

1.0 Introduction

This topic paper will provide evidence to support the policy approach being taken in the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan with regard to youth provision in Ponteland. In particular, this paper will focus on issues related to the provision of a new school site in Ponteland, and to the provision of recreational space and youth facilities. This paper includes proposed draft Policy Areas, and proposed Community Projects that have arisen out of the consultation that has taken place so far with the local community in the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is anticipated that a number of these projects will be delivered through the Ponteland Community Partnership and the Plan will identify partners to bring these projects forward. Some proposals may be delivered through developer contributions.

The Topic Paper is based on the Evidence Base report produced by the 'Youth Provision Topic Group' which is available on the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan website. It is also based on meetings with the subgroup, and on information available from Northumberland County Council and other sources.

2.0 Consultation

Following extensive consultation, the following objective was identified in relation to youth provision in Ponteland:

Objective 11: To ensure that our schools are well planned to meet the needs of our current and projected pupil population

Objective 12: To ensure that there is sufficient provision of recreational space and facilities for young people in Ponteland

3.0 The main issues identified were:

- The need to ensure that the school can accommodate the numbers of new pupils likely as a result of development in Ponteland
- The need to protect existing recreational space for young people
- The need to improve existing facilities for young people
- Maximise the use of existing buildings/spaces for youth and community uses
- Ensure that new development provides appropriate space for further recreational provision or mitigates loss if facilities are to be lost as a result of new development

Each of these issues will be addressed in turn:

3.1 The need to ensure that schools in Ponteland can accommodate the numbers of new pupils likely as a result of new housing development

Although this issue came out strongly in consultation responses, this is not an area that can directly be controlled through planning policy and education provision is managed through the County Council's education service.

However, a new school site is proposed in the Northumberland Core Strategy, and the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan could contain a policy about new educational development which could stipulate criteria for any new school development.

Policy Area: New educational provision in Ponteland

Intention: To ensure that any new site for a school has enough space to meet the educational needs of Ponteland; that any application is accompanied with a detailed Transport Assessment to include mitigation of impacts on local traffic network, seeks to include pedestrian/cycling links to the local housing areas to reduce traffic impacts, incorporates at least the same amount of recreational space as it at the existing schools, and other criteria relevant to a new school site.

3.2 The need to protect existing recreational space

The existing recreational spaces in Ponteland are varied. Some are privately run and so are not available to the general public, and other areas are open to all, some are formal, some less so. Green

spaces used for recreational purposes are proposed for protection as Local Green Spaces. The policy approach is being taken forward in the Natural Environment Topic Paper.

The Youth Club Hut which is currently in an area that is likely to be allocated in the Core Strategy for an alternative use would be lost as a result of any development on that site. An appropriate policy to mitigate that loss is proposed:

Policy Area: Ponteland Youth Club Hut

Intention: To ensure that the Youth Club Hut is re-located to a suitable location, and not lost as a result of any development on the site.

3.3 The need to improve existing facilities for young people

There are facilities which need upgrading/improvements, and much of this is being funded by the Town Council and already underway as a result of consultation responses.

Further consultation with the local community may reveal a demand for additional facilities. The County Council's Playing Pitch Strategy identifies playing pitches and facilities in the County, and Ponteland's facilities are moderately graded. Improvements could be secured through funding from future developments, and as a result of projects funded within the Town Council/Community Partnership/Community Trust.

3.4 Maximise the use of existing buildings/facilities for youth/community use

There is the opportunity to maximise space in existing buildings to create a community 'hub' which would be of benefit to young people, but also to others in the community.

The Memorial Hall could provide such a location, and opportunities could be explored to maximise the potential of the existing

Community Project: Community Hub

Intention: To explore the viability of creating a 'community hub' at a central location in Ponteland. This could provide youth facilities, but also facilities for the wider community. Ideas such as joint library/internet/café/community space to be explored.

building, and perhaps expand it further.

3.5 Ensure that new development provides appropriate space for further recreational provision or mitigates loss if facilities are to be lost as a result of new development

A policy could be contained in the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan which seeks to ensure that new development contributes to the provision of either on-site or off-site recreational facilities if the development is likely to create additional demand. When a

Community Infrastructure Levy is in place, monies from development could be used by the Town Council to improve existing facilities.

Where a Community Infrastructure Levy is in place, and a Neighbourhood Plan is made, 25% of developer contributions will go to the Qualifying Body (in this case Ponteland Town Council).

Policy Area: Developer Contributions to Recreational Space

Intention: To ensure that developer contributions are secured where there is likely to be pressure put on existing recreational space, and to ensure that recreational space is provided in new development where viable and necessary. Identify sites where provision could be improved.

4.0 Strategic Policy Context and Evidence

The strategic policy in relation to these policy areas in the emerging Core Strategy are largely covered in policies 44 and 45. Policy 44 relates to the provision of Community Facilities, and policy 45 is about recreational open space, and requirements regarding the provision of open space in new development.

The proposed policy areas in the Ponteland plan reflect those identified in the Core Strategy, and will provide a local dimension to improve decision making in terms of planning decisions and recreational areas.

5.0 National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 8 of the NPPF seeks to promote the development of healthy communities. Paragraph 69 states that the planning system has an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Local planning authorities should create a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see. To support this, local planning authorities should aim to involve all sections of the community in the development of Local Plans and in planning decisions, and should facilitate neighbourhood planning.

Paragraph 70 states that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies should be positive about the provision of shared space, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

Paragraph 73 states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities. Paragraph 74 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or the development is

for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

The proposed policies in the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan are in line with the intentions of the NPPF.

Evidence Base Documents

Consultation Responses from residents' questionnaires
Northumberland County Council Playing Pitch Strategy

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