In Linlithgow the Community Council is signed up to the weekly planning list and receives these - as would any other member of the public.
- We perceive that WLC does not have the resources to engage in the way envisaged by the planning circular.
- We observe a reluctance of the WLC officers to facilitate a community gathering to determine the community’s needs (and also aspirations).
- A Charrette is perceived to be very costly.
- There appears to be a role for the Community Planning Partnership which is not being fulfilled.

Item c. our experiences, from a settlement perspective, with regard to housing development and the impact of development on infrastructure

- The 5 year timescale for the SESPlan is far too short. The 5 year timescale for the LDP is also short - we have adopted a 15 year vision for the settlement of Linlithgow.
- Policy should be worded such that it can be applicable to all communities within the West Lothian unitary authority area. Planning should apply those policies to settlements. The failure to plan for the development of settlements encourages a gap to develop between the people and the Council. This has been demonstrated by the Council’s reaction to the Plan for the Future.
- Each settlement should have at least a 5 year but preferably a 15 year effective land supply for housing within its settlement boundary.

- Linked to the above, housing should be planned with its supporting infrastructure. Infrastructure planning should not be left to a section 75 agreement at the time of the planning application. Developer's need to know at the outset the extent of their obligation to the community.
- It should be a requirement that Community Councils are consulted on major planning applications. It should be one of the planning officer's duties to seek out the opinion of the Community Council and be prepared to discuss the implications of any major planning application. The Community Council should be given time to consult with residents.

Final Comments

- The requirement for a Pre Application Consultation by a developer should be abandoned. It is a waste of 12 weeks. It's only benefit is as a marketing exercise by the developer. The form of the consultation is not prescribed. There are no requirements for the independent validation of the data collected by the developer which is currently selectively presented in such a way as to support the developer's wishes.
- The law should be repealed which states that once a spade is put in the ground on a site which has planning permission then that application is valid in perpetuity.

6. Next Meeting: 10am on Monday 4th April at 6 Springfield Grange

John Kelly
25th March 2016