

Minutes of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting: Thursday, 15 August 2013

Present

Nigel Kay, Faversham Town Councillor (FTC) – Chairman
Mike Cosgrove, Swale Borough Councillor (SBC) – Vice Chairman
John Coulter, Faversham Town Councillor
Trevor Payne, Faversham Town Councillor
Mike Henderson, Swale Borough Councillor
Anne Salmon, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member
Andrew Osborne, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member
John Sell, Faversham Town Council Planning Agent

In attendance

David Simmons, Mayor, Faversham Town Council
Jackie Westlake, Faversham Town Council Clerk – Secretary
Natalie Earl, Senior Planner, Swale Borough Councillor

Before the start of the meeting, the Chair took questions from the public. These are attached at Annex A.

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 There were no apologies for absence. Cllr Kay (NK) advised the Group that, since the last meeting, Tony Fullwood had resigned from his position as independent planning consultant to the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. NK read out the following statement:

“Following the recent round of consultation on the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan, our independent planning consultant, Tony Fullwood, has indicated to the Steering Group that there is now a significant gap between the consultation responses and the recommendations of his 2010 report.

Whilst he remains convinced that his report contains viable and deliverable benefits to Faversham Creek and provides a sustainable future for the area, he is keen to see the Neighbourhood Plan progress to examination and referendum and he has recommended a review of the composition of the Steering Group. As part of this review he feels that it would be more helpful if he no longer advised the Steering Group and, therefore has decided to withdraw from the process.

Tony has sent his thanks and best wishes to the Steering Group in drawing the process to a successful conclusion.”

NK thanked Tony Fullwood for his work on the Neighbourhood Plan process to date, and the Group agreed a formal letter of thanks should be sent.

ACTION: Jackie Westlake (JW) to send a letter of thanks to Tony Fullwood on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

2. Minutes of the meeting of 25 July 2013 and matters arising

2.1 Cllr Cosgrove (MC) asked that one amendment be made: paragraph 3.2 to read 600 rather than 500. The minutes were then approved.

2.2 All matters arising had been dealt with except that relating to the public question seeking information on the consultation on the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Miss Earl (NE) explained that the designation would be out for consultation in the next two weeks. There was a statutory requirement only for the consultation to be placed on the planning authority's website, but it had been agreed it would be linked to the Town Council website, and letters would be sent to all those living in the designation area.

3. AMT Report

3.1 Anne Salmon (AS) gave a short presentation on the report. This is attached at Annex B.

3.2 Members thanked AS for her hard work and agreed they needed more time to study the report and consider its implications. The Group noted there was strong support for a range of issues on the continuous Creekside walkway, the operation of the swing bridge, and the opening up of the Inner Basin. There was a strong response indicating maritime-related industry and tourism for the Creek with very limited, if any, housing being sought.

3.3 There were two aspects of the report to take into account: one related to the actual numbers responding in similar ways to the questions; the other related to how the wider comments could be incorporated and used to develop the Plan. The number of returned forms, both on specific sites and on the wider questionnaire did not reflect the actual number of recorded visits to the exhibition.

3.4 In discussion, the Group agreed that options presented had to be deliverable. If there were significant numbers seeking a particular option for a site which was not deliverable, the Group had a duty to explain why that was not feasible, and to offer alternatives in the draft Plan.

3.5 It was agreed that a full and final summary should be produced to go on the website. Members would use AS's summary as the template.

ACTION

- **Members to amend AS's summary report. Amendments to JW by Thursday, 22 August**
- **Summary to go on the website**

4. Next Steps

4.1 JW presented the paper on next steps. Members agreed the following actions on communications and engagement:

ACTIONS

- **To send the feedback summaries (site feedback and AMT report) to landowners**
- **To subsequently arrange meetings with landowners/their agents to discuss the feedback and to investigate what impact, if any it would have on their plans**
- **To send the feedback summaries to various organisations (Faversham Creek Trust, Faversham Society, Traders Group, Faversham Area Tourism Association (FATA), FEP)**
- **To invite Faversham Creek Trust, Faversham Society, Traders Group, FATA, residents' association (one from each side of the Creek: Belvedere Road, Brents Community Forum, both to liaise with other residents' associations to ensure comprehensive representation), and a landowners' representative, with an accompanying note explaining the Neighbourhood Plan, the current state of play, next steps, and their role in the work to referendum**
- **To seek the Town Council's views on whether Shepherd Neame should be invited to sit on the Group**
- **To seek the views of the Faversham Youth Forum on the Neighbourhood Plan**

4.2 Members discussed whether the Group should approach SBC for a replacement for Tony Fullwood (TF). There was some concern about the need to do this, given that SBC had not identified there was an issue with continuing to employ TF. However, it was agreed that it was important for SBC to understand the financial implications, which would require the Steering Group to be clear about the workplan for a consultant, the timetable up to referendum, and to what extent the Steering Group would be taking on particular tasks.

ACTIONS

- **JW, with the Steering Group, to draft a letter to James Freeman setting out the Group's requirements for an independent planning consultant**
- **NE to provide SBC papers (including Terms of Reference) where necessary**

4.3 The Group discussed the need to present a set of site-specific alternatives to put to the Town Council for its September meeting. This would have to be before the next Steering Group meeting on 12 September.

ACTION

- **JW, with the Steering Group, to draft a paper on site-specific proposals**

5. Undesignated Heritage Assets Paper

5.1 AS presented draft replies to two consultation letters which were particularly detailed and required separate responses. These were from Mr Harrison and Dr Percival. These had been drafted by AS and John Sell (JS).

5.2 The Group agreed the responses and thanked AS and JS for their work.

ACTION

JW to send the letters out on behalf of the Steering Group

6. Budget

6.1 There had been no further expenditure on the NP budget since the last meeting.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 The following were raised under AOB:

(i) Induction for new members

ACTION

Steering Group members to offer to run through the NP etc on an informal basis

(ii) To consider a report on the potential for maritime-related activity in Faversham Creek

The Steering Group agreed this could be a useful study for the NP. It would be important to understand what levers there were, outside the use class orders, to encourage maritime-related industry

ACTION

MC to explore the potential for such a study

8. Dates of the next meeting

8.1 The date of the next meeting was confirmed:

- Thursday, 12 September, 2013 (7pm, Guildhall)

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Whether the Brents Community Forum could be invited onto the Steering Group? (This was in the form of a letter from Angie Simmons, Brents Tavern, read out by Teresa Luck)

It was agreed, in the body of the meeting, to invite a representative from the Brents Community Forum onto the Steering Group.

2. Could the Standing Orders be amended so that questions could be asked at the end of the meeting?

Standing Orders for the whole of the Town Council would be reviewed.

3. Why were public questions at the meeting limited to registered electors only, when residents from the wider Faversham area had been encouraged to complete the site feedback/questionnaire forms?

Town Council Standing Orders limited public questions at meetings (including Committee meetings) to registered electors. This was standard practice among parish and town councils. The NP was likely to be of interest and concern to a wider group of people, and it was important that they could express their views.

4. Could there be more clarity about the leadership role of the Town Council? How did the approach of the Steering Group fit with the way other NP groups had formed groups and consulted with the community?

There were no particular benchmarks for Neighbourhood Plans. Each vanguard group approached consultation and engagement differently.

5. What impact would the Perry Court development have, if it went ahead, on the need to build housing on the Creek?

It would not affect sites within the Creek area. The requirement to build more houses had to be considered holistically within the Local Plan which would be out for consultation on 19 August.

6. How would the NP fit within the Local Plan?

When a Local Plan is emerging it is increasingly given more weight, depending on what the reference is to the NP. If the reference is not substantial, it has little weight until the NP is agreed at referendum. AAP2, being a saved policy, will take precedence. When it is no longer saved, if the NP is not agreed, the National Planning Policy Framework will take precedence. In any case, the NP has to fit with the NPPF and the strategic policy of the Local Plan.

7. What will happen if there is no NP?

The NP needs to represent Faversham's aspirations, whilst being viable, deliverable and compliant with the NPPF. There will be two lots of statutory consultation once the NP has been drafted. If the NP is not

agreed either at the inquiry or the referendum stage, the Local Plan (see 6. above) and the NPPF take precedence and will be used to determine planning applications. If applications are refused, the applicant has a right to appeal.

AMT report summary

Introduction

The report is based on the results from 278 questionnaires completed at the Illustrations workshop or in the consultation period following.

79% of the respondents were over 51, 38% had lived in Faversham over 25 years, 43% were retired and 38% employed or self employed full time. 43% live in couple households.

Section A Business and employment

80% of respondents did not own a business. Of those who did, 90% owned one business. Most of these responded and 57% of the businesses were outside the creek area. The most popular elements identified as required in the creek area which would help businesses were faster broadband and that there is a lack of suitable premises. Numbers answering the questions on requirements for businesses were very small. Most respondents were not intending to start a business. Responses to the questions about the need for premises were in single figures.

The only question in this section that generated a high level of response was what sort of business should be encouraged in the creek area over the next 20 years. The three most popular answers were maritime industry (92%), tourism and leisure (75%) and small scale industrial/artisan workshops (76%). Most of the answers in the 'other' responses fell within these three use categories.

Section B Open Spaces

A large number of respondents completed this section. Approximately half of respondents use the open spaces around the creek more than once per week. Other elements required in public open spaces were, in order of popularity more footpaths (69%) more public seating (68%) creating wildlife meadows (63%) planting more trees (58%) landscaping of public areas (47%).

There was a wide variety of responses to the question about which open spaces respondents wanted to see protected. Several areas which are not existing public open spaces were identified including Ordnance Wharf and Standard Quay. Many respondents wanted to protect the open land at the Upper Brents, Crab Island, Town Quay, Flood Lane and the Stonebridge Allotments.

81% were in favour of lower energy street lights

92% in favour of keeping light pollution to a minimum

86% supported improving the connectivity of rights of way

94% supported improving the usability of rights of way around the creek

81% favoured improved cycleways.

In the free comments section, several respondents commented on the importance of better signage so that people are directed towards the creek from the town and around the area. Concern was also expressed that areas that attract wildlife should be protected as they provide important natural habitats. The character of the area as a maritime area for traditional crafts and provision of facilities for boat owners and the issue of dredging to remove silt were mentioned frequently.

Section C Young people

The majority indicated that they would not use a children's play park if provided. There was substantial support for improved footpaths (72%) and traffic-free cycleways around the creek (62%) and measures to slow traffic (50%) and better access to current open space (42%).

Suggested locations for slowing the traffic in areas around or approaching the creek included South Road running into North Lane, Conduit Street and Quay Lane, Belvedere Road and most commonly Abbey Street with a few respondents also mentioning the Upper Brents. Controlled crossings to help people to cross the roads more easily were suggested in North Lane from the bridge side to reach Partridge Lane, at the junction of Quay Lane with Court Street, across Bridge Road/Church Road to Bramble Hill Road near the creek bridge and across Church Road, the Brents from Faversham Grill to the nursery in the Brents schoolroom.

This section of questions gave a further opportunity for comment on footpaths, and many respondents supported the provision of footpaths all around the creek.

Many people considered that the creek should be used to provide facilities for young people. 88% supported craft skills and apprenticeships, 87% sailing and canoeing, 84% sea cadets and maritime activities and 74% access to open spaces and the countryside.

The question of location of craft skills and apprenticeships provoked a wide range of responses. Many respondents identified the Purifier building which is owned by the Creek Trust. Other respondents suggested Standard Quay and Ordnance Wharf. A smaller number mentioned Iron Wharf and Alan Staley's boatbuilding works. A few commented that these activities should happen all around the creek.

The question of socialising in pubs and cafes also produced a wide variety of answers. Many respondents commented that there are already a large number of pubs, cafes and restaurants in the town which is not far away. Other suggestions included at Standard Quay, the disused building on the West Street side of Morrison's or at the coach depot.

Section D Housing

90% of the respondents have not experienced any problems finding suitable accommodation with the creek area.

The Local Plan policy as set out in the Strategic Housing Land Appraisal indicated that there should be up to 100 houses within the Creek Neighbourhood Plan area.

The most popular answer was 31% for fewer than 10 houses, 10-20 at 12%, 21-30 at 11%, 31-50 at 9%, 51-70 at 7%, 71-100 at 12%, more than 100 at 7% and No strong opinion at 12%.

Among responders for fewer than 10 houses, concern was raised that any new housing would be too expensive for local people. There are a lot of other places around the town for housing development not in the NP area. There are too many new houses around the creek already. There should be no more new housing. The area will turn into a dormitory with the occupiers commuting out of town. Abbey Street cannot sustain any more traffic. All areas of the waterfront should be used for maritime industry or public amenity. The area is prone to flooding and is not suitable for housing.

10-20 responders wanted new housing to be minimised. If there is any, it should be further away from the creek. Any new housing is likely to be too expensive. The housing shown on the drawings at the exhibition is too dense and there is no parking shown. The creek would become a middle class enclave. It would be preferable to have maritime industry. There are not enough jobs available in the town and too many houses.

20-30 responders' comments included that new housing is likely to become second homes and not meet local housing need. The creek area should not be turned over to housing. Flats on Ordnance Wharf and the oil depot would have a very negative impact. There should be no housing in the basin. There is a need for some affordable housing. Some housing could be built on the BMM Weston site and Fentiman's Yard. Large -scale housing development would cause noise and light pollution.

31-50 responders' comments include that the area should be for affordable housing for local people. The existing houses create a lot of dead space around the creek. Exclusive developments (those people cannot walk through) provide no benefit for local people. There could be some growth but it would cause a significant impact on traffic.

51-70 responders' comments include that any more than 70 units would not be compatible with the area being a leisure and tourism destination. Much above 50 units would be too intensive for the land available.

Comments from the 71-100 responders included that some housing must be included in the Plan but what was shown in the drawings at the exhibition indicate a creek dominated by housing. There is a high housing need in Faversham. Housing should not inhibit access to the creek for all residents of the town and visitors but there should be employment opportunities, especially maritime. The Brents Industrial Estate could be redeveloped for housing as it is poorly located and not well-suited for business. There could be limited housing at Swan Quay and the oil depot and on the top part of BMM Weston and possibly part of Frank and Whittome site.

Some respondents stating that they had no strong opinion comment that the Creek Neighbourhood Plan is not the place to solve the town's housing shortage as waterfront housing is too expensive. There are areas that are not already developed that they would not like to see developed. Housing does not need to be beside the creek where it might get flooded. Waterside housing has to be raised to avoid flooding and is therefore often too tall. The waterside housing that has been built has taken up former employment sites.

The questions on the potential importance of new housing were covered by a high number of respondents. There was an even split between respondents who thought that new housing would or would not enable young people to live around the creek. 61% agreed that new housing would support local businesses, community groups or facilities. There was a roughly even split on whether new housing was acceptable to help to pay for new infrastructure such as streetscape and the bridge while 55% supported the view that new housing would help to meet housing need.

88% considered that more housing would harm the landscape and views.

89% consider that new housing would harm the character of the creek

76% consider that there would be increased parking problems.

79% consider that there would be increased traffic problems.

Four-storey flats and holiday lets would not provide any social housing for local youngsters. New housing would destroy the whole essence and beauty of the creek. Housing would result in the loss of the heritage of the creek and its cultural identity. There will be additional traffic in Abbey Street, West Street and Flood Lane. If there is more housing, it will dominate the creek. There should be no housing around the basin except possibly at BMM Weston. Some might be acceptable at Swan Quay or the oil depot.

The question on what sort of new housing attracted a high number of respondents.

57% favoured small family houses

41% Starter homes (1 bedroom)

41% small homes for older people

32% homes with designated office or workshop space (live/work units)

67% were in favour of providing affordable homes for sale

66% were in favour of homes for sale on the open market

53% said that new housing should be on former commercial sites

63% said that new housing should be achieved by the conversion of redundant or derelict buildings

87% supported that housing should be designed to be appropriate to the creekside character

75% agreed that housing should have a low environmental impact

63% considered that new housing should be low cost to run

71% considered that housing with gardens was very important or quite important

77% considered that off street parking was very important or quite important.

Other comments regarding the location and design of housing included comments that there are too many questions about housing. It is important that housing should not be more than two storeys high as there are enough tall buildings around the creek. A new bridge would improve the overall visual effect and impact of the creek. Any new housing should be in keeping with the surroundings and should not be too large. Residents should be made aware of any new or existing rights of way to avoid the recent disagreements over these. People should be encouraged to use public transport: there are good train and bus services and this will help to reduce the need for large parking areas. Decisions on whether there should be housing should not be made on a financial basis. Maritime heritage should have priority over housing. Housing should not be designed with retail or workshops underneath as such uses are likely to fail and blight the appearance of the area. Housing should be in keeping with the area; individual looking houses and not blocks of flats. Most of the questions are angled as if there is no alternative to housing development around the creek.

Section E The bridge and sluices

Almost all respondents answered the questions concerning the bridge and the sluice gates.

97% supported the statement that the creek bridge should be an opening bridge to let vessels into the basin.

95% considered that an opening bridge would improve the attraction of the town to tourists and residents.

98% supported the provision of working gates and sluices to maintain the creek channel for navigation.

97% considered that the gates and sluices should work to allow vessels into the basin.

Section F Best/Worst, hopes/fears

Most comments in the section on the three best things about the creek related to its maritime character and the presence of large boats or

barges, and of boats coming and going, the presence of wildlife and open space around the creek right into the town centre for walking, that the creek is a unique asset or has a unique character and that the area has a wildness and beauty.

Most common themes for answers in the three worst things about the creek were that the bridge and sluices are not working and that the creek has silted up, with lots of mud, there is no public access all around the creek and the existing footpaths do not join up and that the creek area appears neglected and forsaken.

The most common responses to a main hope for the future of the creek were on the themes of bringing back more maritime use in the form of workshops to repair vessels and moorings for traditional vessels to create a maritime character, better access around the creek on footpaths and better access up the creek by water and use of it for leisure for all sorts of vessels.

The most common responses to a worst fear for the creek were that the creek area would be surrounded by housing and that there would be overdevelopment. This would result in harm to the unique character of the area. Provision of shops and cafes would make the area like any other tourist town. The creek would just become like everywhere else and lose its distinctiveness. Access to the creek would be more restricted. This could happen whether the Plan was adopted and this is what the Plan included or if it failed and the developments were granted on appeal. A minority view was that no agreement would be reached and nothing would happen, leaving the creek to silt up and die.