

**Longbenton Community Conversation**  
**27<sup>th</sup> November 2013**  
**Oxford Centre, Longbenton**

**Present:** Cllr Eddie Darke (chair); Cllr Joan Walker; Cllr Kevin Conroy; Angela Gent, NTC; Felicity Shoosmith, NTC, Steven Lyttle, Capita, David Hall, Capita, Derek Smith, Capita, Steve Harvey, Capita and 27 residents.

Cllr Darke welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave some information about this new way of engaging with communities which will take place at a ward level. As well as the community conversations the Mayor and her Cabinet are holding “listening sessions”. These are open to all residents. There will be a listening event on the 27<sup>th</sup> March at St Andrew’s Church Hall, Benton, further dates are on the Council’s website.

**North Tyneside Local Plan**

A short presentation was given explaining about why we needed to have a local plan. This is currently being consulted on and all residents have an opportunity to give their views on all of the potential sites identified for development. Information on this plan has gone to all households, and more detailed information is available in libraries and on the Council’s website.

This local plan will set out North Tyneside’s planning policy for the next 15 years. The local plan is based on a range of evidence which has indicated that we will need 16,500 new houses over the next 15 years. However working with Newcastle and Northumberland we have reduced this down to 10,500 to 12,000 new houses to be built in North Tyneside. The local plan proposes no changes to the Green belt, but the potential areas do include both brown and green field sites. There are over 100 sites identified in the consultation document, we do not need all of these and want residents views.

**Question:** I am confused about what you mean by 25% affordable – what about the other 75%.

**Response:** We plan on having 25% - about 3000 houses that will be social housing, the other housing will be for sale.

**Question:** I am worried that if people cannot afford the new houses they will have to move out of North Tyneside. We must consider the needs of people who cannot afford the new houses.

**Response:** For a long time the Council have not built Council Housing, we have just started to change this.

**Question:** I am concerned that in the White House Farm development there was no social housing.

**Response:** We got money from the developer (5.5 million) which is being used in other parts of North Tyneside, for example development that has already started in Wallsend to build Social Housing.

**Question:** Why did the Council allow the White House Farm development?

**Response:** The planning committee turned down the planning application, but this

decision was overturned on appeal. The reason we need a Local Plan is to give us greater control of local planning decisions.

**Question:** How do you know what people of North Tyneside need, there is no National picture.

**Response:** We have based the local plan on a wide range of local and national evidence.

**Question:** One of the areas is beside the Westmoor Centre, there is no enough space for the 57 houses that have been identified.

**Response:** This is only an estimate, the reason we are asking for people's views is so we can make the right decisions. We will be working with developers and want them to come up with plans on what this needs to look like.

**Question:** Is it the Government who gives the figure of 25% affordable properties?

**Response:** No, this is what the Council have said they think is achievable.

**Question:** When Longbenton was developed a number of Council Houses were pulled down, this does not seem to replace the affordable housing that was pulled down.

**Response:** This is looking forward.

**Question:** We were told that Kier are only building bungalows.

**Response:** This is not the case – we are looking at a mix of different sized housing.

**Question:** Are you building houses around the needs of people because of the bedroom tax?

**Response:** We are looking at a mix of different sized housing.

**Question:** Could the 25% of affordable property be increased to 35%.

**Response:** It is unlikely, there is a viability issue and we would expect the developers to move to Newcastle / Northumberland if we increased the % of social property they would need to build.

**Question:** How is this funded?

**Response:** On a private site the developers have to fund the development of social housing from their profits, and this is further supported by a new homes bonus fund.

**Question:** Is the Council Tax going up?

**Response:** There are no plans to increase council tax in the next financial year.

**Question:** Can we have more than 25% affordable homes as a target?

**Response:** Put this down in response to the Local Plan consultation.

**Question:** When will the Council invest in the other side of the Benton Estate.

**Response:** There has been some regeneration and upgrading of the Benton Estate already, including double glazing and new kitchens.

## **Flooding**

Derek Smith and Steven Harvey from Capita gave a short presentation. We have had a number of incidents over the past couple of years where residents have experienced flooding. On the 28<sup>th</sup> June over 900 properties were flooded. The Council is taking a lot of steps with over 4 million of new investment to reduce the risk of further flooding.

The Council, working with Capita, have developed a range of initiatives all aimed at making sure we are doing everything possible to reduce the risk of flooding for residents. We have cleaned out more gullies and are continuing to do so on a regular basis, we are working with other partners all aimed at trying to reduce the risk of future flooding.

**Question:** I understand that there is a committee that looks at reducing the risk of flooding, why is there not a resident on this committee?

**Response:** I am not sure that the partnership is the most appropriate place, as this tends to be at a high strategic level, but we will look at how we could include greater resident involvement.

**Question:** What about flooding around the cat and dog shelter?

**Response:** Capita are doing a big study next year on the Longbenton Letch, this will include the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water, however an offer was made to meet the resident on site to see if anything more could be done in the meantime. The Council only took over in 2010 as the flood authority, there has been a lot of work done since that time, and it is really important that any plan does not cause other problems. This means that solutions need to be fully modelled to check the full impact of any work.

**Question:** The council are looking to build more houses, will this not just increase the risk of flooding?

**Response:** Understanding of the importance of building in good flood prevention measures has increased over recent years. As a result new development should reduce the risk of flooding, and is an area that is taken very seriously at the development stage. All new plans are assessed by Flooding experts within the Council / Capita and at Northumbria Water. Planning permission is not granted if there are any concerns.

**Question:** When the council cuts the grass and does not collect it this adds to the problems – could you not concrete areas so you don't have to cut the grass?

**Response:** No this would make the situation worse but thanks for your comments on the grass we will look into this.

**Question:** You need to look at the Ouseburn.

**Response:** This is the responsibility of the Environment Agency – but we are talking to them about what they are doing and this is part of the overall partnership approach taken to reduce flooding

**Any other business?**

**Question:** The pathways on the Benton Estate need some work, this includes overgrown hedges

**Response:** Not all of the hedges are on council property, but if you could let your ward councillor know where you are concerned about we will try to see if we can get this addressed.