

## **Minutes of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting: Wednesday, 23 July 2014**

### Present

Nigel Kay, Faversham Town Councillor (FTC) – Chairman  
David Simmons, Faversham Town Council  
John Coulter, Faversham Town Councillor  
Trevor Payne, Faversham Town Councillor  
Cllr M Cosgrove, Swale Borough Council, Vice Chairman  
Cllr Mike Henderson, Swale Borough Council  
Andrew Osborne, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member  
Anne Salmon, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member  
Kirsty Northwood, Faversham Traders Association  
Janet Turner, Faversham Society  
Sue Akhurst, Faversham Creek Trust  
Brenda Chester, Brents Community Association  
Eric Green, Faversham Creek Management Company

### In attendance

Jackie Westlake, Faversham Town Council Clerk – Secretary  
Natalie Earl – senior planner, Swale Borough Council  
Brian Whiteley, Planning Aid England  
Richard Eastham, independent planning consultant, Feria Urbanism  
Isabelle Haddow Feria Urbanism

Details of the public questions can be found at Annex A.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

3.1 There were no apologies for absence. Dr Pat Reid had notified the chair that she had had to stand down due to other commitments. The Faversham Creek Management Company had nominated Eric Green to replace her. The Chair, the Mayor, Cllr N Kay (NK), thanked Dr Reid for her contribution and welcomed Eric Green to the meeting.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.**

2.1 The minutes were agreed. All matters arising had been completed.

### **3. Independent planning consultant update**

3.1 Natalie Earl (NE) advised that interviews had been undertaken and Feria Urbanism had been selected to act as the independent planning consultant for Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan.

3.2 Richard Eastham (RE) said he had worked on neighbourhood plans in Harrietsham, Staplehurst and Loose, all in Kent. The company was also starting work on a neighbourhood plan in Bristol. His background was in urban design and planning. He recognised a lot of work had been done already by many people, and it was important that the neighbourhood plan brought all that together. In response to questions, he said he had worked on waterways and marine industry issues in Weymouth and Poole. In Weymouth, the issues had been about public access, silting and dredging, and a lifting bridge.

#### **4. Presentation by the Faversham Creek Trust and the Brents Community Association**

Sue Akhurst (SA) and Brenda Chester (BC) gave a brief presentation on the Faversham Creek Trust's survey. Full details of the presentation are attached at Annex B.

#### **5. Consultation update**

5.1 Anne Salmon (AS) gave a brief update on the formal consultation paper. Jude Sach (JS) had pulled together the results into the summary which was before the Steering Group. A separate appendix had been prepared for each sheet, with a record of each question and response. NK thanked JS and asked that a formal record of thanks be sent to her.

**ACTION: Jackie Westlake (JW) to write to JS on behalf of the Steering Group/Faversham Town Council**

5.2 Andrew Osborne (AO) asked that the meeting record the Steering Group's thanks to all those who helped out at the consultation events, both in their planning and in their execution. NK agreed that the minutes should record the Group's thanks.

5.2 Members considered next steps. The following were agreed:

- The independent planning consultant (RE) would take away all the information from the consultations, as well as review all the previous paperwork, past consultations, early drafts of the Plan, etc. RE said there appeared to be a high degree of consensus in the responses (although it was pointed out that this was not necessarily reflected in the Plan), and it would be necessary to consider how to grow that consensus in the review of the Plan
- The Steering Group would meet in mid-September (not 19 August as originally planned) to agree a final draft of the Plan. That meeting might have to run over two nights
- There would have to be a separate Town Council meeting to agree the draft Plan to be sent to Swale Borough Council

5.3 SA asked that the Steering Group be provided with the entire consultation papers, including the comments, and papers would be circulated in sufficient time for detailed consideration of them could be made in advance of the September meeting. [Secretary's note: any data would be redacted in that personal information would not be available.]

5.4 Members considered the timetable. There was some concern that there was pressure to complete the draft Plan too quickly, when the referendum would not be held until September 2015. Mike Cosgrove (MC) said that much of the timetable between now and the referendum was as a result of the statutory processes that had to be met. Any delays to the timetable could lead to landowners putting in planning applications ahead of the Plan. This was confirmed by RE, who said that if there was a policy vacuum at local planning authority level because there was no five year land supply and an out of date Local Plan, sites were vulnerable to planning by appeal. The National Planning Policy Framework supported planning for housing.

Faversham Creek was vulnerable because there was no Neighbourhood Plan and no up to date Local Plan (there was no 5 year housing supply).

5.5 Members expressed disappointment with the poor response from statutory consultees and asked why they had not been chased. There would be an opportunity for them to be consulted at the next stage. NE would investigate KCC's absence from the list. A list of interested parties (not statutory consultees, but including organisations such as Peel Ports and the Baddlesmere Estate) could be drawn up for the next stage.

**ACTION: NE to review SBC's statutory consultee list**

## **6. Any other business**

6.1 Flood Alleviation Scheme: [Mike Henderson (MH) declared a pecuniary interest and left the room during the discussion.] JW said she had been approached by Mike Ellsmore, a resident of Faversham and a member of the Brents Community Association following the December floods, to liaise with both the Environment Agency and Swale Borough Council to develop a flood alleviation scheme. A public meeting had been held earlier in the year, and it was felt a scheme was vital to Faversham. Swale Borough Council's Resilience Manager had organised a meeting with the Environment Agency, Southern Water and KCC to discuss the Creek flooding and consider a flood alleviation scheme. Mr Ellsmore was seeking Town Council support in principle for a flood alleviation scheme.

6.2 Members considered the request. It was difficult to understand what the support would be for without detail of a scheme, and further information was sought. It was agreed that Mr Ellsmore should be asked to provide a paper which set out the aims, goals and relationship with the Environment Agency.

### **ACTIONS**

- **JW to contact Mr Ellsmore and Swale Borough Council for further information**
- **NE to provide SBC contact details**
- **JW to include the additional information on the Town Clerk's report for the Town Council meeting on 26 August**

6.3 Date of next meeting: to be arranged for mid-September, in discussion with RE/Feria Urbanism

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Q. Following the success of the nautical festival, will the Steering Group/Town Council ensure provision for public moorings, toilets and slipway in the final Neighbourhood Plan? Although the draft refers to moorings, there is no distinction made between public and private moorings, who will use them and in what circumstances.

A. The draft Plan currently refers to moorings, a continuous creekside walkway with sufficient space for public moorings as well as wider public access. Iron Wharf has 192 assorted craft moored and on dry land; Oare Creek has 235 craft moored; and Conyer Creek has 252 craft moored. There are already toilet facilities at Standard Quay.

Q. Where are the facilities in the draft Plan for employment and boat building? There is high unemployment in Faversham, particularly in Davington Priory Ward.

A. Unemployment in Faversham dropped from 3.6% to 1.9% in June. In Davington, the figure has dropped from 5.9% to 2.9%. There are 23 people in marine-related industry around Iron Wharf; up to 60 part-time employees at Standard Quay; and 590 jobs in total in the footprint around the Creek. [Figures quoted refer to Job Centre Plus figures which are linked to job seekers allowance. The reference to job support allowance relates to Employment and Support Allowance. For those who are ill or disabled, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) offers:

- financial support if unable to work
- personalised help with work if able]

## **PRESENTATION BY THE BRENTS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AND FAVERSHAM CREEK TRUST**

First, we would like to thank Faversham Town Council for re-appointing the Brents Community Association and the Faversham Creek Trust to the Steering Group. We believe we have an important contribution to make, as we all believe that the success of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan is vital for our historic town's long term future. We would like to thank the Mayor for allowing us to present the results of the exhibition and survey that we conducted during May and June.

On several occasions the executive members of Faversham Town Council have expressed their willingness to consider alternative options from those set out in the Draft Plan. We therefore compiled an exhibition – *not* an “alternative neighbourhood plan” but a presentation of the pros and cons of different ideas. It was designed to test the proposals in the draft plan, from us and from BMM Weston against public opinion. It aimed to encourage people to respond with ideas of their own both to us and to the Statutory Consultation. Everyone was given details of the Town Council's events, website and questionnaire.

You have had the opportunity to study the detailed analysis of our survey, so we do not need to go through the statistics now. You have seen how similar our results are to the ones published so far from the Town Council's questionnaire. The majority of respondents in both cases want very limited housing development along the Creek. There is huge support for the opening bridge, the alternative use of Ordnance Wharf for marine activities and a community centre, and for restoring the Basin. There is strong support for continued maritime use at other locations along the Creek, in particular at Standard Quay. Great concern was expressed about flood risks and the desire to have the Creek dredged and made navigable again.

People agreed that the proposed development of the BMM Weston site offers housing better suited to local needs and away from high flood risk areas. This would allow waterfront sites to remain in industrial and employment use more compatible with infrastructural and conservation constraints. Alongside the existing residential developments, this could give us a truly mixed and thriving creekside environment.

Many people attended and responded to both the Town Council's statutory consultation and our exhibition and survey. Between us we have a wonderfully rich and informative source of data to use now. It illustrates how engaged our residents are in the future of the area. It also demonstrates that many people are willing to accept changes which will bring benefits to the Creek and to the town as a whole, far into the future. Their clearly expressed view at this and at earlier consultations is that we must not lose contact with our thousand year history of maritime activity.

I'd like to illustrate those views with a few quotes selected from the more than thirty pages that you have in your documents, which bring into focus the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that are before us now.

### **The Strengths**

“Connect our amazing history to the present. Important to take the long view.”

“The thing that makes Faversham different from other towns is its boat-building heritage. It is important to keep and develop this to make Faversham a different place to visit, and therefore get it on the tourist route. Whitstable makes use of its seafront/fishing, Canterbury its Cathedral, and Faversham should concentrate on its unique heritage too.”

### **The Weaknesses – the Challenge**

“Flooding is a problem and the existing character of the creek with its historic buildings and maritime heritage should not be sacrificed for housing. Dual use buildings is a possibility but there need to be firm plans for their purpose and occupants otherwise they will be obsolete and unused.”

“Had no idea Davington was so deprived - surely this/Brents area should be the focus of the whole redevelopment? Very keen on a cohesive, thought-through plan for this, ie not just sanctioning loads of so-called affordable housing. Community Centre & appropriate provision for it is crucial.”

### **The Opportunities**

“If consulting local people is to mean anything then the strategies proposed in this exhibition should be taken on board and implemented by the local authority. Faversham benefits from extraordinarily well-informed and gifted people who have undoubtedly spent more time than hired professionals on coming up with these plans. The depth of care and concern for Faversham must not be underestimated or marginalised.”

### **The Threats**

“We need to learn from past mistakes - many (in 60s and 70s) beautiful old buildings were flattened to make way for new developments - heritage lost forever - don't let this happen again. Faversham exists because of the Creek and its associated culture - when it's gone, it's gone. Without it Faversham is not unique and lacks essential attractiveness for tourism - people will live here but go elsewhere to spend £.”

“Faversham is a special place. Let's keep it so. Maritime history is a central part of the town's uniqueness and should be recognised in the plans. Too many "waterfront" towns have been developed for retail use but are generally dead areas e.g. Milford Haven. Faversham is well known for its barge/boat services - let's keep it so.”

### **Conclusion**

Swale Borough Council has announced that it will not be able to conduct the referendum until the autumn of 2015, more than a year from now. This gives us the wonderful gift of time. We have time now to enquire carefully into what the people of Faversham are saying, to investigate fully what the alternatives could be, to consider carefully how we all, working together and using the amazing resources we have here, of willing, skilled, experienced people, can produce a plan which will safeguard the long term future of Faversham, its maritime heritage, its status as a Cinque Port Limb and a Royal Port, so that in a hundred years from now we still can have a working,

living Creek and a vibrant town that people love to live in and look forward to visiting.

We should review the Plan from first principles, with greater openness and engagement. A can-do attitude, coupled with a strategic approach to core issues and priorities and a realistic delivery programme, recognising that it is a 20 year Plan, during which development can take place at any time in the 20 years. The Plan will affect the future of the town for centuries to come. Together, we must create a plan that will have the enthusiastic backing of the community when it goes before the Independent Examiner, and which will result in a successful referendum.